PHASE XI (2024-2028)

RULES OF PROCEDURES
AND TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR OPERATIONAL BODIES AND MECHANISMS

ECPGR Terms of Reference for the Working Groups and their Chairs

Rationales for the revision of the document:

❖ Discussion during the last SC «ECPGR towards Phase XI», based on results of Chairs' meeting of 2022 (5-6 April):

Result of SC:

«Establishment of a TF for the Revision of the ECPGR ToRs, with the task to:
revise/update the role, function and mode of operation of all existing ECPGR bodies, in particular the WGs (including objectives, guidelines and the mode of operation, appointment of Chairs and members and their expected commitment, expected number of virtual and physical meetings, communication across WGs, reporting duties, relationship with EVA etc)»

❖ European Strategy
❖ Keep track with developments in ECPGR over the last years (Grant Scheme, EVA, etc)
❖ Dedicate appropriate space also to the «mechanisms» (Grant Scheme, AEGIS, EVA, EURISCO,)
❖ Update administrative/organizational aspects (country quota dropped)

TF composition:
Linn Borgen Nilsen (TF Chair), Audrey Didier, Petra Engel, Jelka Šuštar Vozlič, Imke Thormann
Marianne Lefort (ExCo Chair)
Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretary)

General work carried out by the TF

➢ Restructuring of document:

New «Management Structure»
dedicated separate sections for
- Operational Bodies
- ECPGR Mechanisms

➢ Revision, streamlining and updating of single chapters

➢ Inclusion of Glossary

➢ Revision of Annexes

CONTENTS

Introduction

The European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) is a collaborative Programme among most European countries operating since 1980. It aims at ensuring long-term conservation and facilitating the increased utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) in Europe.

The **vision** of ECPGR is that the widest plant diversity is preserved for sustainable agriculture, food security and quality.

The **mission** of ECPGR is to form a European Network to promote conservation, management and sustainable use of PGRFA.

The **long-term goal** of ECPGR is that stakeholders in Europe collaboratively, rationally and effectively conserve PGRFA ex situ, on farm and in situ, provide access to the material and increase sustainable use.

The ECPGR Programme is financed by the participating countries, managed by their representatives and coordinated by a Secretariat. General procedures related to the ECPGR management structure are outlined in the first section "Rules of Procedures". The following two sections contain descriptions and terms of references of operational bodies and roles, as well as of ECPGR mechanisms.

The document was first prepared for approval by the 17th Steering Committee meeting held in Oeiras, Portugal, in May/June 2023 and will enter into force at the beginning of Phase XI of ECPGR in January 2024.

Rules of Procedure

Comparison Table

ToRs Phase IX	ToRs Phase XI
	Rule 1 – Phases
Rule 1 – Membership	Rule 2 – Membership
Rule 2 – Structure	Rule 3 – Operational structure
Rule 3 – Secretariat	Rule 4 – Nomination of the Secretary
Rule 4 – Meetings	Rule 5 – Election of the Executive Committee (ExCo)
Rule 5 – Agenda and documents for the SC meetings	Rule 6 – Meetings
Rule 6 – Decision-making procedure	Rule 7 – Decision-making procedure for the ExCo and SC meetings
Rule 7 – Associate Members and Observers	Rule 8 – Agenda and documents for the SC meetings
Rule 8 – Reports	Rule 9 – Reports of the SC meetings
Rule 9 – Language	Rule 10 – Language
Rule 10 – Expenses	Rule 11 – Expenses
Rule 11 – Amendment and suspension of the rules	Rule 12 – Amendments and suspension of the Rules of Procedure

Working Groups

WGs are composed of experts nominated by the NCs, based on their expertise and interest. They carry out crop-specific and/or thematic activities, in order to contribute to the achievement of the Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe through the priorities defined by the ECPGR SC in the ECPGR Work Programme for each Phase.

The responsibilities of the Working Group members are:

➢ To **carry out activities** mandated by the SC or proposed by WGs and approved by the ExCo.

➢ To **actively initiate and/or participate in additional activities**, in line with the priorities defined by the SC for the relative Phase and funded through different sources.

➢ To contribute as much as possible to the **development and implementation of the ECPGR mechanisms** (AEGIS, EVA, EURISCO).

➢ To provide **technical support to AEGIS** regarding quality standards and the collaborative management of the European Collection.

➢ To **raise awareness** and strive to contribute to ECPGR objectives and initiatives **also outside specific funded WG activities**.

➢ To gather WG-relevant information and **involve expertise at national level** as appropriate.

➢ To actively share information relevant to the work of the WGs with the other members and proactively participate in the activities, compatibly with their individual expertise.

➢ To **actively communicate** with the respective NCs.

➢ To **interact** with members of other WGs as relevant.

➢ To **propose and suggest Working Group Chairs** to the ExCo.

Working Group Chairs

Each WG is coordinated by a Chair, or in exceptional cases by two Co-Chairs, with possible support from one or more Vice-Chairs.

The responsibilities of Working Group Chairs are:

➢ To **inform WG members**, at the beginning of each new Phase, about the respective objectives, and **regularly consult with them** on activities to be carried out in order to achieve these objectives.

➢ To **orchestrate the know-how** available in the WG to resolve specific technical issues that are part of the activities of the WG.

➢ To participate and/or initiate and coordinate the preparation of **project ideas and proposals** for funding from the ECPGR Grant Scheme and/or from other funding sources. The WG Chair will also be responsible for the timely submission of Grant Scheme proposals.

➢ To provide an **overview of the activities carried out**, constraints faced and results obtained, for information and consideration of the SC during its meetings.

➢ To **encourage and facilitate regular communication within the group** through email distribution lists and virtual meetings.

➢ To **provide information to the WG members on ECPGR-related matters** and modes of operation on a need or request basis.

➢ To **provide advice to other WGs upon request** or on a need basis on technical WG-related aspects that may be of interest or importance to other WGs.

➢ To **delegate specific tasks and responsibilities to WG members** on a need and voluntary basis.

➢ To **ensure good cooperation with Co-Chairs and/or Vice-Chairs**, if appropriate, in the best manner to efficiently stimulate activity and achieve results of their respective WGs.

Election of Working Group Chairs

The WGs propose candidates to act as Chair. In the event no candidates are proposed, the NCs are invited to suggest candidates. Proposed candidates submit an expression of interest to the ECPGR Secretary (Annex II). The final decision is taken by the ExCo, based on the submitted expression of interest. The WG Chair may identify one or more Vice-Chairs among the WG members for support.

Grant Scheme

Since 2014, the main mechanism to assign ECPGR funds to the WGs is the ECPGR Activity Grant Scheme. This consists of Calls for proposals that are periodically launched by the ECPGR Secretariat, based on indications of the ExCo and availability of funds. Rules for participation, including scope, eligibility, eligible expenditures and evaluation criteria are detailed for each Call by the ExCo, within the framework of the ECPGR objectives and work plan for the current phase, approved by the SC.

Participation in the Grant Scheme:

➢ A **proposal** for a new activity to be funded under the Grant Scheme may be made by a WG Chair or any member of a WG. The proposing WG member will act as **Activity Coordinator** for the specific activity.

➢ Proposals can be submitted jointly by **more than one WG**.

➢ **Funded participation** is possible only to WG members and is limited to the amount of funding.

➢ **Self-funded participation** is open to other interested WG members and other stakeholders.

➢ **External trainers/resource persons** can be funded for specialized tasks if agreed by the participating WG members.

➢ Participants in an activity are selected based on an '**Expression of Interest**', where the potential participants indicate their commitment (see Annex III), which is approved by the NC and sent to the Activity Coordinator.

➢ **Selection of the participants** for an activity is made by the WG Chair and/or the coordinator of the activity. The Secretariat can be consulted for advice or assistance if necessary.

➢ The proposals need to meet the **specifications as detailed in the Grant Scheme Call** and should be submitted using the respective **template**.

➢ **Proposals should be circulated to all members of the involved WG(s)** prior to submission, for their information and possible comments.

➢ A **final report** needs to be submitted by the Activity Coordinator to the Secretariat upon finalization of an activity.

➢ The results of the activities should **feed into EURISCO, EVA and AEGIS, as relevant**.

https://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/grant-scheme/call-for-proposals

AEGIS

AEGIS is the ECPGR initiative connecting European genebanks under a common system for the long-term conservation of unique accessions of PGRFA. These selected accessions (European Collection) are maintained by the participating institutions (i.e. Associate Member institutions) at an agreed quality standard and are made available in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), i.e. through a Standard Material Transfer Agreement. AEGIS entered into force in 2009.

Membership

Membership is **open to all European countries that are members of ECPGR** and **willing to make PGRFA available under the conditions of the International Treaty**. A country's Membership in AEGIS is formalized through the signature of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** by the respective national authorities.

Associate membership of AEGIS is open to institutions located in a member country once it has signed an AEGIS - **Associate Membership Agreement** with the National Coordinator in the form set out in the Annex to the MoU.

Role and responsibilities of AEGIS members and bodies

➢ AEGIS operates within the framework of ECPGR. **Roles and responsibilities** of members of AEGIS and all the relevant bodies are specified in detail in the **MoU**. Altogether they **contribute to the establishment, maintenance, documentation and provision for use of the European Collection**.

➢ The **ECPGR SC has overall responsibility and oversight** over the operation of AEGIS and delegated the oversight function to the Executive Committee.

➢ **Coordination** of AEGIS is provided by the ECPGR Secretariat.

➢ The **ECPGR WGs provide technical support** regarding quality standards and the collaborative management of the European Collection.

➢ **Associate Member institutions**, through agreements with the NCs, act as conservation units and providers of related services, such as regeneration capacity, safety-duplication space, etc.

➢ The **ECPGR Documentation and Information WG** provides advice regarding the information infrastructure.

➢ **EURISCO** makes available relevant AEGIS-related information according to the decisions of the ECPGR SC.

➢ The **National Coordinators of ECPGR** act as coordinators for AEGIS at the national level.

A Checklist for the implementation of the AEGIS MoU at the national level with a step-by-step flow diagram is provided (link).

EVA

The ECPGR European Evaluation Network (EVA) for PGRFA – established in 2018 – is aimed at increasing the use of crop genetic diversity and the diversity of stakeholders in plant breeding. In collaborative projects involving public and private sector partners, EVA generates standardized evaluation data (both phenotypic and genotypic) for crop accessions and landraces available in European genebanks.

Implementation and coordination

EVA is implemented through **crop-specific public–private partnerships/projects and their crop-expert groups**. It is coordinated by the ECPGR Secretariat and is **supported by a Steering Unit** and a **data and information management support group**.

The Organigram of the European Evaluation Network (EVA) is available [here](#).

Membership

Persons or entities committed to active involvement in the evaluation of PGRFA in the European region (e.g. providers of genetic material and/or evaluators from the public and private sector) can become Members of EVA by signing a **Letter of Commitment**. Members of EVA can form **Crop-Specific Networks** where they work together to generate relevant evaluation data on selections of genetic resources available in European genebanks. Principles, structure, expected benefits of EVA and the Letter of Commitment that members should sign, are listed in the **Establishment Agreement** ([link](#)).

Roles and responsibilities

The ECPGR Secretariat provides coordination and administrative support to EVA networks.

A Steering Unit of no more than eight experts appointed by the SC of ECPGR in consultation with the private sector, is envisaged to provide overall policy guidance for EVA.

A data and information management support group appointed by the Steering Unit is envisaged to advise on information management aspects.

Members of an EVA network contribute to:

➢ Improving the evaluation of PGRFA through **coordinated and collaborative efforts**, by developing and using harmonized methods and standard protocols as well as best practices, guidelines and tools.

➢ Improving the **digitization, harmonization, availability and exchange** of existing and newly generated evaluation data of PGRFA using, to the extent possible, the existing EURISCO infrastructure.

➢ **Making maximum use of AEGIS, EURISCO and other ECPGR bodies and mechanisms**, including the ECPGR Crop Working Groups and the ECPGR Documentation and Information WG.

➢ **Promoting cooperation with other relevant EU infrastructures** and collaborations related to the scope of the network

EURISCO

EURISCO is the European Plant Genetic Resources Search Catalogue providing common access to information on PGR included in respective National Inventories (NI) of European countries. All the countries that are eligible to be members of ECPGR can provide data to EURISCO. The objective of EURISCO is to provide access to the most complete and user-friendly data on PGR occurring *ex situ, in situ* and on farm in Europe through a single entry point. These include food crop genetic resources, forages, wild and weedy species (including crop wild relatives – CWR), medicinal and ornamental plants.

EURISCO is supportive to the implementation and reporting of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and other international mechanisms such as the FAO Global Plan of Action on PGRFA, and the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Information about accessions included in the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing is available inter alia through EURISCO.

EURISCO serves as the catalogue of the European Accessions designated as part of AEGIS. Individual countries will register the European Accessions by notifying them to EURISCO, through the National Inventory System.

EURISCO is serving the EVA network as a central repository of newly generated evaluation data. A dedicated EURISCO-EVA Intranet infrastructure enables protected data sharing among EVA members during embargo periods. At the end of the embargo, the data are published in the public area of EURISCO, subject to agreement of the respective National Inventory Focal Points (NIFPs).

Management and hosting-arrangements

EURISCO is managed in accordance with the principle that it should only contain **data that can be made publicly available and can be used without limitations or restraints.** The management and coordination of EURISCO is following the mandate and guidance given by the ECPGR SC.

Subject to approval and renewal by the SC each Phase, EURISCO is hosted by a relevant and capable institution, located in an ECPGR member country. The hosting institution is ensuring the maintenance and development of EURISCO on behalf of the ECPGR Secretariat and under the legal umbrella of Bioversity International.

EURISCO is currently physically hosted by the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) in Gatersleben, Germany.

EURISCO

Roles and responsibilities

EURISCO Coordinator

A EURISCO Coordinator is employed by the hosting institution to carry out tasks related to the **maintenance and development of EURISCO on behalf of ECPGR**. He/she is responsible for the following:

➢ To ensure maintenance and further development of EURISCO, **including its web interface**, in accordance with the advice of the **EURISCO Advisory Committee**.

➢ To ensure management and upload of data provided by the **NIFPs**, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the **EURISCO Data Sharing Agreement**.

➢ To promote **communication and provide basic help desk assistance** to the NIFPs identified in European countries for (PGR) inventories.

➢ To organize **training and capacity building** for EURISCO data providers and users.

➢ To **contribute to ECPGR reports, e-Bulletins and other information** as requested by the ECPGR Secretariat.

➢ To **raise awareness about EURISCO** through various communication tools.

➢ To **contribute to raising funds** for the EURISCO maintenance and further development.

National Inventory Focal Points

National Inventory Focal Points are appointed within individual European Countries and have the following responsibilities:

➢ To **coordinate the regular updating of data in the National Inventories** (Nis) by contributing institutions/partners and, if necessary, assist partners in doing so.

➢ To validate and **regularly upload** the updated NIs in EURISCO.

➢ To **upload C&E datasets in EURISCO** or use the possibility to **delegate to data provider institutions** the process of formatting and uploading these datasets (in whole or in part).

➢ To **approve uploaded C&E datasets** before they are published.

➢ To timely inform contributing institutions/partners on EURISCO-related **novelties such as new functions, tools and data standards**.

➢ To consult with contributing institutions/partners on **agenda items of Doc/Info WG meetings** prior to these meetings.

➢ To **provide clearance for the online publication** of country passport data.

EURISCO

Roles and responsibilities (cont'd)

<u>EURISCO Advisory Committee</u>

A EURISCO Advisory Committee is established to **monitor the progress of EURISCO and give advice on its further development**. Members of the Committee and its Chair are **selected under their personal capacity by the ExCo**, based on suggestions received from the Chair of the Documentation & Information WG (Doc&Info WG) and from ECPGR SC members. The Chair of the Doc&Info WG is a member of the EURISCO Advisory Committee and can also be designated as its Chair. The ECPGR Secretariat will support the organization of meetings. The Committee **aims at face-to-face meetings at least every two years**, but more frequent interactions can be scheduled in the form of videoconferences.

<u>The Chair of the EURISCO Advisory Committee has the following responsibilities</u>:

➢ **Propose meetings** of the Committee (physical or virtual) and **draft the agendas** of the meeting.
➢ Chair the meetings of the Committee and approve **meeting reports**.
➢ Approve the **reports and work plans** that are prepared annually by the EURISCO Coordinator, after receiving feedback from the EURISCO Advisory Committee and the ECPGR Secretary.
➢ **Keep regular contact with the WGs** and coordinate the activities of the Committee in support of the EURISCO Coordinator.

Prior to any appointment of a EURISCO Coordinator, the hosting institute should provide the CV of the proposed candidate to the ECPGR Secretary and the Chair of the EURISCO Advisory Committee.

The possibility that a National Inventory Focal Point coincides with the focal point for the FAO *World Information and Early Warning System on PGR* (WIEWS) should be taken into consideration as a possible way to enhance complementarity with the FAO WIEWS (see http://apps3.fao.org/wiews).

Further elements of the document

GLOSSARY

- **A European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS):** An ECPGR-led initiative connecting European genebanks under a common system for the long-term conservation of unique accessions of PGRFA.
- **Associate member:** Countries that are eligible to become members of ECPGR, but have not yet signed a LoA.
- **ECPGR Secretariat:** A permanent body, responsible for the implementation of the ECPGR Programme with the support of operational bodies in accordance with the mandate given by the SC.
- **ECPGR Secretary:** Head of the ECPGR Secretariat.
- **ExCo chair:** Head of the ECPGR ExCo, appointed by the SC.
- **Executive Committee (ExCo):** A group of four elected members of the Steering Committee and a Chair, who support the Secretariat in the planning and execution of ECPGR activities.
- **Grant Scheme:** A mechanism with regular Calls for activity proposals to assign ECPGR funds to the Working Groups.
- **National Coordinator (NC):** Representative of a member country designated by its respective national Authorities.
- **National Inventory Focal Point: Persons appointed** with the responsibility to coordinate the maintenance of National Inventories of PGRFA and upload these onto EURISCO.
- **Steering Committee (SC):** The decision-making body of ECPGR, consisting of the NCs of the member countries.
- **Task force (TF):** Small temporary unit established by the SC to conduct a specific, time-bound task.
- **The ECPGR European Evaluation Network (EVA) for PGRFA:** An ECPGR-led initiative operating through crop-specific PPP-networks who generate standardized crop evaluation data.
- **The European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (EURISCO):** An European ECPGR-led information portal containing passport and phenotypic data of PGR conserved in Europe.
- **Working group (WG):** A group of crop-specific or thematic experts who are delegated by the National Coordinators to carry out activities mandated by the SC or proposed by the WG.
- **Working group chair:** Person in charge of a WG.

Annexes

Annex I. Main categories of expertise for the appointment of Working Groups' experts

Annex II. Template for an Expression of interest to serve as ECPGR Working Group Chair during Phase XI

Annex III. Template for an Expression of interest to participate in an ECPGR Activity