

# ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

# 2025



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## ECPGR IN 2025 – HIGHLIGHTS

### Grant Scheme Activities and Working Group meetings

Several Grant Scheme activities of Phase X were finalized. **Garli-CCS** enabled genotype-by-sequencing of nearly 2,500 accessions from 16 European and one international genebank, along with phenotyping of a large portion of these accessions. The resulting data will be analyzed to deepen understanding of European garlic diversity. **FRUITTREEDATA** promoted a thorough revision of existing data in European *Malus*, *Pyrus* and *Prunus* collections, filling gaps in EURISCO, providing new C&E data, and analyzing the genetic uniqueness of the collections using molecular data. **INWHEATORY** surveyed over 300 wheat landraces and provided case studies on their history, distribution, current management and value, contributing to a *Guide to Good Practices for On-Farm Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wheat Landraces*.

Phase XI activities, **EuroPepLand** and **MALANIRS**, progressed with the investigation and evaluation of pepper and maize landraces, respectively, with links to the relevant EVA Networks. Two new activities were approved: **CryoConnect** aims to develop a cross-border cryobank in the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, focusing on local fruit tree and grape accessions; **ABC Mediterranean Landraces** aims to develop a European inventory of landrace names and create a link in EURISCO between *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation data.

The Working Groups on **Allium**, **Berries**, and **Maize** held meetings, advancing collaboration on harmonized conservation standards and developing joint project proposals.

### EURISCO

At the meeting of the EURISCO Advisory Committee on 20 September 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia, it was decided to establish closer cooperation between EURISCO and Genesys in order to achieve synergy effects, particularly at the technological level. The focus of work in 2025 was therefore on completely overhauling the infrastructure for the public web application, developing a uniform and user-friendly interface. The new portal will be launched in 2026.

In addition, further development and maintenance activities were carried out (EVA infrastructure, EURISCO intranet).

### European Evaluation Network (EVA)

The EVA network membership in 2025 amounted to 130 organizations from 37 countries, including 57 private sector partners. By the end of 2025, data from 425 evaluation trials had been uploaded to the dedicated EURISCO-EVA database, totalling almost 640,000 individual datapoints.

The EVA networks continued their collaborative activities after the end of the first German-funded project in March 2025 through in-kind contributions and, in the case of EVA Pepper and Maize, in the framework of Grant Scheme Activities. EVA Carrot extended its membership and selected a new set of accessions for evaluations. EVA Wheat and Barley finalized evaluations of the AGENT accession sets, and EVA Lettuce focused on data analysis of wild lettuce evaluations. The final report of this project is available online.

The EVA Legumes Network is implementing evaluations on seven legume crops with support from the EVA Boost project, funded by Germany through 2027. This project also facilitated a workshop to establish an EVA Perennials Network and the development of a roadmap for adaptation of the EVA framework to perennial crops such as fruit trees and berries. A factsheet is available online.

Three in-person project meetings took place in 2025: two for EVA Maize (one jointly with MALANIRS and the Maize Working Group) and one for EVA Legumes. All crop networks had regular virtual meetings for updates and planning.

### German-funded projects

- Funded by the German Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (€153,640), **New AEGIS** strengthened the AEGIS quality system and improved EURISCO phenotypic data coverage. Achievements included 19 new genebank manuals, two new crop-specific standards (Berries, Maize), and a genebank metrics tool tested by 15 genebanks. Nine genebanks participated in reciprocal peer visits across three trios, and phenotypic data for ca. 2,300 accessions were prepared for EURISCO. The final project meeting in Prague presented a blueprint for a certification system and revealed that only 54% of AEGIS accessions are safety duplicated.
- Approved in November 2025, **AEGIS Plus** (€175,076) aims to enhance genebank quality and capacity through: integration of the Genebank Metrics Tool into documentation systems; revision of the operational manual template; two hackathon workshops for hands-on training; safety duplication support for up to 700 AEGIS accessions; 12 reciprocal peer review visits; and a desk study to assess distribution bottlenecks and propose corrective measures.
- Two German-funded projects supported the implementation of EVA in 2025. The first **EVA project** (2019–2025, €1,053,275) facilitated the implementation of EVA Wheat and Barley, Maize and Vegetables networks and was finalized in March 2025. The **EVA Boost** project (2024–2027, €353,740) supports the implementation of the EVA Legumes Network, funding regeneration and specific evaluation activities in all seven crop groups. In addition, EVA Boost facilitated a workshop to establish a framework for a new EVA Perennials Network, focused on berries and fruit trees, engaging relevant ECPGR Working Groups and interested stakeholders in developing a roadmap.

### PRO-GRACE project

Coordinated by ENEA (Italy), PRO-GRACE (2023–2025) aimed to lay the foundations for a European Research Infrastructure dedicated to the conservation and study of plant genetic resources. ECPGR led Work Package 5 on governance and financial planning. The project was extended to October 2025 to finalize deliverables, with partners developing a proposal for the ESFRI roadmap. Despite broad support, the proposal did not secure the required political and financial backing from a minimum number of countries. A proposal by the ECPGR Secretariat for GRACE-RI to adopt ECPGR's existing governance framework was not taken forward. The project concluded with a final meeting and the 2nd International Workshop on Plant Genetic Resources in Crete, followed by the 1st GRACE-RI General Assembly, where ECPGR is not involved.

## 1. ECPGR STRUCTURE AND MODE OF OPERATION IN PHASE XI

### 1.1. MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS

By the end of December 2025, 31 countries had signed the Letter of Agreement (LoA) for Phase XI membership, with three new signatures added during 2025 (Azerbaijan, Belgium and the Czech Republic). The complete list of signatory member countries is available online on the [Membership webpage](#).

Four additional countries (Greece, Hungary, Montenegro and North Macedonia) contributed funds for Phase XI, even though they have not yet signed the LoA. Italy neither signed the LoA nor paid its contributions.

Although Belgium signed the LoA, it fell under the provisions of ECPGR Rule of Procedure 2.6 concerning the non-payment of outstanding membership fees for two consecutive calendar years, similarly to Italy, which did not sign the LoA. Starting from 1 April 2026, these two countries will be ineligible to receive funds until their outstanding contributions are paid. Belarus, also a signatory to Phase XI, continues to be subject to the same non-payment condition.

Ukraine's participation was expected and was being facilitated with support from FAO, which set aside the necessary funds to pay the annual contributions for Phase XI. After approval by the Ukrainian government of the national strategy for plant genetic resources (PGR) in 2024, the decision to join ECPGR was pending at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.

Voluntary contributions related to Phase XI expenditures had already been provided by the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity during Phase X. These were supplemented with additional voluntary pledges in both 2024 and 2025, dedicated to specific projects. The European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP) also contributed in 2024 and 2025 to the *Genetic Resources* journal. These voluntary contributions add additional €951,415 to the Phase XI budget. Further details are available in the Financial Report 2025.

### 1.2. CHANGES IN THE STEERING COMMITTEE

In 2025, the following changes took place:

**National Coordinators** (full list available [here](#)):

- **Croatia:** Marija Broz, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, replaced Ivana Dugalić in July 2025.

**Observers to the Steering Committee** (full list available [here](#)):

- **EUROSEEDS:** In January 2025, Federico Pisani replaced Nick Vangheluwe, who moved to a position at the European Commission.
- **NGOs:** In November 2025, the Office of European Coordination Let's Liberate Diversity! (ECLLD) assumed the NGO observer seat on the Steering Committee, replacing Béla Bartha (Pro Specie Rara, Switzerland).
- **NordGen:** In March 2025, Lene Krøl Andersen replaced Lise Lykke Steffensen as Director of the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre.

### **1.3. MANAGEMENT OF ECPGR WORKING GROUPS AND GENE BANK MANAGERS NETWORK**

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**Avena Working Group:** In December 2025, Edyta Paczos-Grzęda, from the University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Poland, was appointed as new Chair, replacing Andreas Katsiotis, Cyprus University of Technology.

**Barley Working Group:** In December 2025, Nils Stein, Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben, Germany, was appointed as the new Chair, replacing Jan Svensson, NordGen, Sweden.

**Leafy Vegetables Working Group:** In June 2025, Mariusz Chojnowski, from the National Institute of Horticultural Research in Skierniewice, Poland, has been appointed as the new Chair, succeeding Jelka Šuštar Vozlič, KIS, Slovenia.

**Genebank Managers Network:** In May 2025, Dagmar Janovská, Head of the Czech Gene Bank, Prague, Czech Republic, replaced Lise Lykke Steffensen as Chair of the genebank managers network. Ana Maria Barata, Head of the INIAV genebank, Braga, Portugal, will continue as Vice-Chair.

See full lists of [Working Group members](#), [Working Group members by country](#) and [Working Group Chairs](#) and [Genebank Managers Network members](#).

### **1.4. ACTIVITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ExCo)**

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At the end of 2025, the Committee was composed of Jens Weibull (Chair), Petra Engel (Italy), Pavol Hauptvogel (Slovakia), Imke Thormann (Germany), Dainis Ruņģis (Latvia), replacing Birgitte Lund (Denmark) at the beginning of 2025, and Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat, *ex officio*). A decision was taken for the replacement of P. Hauptvogel with Maja Boczkowska, who was to be appointed National Coordinator for Poland at the start of 2026.

The ExCo held two main meetings in 2025:

- Thirty-second meeting, 13 March 2025, online
- Thirty-third meeting, 2 September 2025, online

In 2025, the main activities of the ExCo focused on the following:

- **Evaluation, selection and awarding of proposals submitted under the ECPGR Grant Scheme**  
The proposals 'CryoConnect' (submitted by the Cryopreservation Working Group) and 'ABC Mediterranean landraces' (submitted jointly by the On-farm Conservation and Management and the Documentation and Information Working Groups) were approved for funding under the Second Call of Phase XI, with a total allocated budget of €58,795. A third Call for Proposals was agreed upon and launched in October 2025, with a submission deadline of 6 February 2026.
- **Appointment of Working Group Chairs**  
During 2025, the ExCo appointed new Chairs for the *Avena*, Barley, and Leafy Vegetables Working Groups.

- **PRO-GRACE**

The Secretariat regularly updated the ExCo on developments related to the Horizon project PRO-GRACE, particularly the preparation by project partners of a GRACE Research Infrastructure (RI) proposal for the ESFRI roadmap. The ExCo noted that no progress had been made regarding the integration of ECPGR's suggestions for an appropriate role in a future GRACE-RI. The PRO-GRACE initiative ultimately failed to secure the minimum number of country commitments and a coordinator, and was therefore unable to submit a proposal to the European Commission to establish the GRACE-RI.

Following an invitation to attend the final PRO-GRACE meeting in Crete in October 2025, the ExCo mandated Sandra Goritschnig from the Secretariat to speak on behalf of ECPGR, in line with the following ECPGR position:

- Build on PRO-GRACE outputs to strengthen the implementation of ECPGR initiatives and the *Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe*
- Engage in collaborative actions to better connect PGR conservation, research and breeding
- Enhance outreach to policymakers and the public to advocate for increased and stable PGR funding.

- **Preparations for the All Chairs meeting and the Mid-term Steering Committee meeting in 2026**

The ExCo initiated preparations for the All Chairs Meeting, to be held at least three months prior to the Steering Committee (SC) meeting scheduled for June 2026. The ExCo recommended the meeting format and invited a small group of Chairs to lead the preparations and draft the agenda.

For the Mid-term SC Meeting, the ExCo worked to identify a suitable venue that was logistically convenient, geopolitically stable, offered good geographical alternation from previous locations, and was cost-effective. The offer from Georgia was eventually accepted, with dates set for 1–4 June 2026. Regarding the meeting content, the agenda will include both a reporting session and a planning session. A key agenda item will be the potential renewal of the hosting arrangement with Bioversity International, based on a cost estimate for 2027–2028. Volunteers were identified to prepare strategic planning presentations. The ECPGR Secretary and Chair prepared and circulated a draft agenda for comments to the entire SC.

- **Preparations for Secretary recruitment in 2026**

The ExCo Chair, in liaison with the Secretariat and Bioversity Human Resources, prepared an announcement for the recruitment of a new ECPGR Secretary, to be appointed at the end of 2026. The announcement, referring to an international position at the level of Project Leader (BG10 on the Bioversity scale), was under final clearance through Bioversity's internal processes and was planned to be published in early 2026.

## 2. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN 2025

### 2.1. ECPGR ACTIVITY GRANT SCHEME

*Note: for all activities, details on the implementation and all available documents (interim and final reports, complementary data, references etc.) can be found on the respective Activity webpages. The available final reports can also be found [here](#) (for Phase IX) and [here](#) (for Phase X).*

Two new activities were granted in 2025 (Phase XI) and started to be implemented: ABC Mediterranean landraces and CryoConnect. The other two ongoing activities were granted and started in 2024 (EuroPepLand and MALANIRS).

Fifteen activities were granted during Phase X. By the end of 2025, ten were concluded with an Activity report. The status and/or outcomes of activities that were still ongoing during 2025 are summarized in Table 1. Thirty-one Activities were granted during Phase IX, all completed except a final report was not obtained from the coordinators of four of them: Training in *Triticum* species; BETANET; CarrotDiverse; EcoHisPy.

**Table 1.** Status of ongoing Phase X and Phase XI Grant Scheme Activities at the end of 2025

Working Group	Name of the Activity	Planned Activity Timeframe	Main Information and Outputs
<i>Allium</i> , Cryopreservation and Documentation and Information	<a href="#">Genotyping-by-sequencing of the European garlic collection to develop a sustainable <i>ex situ</i> conservation strategy (Garli-CCS)</a>	April 2023 – August 2025	<p>The <a href="#">Garli-CCS</a> Activity (Phase X) was concluded and published the <a href="#">final report</a>. The final meeting was held in May 2025 in Gatersleben, Germany, in the context of the Gatersleben <i>Allium</i> Symposium. Partners reviewed Garli-CCS data, and discussed conservation and cryopreservation strategies of genebanks. Part of the programme was dedicated to the <a href="#">9th <i>Allium</i> Working Group meeting</a>.</p> <p>The Activity aimed to create an efficient conservation strategy for European garlic by combining cryopreservation with improved usability for breeders through prioritization, rationalization and acquisition efforts.</p> <p>Major achievements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genotype-by-sequencing (GBS) data generated for 2,434 accessions from 16 European and one international genebank</li> <li>• Phenotypic data delivered for 1,731 accessions, enabling genetic analyses and supporting breeding</li> <li>• Cryopreservation training provided to 20 scientists, with four partners receiving advanced instruction to strengthen European cryopreservation capacity</li> <li>• Exchange of methods through three online and one in-person meeting, strengthening collaboration.</li> </ul> <p>In 2026, IPK will produce two new reference genomes to fully exploit the GBS data and deepen the understanding of European garlic diversity. This knowledge will support prioritization of genotypes for cryopreservation, the establishment of a European garlic core collection, and the development of a long-term conservation strategy.</p>
<i>Avena</i>	<a href="#">Updated morphological Descriptors for <i>Avena</i> Species (UMORPHEAS)</a>	March 2020 – February 2022 (extended until April 2025)	<p>The starting date was delayed until March 2022, due to COVID-19 restrictions. <a href="#">UMORPHEAS</a> aimed to update the IBPGR Oat descriptors, involving the widest possible global community. A core set of descriptors was tested in the field, starting from December 2022, on a selected number of diverse accessions. A second round of testing started in the end of 2023 and was largely completed in 2024 and 2025. Results and observations were intended to define stable and discriminating characters. The FAO-ITPGRFA Secretariat and the Canadian genebank curator also offered their expertise for this initiative. The final Activity report is pending.</p>

Working Group	Name of the Activity	Planned Activity Timeframe	Main Information and Outputs
Cryopreservation	<a href="#">A Regional Initiative for a Cross-Border Cryobank in the Western Balkans and the Caucasus – A case study based on a sample of fruit tree and grape local accessions (CryoConnect)</a>	June 2025 – May 2028	<p>The kick-off meeting of the <a href="#">CryoConnect</a> Activity was held in Tirana, Albania, on 25 June 2025. CryoConnect is a subregional initiative aimed at developing a cross-border cryobank in the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, focusing on local fruit tree and grape accessions. The initiative brings together leading institutions from Albania, Croatia, Georgia, and Serbia. North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina participate as observers, with the potential to join the initiative.</p> <p>A Training School on Fruit Germplasm Cryopreservation <i>In Vitro</i> was held in August and September 2025 at the Fruit Research Institute in Čačak, Serbia. The training covered droplet-vitrification, V cryo-plate, and D cryo-plate techniques, including all steps from the preparation of the necessary solutions and explant isolation to the full implementation of the cryopreservation protocols.</p>
Grain Legumes	<a href="#">Exploring grain legumes diversity for sustainable European agri-food systems (Explo-Div)</a>	March 2023 – November 2025	<p>Local accessions of grain legume crops (beans, chickpeas, faba bean, grass peas, lupins, and peas) collected from traditional farms were characterized and evaluated in two-year trials by nine partners. The resulting data were being prepared for transfer to EURISCO. The activities included multiplication, monitoring of plant viability during cultivation, and phenotyping of a minimum of 40 accessions at each of nine locations. Agronomic evaluation of a subset of accessions (10–15 accessions per location) under low-input crop management systems and/or different agroclimatic conditions facilitated the selection of grain legume local accessions for inclusion in AEGIS and/or for promoting their use, also within the <a href="#">EVA Legumes network</a>.</p> <p>The final Activity report is pending.</p>
Maize	<a href="#">MAize Landraces traits phenomic prediction using Near InfraRed Spectra (MALANIRS)</a>	September 2024 – September 2027	<p>The Activity aims to compile a set of 500 new European maize landraces, which will be genotyped and characterized with Near InfraRed Spectroscopy (NIRS) to test the applicability of prediction models for kernel quality traits. The <a href="#">EVA Maize Network</a> will be able to exploit these results by selecting additional diverse maize sets for multi-location evaluations.</p> <p>The Activity started in March 2025, after its kick-off meeting in Bergamo, Italy, in February 2025. A joint ECPGR Maize Working Group, MALANIRS and EVA Maize meeting took place on 2 October 2025 in Zemun Polje, Serbia. The genotyping of 500 maize landraces was completed with a 12k SNP panel that was defined by the project <a href="#">MineLandDiv</a>. Field trials were conducted in 2025 in Zagreb (University of Zagreb) and Belgrade (MRIZP) on a subset of the landrace accessions panel from the MineLandDiv project according to phenotyping protocols defined in the EVA Maize project. Collected phenotypic data will be uploaded to the EURISCO-EVA intranet.</p>

Working Group	Name of the Activity	Planned Activity Timeframe	Main Information and Outputs
<i>Malus/Pyrus</i> and <i>Prunus</i>	<a href="#">Improvement of Fruit Tree Data Inclusion in EURISCO (FRUITTREEDATA)</a>	January 2023 – December 2024, extended to November 2025	The 16 partners worked to revise national inventory data in comparison with information currently in EURISCO and fill gaps in EURISCO for all the relevant accessions in their national <i>Malus</i> , <i>Pyrus</i> and <i>Prunus</i> collections. A major contribution was made to defining and implementing protocols for encoding C&E data into EURISCO. More than 261,000 C&E apple and 140,000 pear data points, covering respectively 8,541 and 3,500 accessions were uploaded to EURISCO. An analysis of the presence in EURISCO of accessions corresponding to all known unique genotypic codes (MUNQ/PUNQ) was also carried out. The final Activity report has been completed in a draft form and will be finalized in 2026.
On-farm Conservation and Management, and Wheat	<a href="#">Inventorying wheat on-farm diversity (Inwheatory)</a>	October 2023 – November 2024, extended until May 2025	This Activity involving 14 countries has collected data on wheat landraces still cultivated on farm, aiming to create a database with related information. Records of 616 wheat landraces cultivation sites were inventoried, representing 303 different landraces. Greece, North Macedonia, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany provided the highest number of records (181, 104, 91, 89 and 88, respectively). Case studies on 42 different wheat landraces from 11 European countries described the history, distribution, current management and value of specific landraces. These studies contributed to a <i>Guide for good practices for on-farm conservation and sustainable use of wheat landraces</i> . In addition, 25 detailed wheat landrace cultivation descriptions were collected to be added to the ECPGR 'In situ landraces: best practice evidence-based database'. The final report is available <a href="#">here</a> .
On-farm Conservation and Management, and Documentation and Information	<a href="#">Annual &amp; Biennial Crop Landraces Catalogue of Mediterranean Countries (ABC Mediterranean landraces)</a>	September 2025 – August 2027	This 8-country Activity seeks to improve knowledge of on-farm diversity through 'landrace inventories.' These lists will support national monitoring and management efforts. They will be featured in a dedicated EURISCO section to raise awareness and facilitate user access. Each landrace name will be linked to conserved genebank accessions, enabling monitoring of <i>ex situ</i> conservation and supporting gap analysis to identify landraces needing secure storage. Finally, establishing minimum descriptors for these inventories will help create a European regional catalogue.
Potatoes	<a href="#">Get Potatoes United – Collaboration Action for Updating the Virtual European Potato Collection (EURO-POTATOES)</a>	March 2023 – January 2025, extended until the end of 2026	The main genotyping objective is to distinguish unique from duplicate genotypes, identifying accessions for conservation and possible inclusion in the AEGIS European Collection. Marker choice caused significant delays, as the release of the planned potato genotyping array was repeatedly postponed. The group may revise its strategy in 2026 to complete the Activity. Meanwhile, partners successfully tested materials using SSR markers, obtaining valuable information on duplications across genebank collections. The group also worked on potato-specific standards for the maintenance of orthodox True Potato Seed.

Working Group	Name of the Activity	Planned Activity Timeframe	Main Information and Outputs
Solanaceae	<a href="#">Implementing a trans-EUROpean PEPper LANDrace collection for resilient agriculture (EUROPEPLAND)</a>	September 2024 – August 2026	The project aimed at a genetic analysis of a core collection of 400 accessions representing the diversity of 13 countries across western Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and the Balkan region. Accessions have been genotyped, yielding over 9,900 SNPs. Data analysis is underway. Most partners have provided phenotyping data for the accessions they contributed, with available information including shape, colour, pungency and fruit size, in addition to passport data. A phenotyping experiment on salt stress was carried out using the CREA-OF phenotyping platform in Italy on selected accessions. This aimed to validate previous data from the <a href="#">EVA Pepper Network</a> and accessions from the EuroPepLand collection. Leaf samples from the control and salt-stress trials will be analyzed for metabolite content in 2026.

## 2.2 WORKING GROUP AND GENE BANK MANAGERS NETWORK MEETINGS

- **Allium Working Group**

The 9th meeting of the *Allium* Working Group was hosted by IPK, Gatersleben, Germany, on 21–22 May 2025, with 18 members from 17 countries joining alongside observers. Chair Helena Stavělíková shared updates since 2019 and presented survey results on *Allium* accessions from 24 European countries, covering 28 genebanks and 11,268 accessions. Members agreed to prepare a project proposal on *Allium ursinum*, a wild relative with promising commercial potential, for the next ECPGR Grant Scheme call. A new questionnaire on *Allium* cryopreservation practices will feed into a joint strategy with the Cryopreservation Working Group. The meeting's summary, report and presentations are available [here](#).

- **Berries Working Group**

The 2nd meeting of the Berries Working Group took place on 18–19 June 2025 in Kaunas, Lithuania, with members from 14 countries, in collaboration with the Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry. Chair Monika Höfer reported on the ECPGR [Europe.Berries](#) Activity, which updated the documentation of *Fragaria*, *Ribes*, *Rubus* and *Vaccinium* collections for EURISCO and developed crop-specific genebank standards, which have been finalized for the AEGIS Quality System. The group discussed future cooperation, agreeing to prioritize descriptors and phenotyping protocols for key berry crops to submit to the next Grant Scheme call, while also highlighting genotyping as an important future objective. The meeting's summary, report and presentations are available [here](#).

- **Maize Working Group**

Nine members of the Maize Working Group held a joint meeting on 2 October 2025, jointly with the [EVA Maize Network](#) and [MALANIRS](#) project, on the sidelines of the scientific conference organized on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Maize Research Institute Zemun Polje (MRIZP) in Belgrade, Serbia. The group finalized the crop-specific conservation standards for maize, which were developed as part of the German-funded New AEGIS project. Carlotta Balconi (CREA-CI, Italy) was nominated and elected as Vice-Chair for the Maize Working Group. The meeting's report is available [here](#).

- **Genebank Managers Network**

Genebank managers held their 4<sup>th</sup> meeting online in February 2025 and then convened in Prague, Czech Republic, on 20–21 May 2025 for the 5th Network meeting, held alongside the New AEGIS final meeting. In 2025, the Network consisted of 69 members from 32 countries. At their meetings, members discussed a range of key topics, including how to make the best use of the Network, strengthening collaboration with industry and the private sector, tackling quality management challenges, and sharing experiences from recent genebank reviews. The next in-person meeting is planned for 2026, hosted by IHAR-PIB, Poland. The minutes of the meetings, as well as the presentations, are available [here](#).

## 2.3 AEGIS

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### 2.3.1 Coordination of AEGIS

The ECPGR Secretary continued to dedicate 20% of his time to the AEGIS coordination. This mainly consisted of managing the German-funded project NewAEGIS (see below). Additionally, a proposal for a follow-up project (AEGIS Plus) was submitted to the German Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity in September 2025 and approved with a start in November 2025, with a total budget of € 175,076.

### 2.3.2. New AEGIS project

The project '[Reinforcement of the AEGIS Quality System and EURISCO data coverage](#)' (in short New AEGIS), funded by the German Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity with a budget of €153,640, ran from September 2024 to May 2025, addressing key aspects of the AEGIS initiative, as well as improving phenotypic data coverage in EURISCO.

The project aimed to support the AEGIS Associate Members towards the implementation of their commitments (preparation of operational genebank manuals; translation and publishing of Standard Operating Procedures, support to monitoring genebank operations), completing the definition of AQUAS standards and improving C&E data coverage in EURISCO.

Key achievements included:

- Nineteen new genebank manuals were developed. These manuals describe each institution's structure, processes and protocols, forming the foundation for continuous quality improvement. An independent expert review of 30 manuals provided recommendations, calling for clearer, more standardized and regularly updated manuals.
- Two new crop-specific genebank standards were finalized for Berries and Maize. These standards define quality benchmarks for maintaining crop accessions and future certification systems.
- Three Associate Members – Suceava Genebank (Romania), Isoplexis (Madeira, Portugal) and the University of Pavia (Italy) – shared their Standard Operating Procedures. These examples encouraged greater transparency and shared learning in genebank management practice across the network.
- A genebank metrics tool was tested by 15 genebanks, enabling quantitative performance monitoring. Feedback from the pilot phase has been published in *Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization* (DOI: 10.1017/S147926212510021X).
- Nine genebanks, organized in three trios, participated in reciprocal visits, building trust and sharing practical experience to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The resulting reports and presentations, published online, serve as practical examples of peer-based quality enhancement within AEGIS: (1) Nordgen/Austria/Hungary, (2) Netherlands/Latvia/Portugal, and (3) Czech/Georgia/ Romania.

- Phenotypic data for ca. 2,300 accessions from Albania, France, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, covering crops like maize, wheat, brassica, tomato, grapevine and hop, were prepared for inclusion in EURISCO.

The final project meeting, summarizing and disseminating all the results, took place on 22 May 2025 in Prague, Czech Republic, jointly with the annual meeting of the Genebank Managers Network. A blueprint for a certification system was presented, aiming for sustainability, quality compliance and broader accessibility. Safety duplication policies were reviewed, showing that only 54% of AEGIS accessions are duplicated in another site. Discussions emphasized the need for capacity building, documentation and future collaborative funding opportunities. Presentations and minutes of the meeting are available [here](#).

In 2025, NewAEGIS partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 8,668.

### 2.3.3 AEGIS Plus

The project '[Reinforcing European plant genetic resources \*ex situ\* conservation through AEGIS implementation and capacity building](#)' (in short AEGIS Plus), started in November 2025 and will continue until December 2026. The project aims to enhance genebanks' operational quality and capacity, and ensure accessibility and use of the collections through a diverse range of activities:

- **Documentation & monitoring:** a 2-day workshop will support up to ten genebanks in integrating the Genebank Metrics Tool into their documentation systems, enabling real-time operational monitoring. An expert group will simultaneously revise the genebank operational manual template to make it more user-friendly.
- **Technical capacity:** two 'hackathon' workshops (up to 10 curators per event) will help share knowledge and enable hands-on practice on key genebank operations, such as germination testing, viability monitoring and drying protocols.
- **Safety duplication:** direct support will facilitate the safety duplication of up to 700 AEGIS accessions in partner genebanks, directly expanding the European Collection and its security.
- **Peer learning:** 12 reciprocal peer review visits will be organized, including field orchards for the first time, sharing knowledge and best practices across the network.
- **Accessibility study:** a desk study led by the Centre for Genetic Resources (CGN), The Netherlands, will survey AEGIS genebanks on distribution requests and accessibility levels over the past five years, identify bottlenecks and propose corrective measures.

In 2025, AEGIS Plus partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 19,433.

### 2.3.4 Status of the European Collection

By the end of December 2025, a total of 119,343 accessions from 22 contributors were part of the European Collection, with 1% increase compared to 2024. The reduction of AEGIS accessions from the German collection is mainly due to the removal of duplicates. The composition of the European Collection at the end of 2025 is shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** The European Collection: breakdown by contributors

Contributor	No. of accessions flagged as AEGIS			Last year changes
	by end 2020	by end 2024	by end of 2025	
1. Albania	8	8	610	+602
2. Belgium	0	2	2	
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina	29	29	29	
4. Bulgaria	341	391	391	
5. Croatia	90	90	90	
6. Czech Republic	1,659	2,097	2,112	+15
7. Estonia	129	257	375	+118
8. Germany	26,725	84,236	83,941	-295
9. Hungary	0	559	559	
10. Italy	8,815	10,946	10,974	+28
11. Latvia	27	27	27	
12. Lithuania	45	45	45	
13. Montenegro	31	31	31	
14. The Netherlands	5,841	5,840	5,838	-2
15. Nordic Countries	4,779	4,785	4,785	
16. Poland	443	443	443	
17. Portugal	86	86	86	
18. Romania	732	799	800	+1
19. Slovakia	640	1,381	1,381	
20. Slovenia	0	21	21	
21. Switzerland	5,611	5,611	5,611	
22. United Kingdom	1,659	1,659	1,659	
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,690</b>	<b>119,343</b>	<b>119,810</b>	<b>+467</b>

## 2.4. EURISCO

The activity report for 2024 and the work plan for 2025 were made available online on the [EURISCO website](#).

### 2.4.1 EURISCO coverage

During 2025, 34 production updates of passport data from various National Inventories were performed, either partially or completely. The number of accessions documented in EURISCO increased by 19,417 to a total of 2,120,171. Of these, 2,113,129 accessions were from 430 *ex situ* collections, and 7,042 populations were from 39 *in situ* crop wild relatives collections. In total, passport data of more than 600,000 accessions were updated. EURISCO member organizations from the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, NordGen and Serbia assigned an additional 65,071 DOIs (301,527 in total). Moreover, a large number of phenotypic data sets were validated (in cooperation with the data providers) and will be imported as soon as the infrastructure expansion is complete.

**Table 3.** Progress of EURISCO coverage in 2025

	Progress in 2025	Countries that contributed to the progress
Documented accessions	+19,417	Several countries. In addition, passport data updates of > 600,000 accessions
New DOIs	+65,071	additional DOIs from CZE, DEU, FRA, ITA, NGB, NLD, SRB

### 2.4.2 EURISCO development and updates

Following the recommendations made at the meeting of the EURISCO Advisory Committee on 20 September 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia, the EURISCO public web application has been redesigned from scratch in 2025 to provide a uniform and user-friendly interface. The overarching framework was implemented using Oracle APEX and includes:

- A fully functional home page serving as the main entry point, featuring a search bar, dynamic statistics, a crop carousel and a news/updates feed
- An 'About' section offering comprehensive background information, including documents, terms of use, and guidance on how to obtain germplasm
- Search and visualization functionalities for *ex situ* passport data
- Search and visualization functionalities for *in situ* crop wild relative (CWR) passport data.

Genesys REST APIs<sup>1</sup> were used to provide and display the *ex situ* passport data, supplemented in some cases by EURISCO's own APIs. Dedicated EURISCO REST APIs were developed to serve the *in situ* CWR passport data.

The new EURISCO portal is expected to go live in spring 2026.

A significantly more user-friendly exchange format for uploading phenotypic data was agreed upon with the Advisory Committee. Work is currently underway to redesign the management and search functionalities for phenotypic data.

The implementation of Single Seed Descent (SSD) accessions data handling had to be postponed due to time constraints. Similarly, the integration of EVA data into EURISCO can only begin once the revision of the new mechanism for updating and storing phenotypic data is completed.

### 2.4.3 EURISCO coordination and public awareness

As in previous years, engagement with current and potential EURISCO stakeholders was intensified throughout 2025. Although training sessions for data providers were originally planned for the year, this initiative was deferred until after the completion of the extensive revisions to the EURISCO infrastructure.

The EURISCO coordination team contributed to several publications on PGR, including [Goritschnig et al., 2025](#) and [van Hintum et al., 2025](#). Outreach activities included a presentation on the PGR data landscape, its aims, and challenges, delivered at the 2nd International Workshop on Plant Genetic Resources (8–10 October 2025, Chania, Greece) by Stephan Weise. Two additional talks at the same workshop, both by Catherine Aguilar, focused on an inventory of PGR information not yet represented in EURISCO and a proposal to simplify PGR data description. Furthermore, a presentation on a systematic FAIR assessment of PGR data within EURISCO was given at the Living Data 2025 conference (21–24 October 2025, Bogotá, Colombia) by S. Weise, with a corresponding publication forthcoming. Finally, the EURISCO newsletter was distributed in December 2025.

### 2.4.4 Participation in European Commission projects

Special attention was given to the HORIZON 2020 project **AGENT**, where EURISCO played a central role in managing data from European wheat and barley collections. The project, which ended in April 2025, served as a sandbox for expanding EURISCO, with particular emphasis on improving the FAIRness of PGR data. Solutions for connecting traditional genebank data with genotyping data were also evaluated and will be implemented in EURISCO in the future. To enable this, the EURISCO

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<sup>1</sup> Representational State Transfer Application Programming Interface (REST API) is a set of rules and protocols that allows different software systems to communicate with each other over the internet. A REST API acts as a bridge or messenger between two systems. One system (the client) sends a request to the other system (the server), and the server responds with the requested data.

infrastructure will be expanded to link genotyping data in public repositories, such as EBI systems, to corresponding genebank accessions or derived SSD lines.

From January 2023 to October 2025, the EURISCO coordination also participated in the **PRO-GRACE** research project under Horizon Europe. The focus here was on creating an inventory of PGR-related data systems, information standards, and their interactions. This inventory will help prioritize actions toward a more integrated European PGR information system centred around EURISCO. Project partners were also supported in developing a demo application illustrating how EURISCO can link with external repositories for phenotypic data.

#### **2.4.6 EURISCO Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)**

As of December 2025, 37 out of 43 countries have signed the EURISCO DSA, regulating the terms and conditions of data sharing between the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, on behalf of ECPGR, and the data provider countries. The remaining countries providing data to EURISCO that still have to sign the DSA are the following: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, North Macedonia, Russian Federation and Türkiye.

### **2.5 CROP WILD RELATIVES *IN SITU* DATA IN EURISCO**

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The ECPGR [project](#) 'Extension of EURISCO for Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) *in situ* data and preparation of pilot countries' data sets', funded by the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity, with a budget of €314,315, was extended until June 2025 to enable the participation of two additional data contributors, North Macedonia and Slovakia.

The project successfully involved 17 countries in identifying priority *in situ* populations, creating national inventories and building data provider networks. Sixteen countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal<sup>2</sup>, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom) have provided CWR data to EURISCO, for a total of 19,212 populations' data.

A [brochure](#) showcasing the project, its key results and outputs – including country-by-country achievements – has also been produced.

In 2025, this project partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 2,201.

### **2.6. EUROPEAN EVALUATION NETWORK (EVA)**

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In 2025, the [ECPGR European Evaluation Network \(EVA\)](#) conducted activities within the framework of projects funded by Germany, ECPGR Grant Scheme Activities and through in-kind contributions. At the end of 2025, EVA membership in six crop-specific networks numbered 130 partners operating in 37 countries, with Italy, France and Germany counting the most participating organizations with 30, 26 and 19, respectively.

The first EVA project, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Identity, with a total budget of €1,053,275.40, was finalized in March 2025. The [final project report](#) summarizes the achievements, showing that this project has provided an important impetus to kickstart the ECPGR EVA Network with results reaching and even exceeding most of the expected outcomes of the project. It has created a EURISCO-EVA intranet, which serves as a phenotypic database for multilocation field trials, and facilitated the implementation of more than 450 experimental trials,

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<sup>2</sup> Portuguese data provided, but not yet uploaded to EURISCO by the end of 2025

generating data on 5,566 European genebank accessions. The report also highlights some challenges encountered during implementation and an outlook to future sustainable continuation of the EVA networks, developing specific funding mechanisms to facilitate follow-up activities of the networks, building on the successful model of combining in-kind contributions with regular and activity-based budgets.

A second project funded by Germany, EVA Boost, supports the implementation of the EVA Legumes Network until 2027. EVA Legumes works on seven legume crops (common bean, chickpea, lentil, pea, faba bean, lupin, cowpea) and in 2025 regenerations and field trials were conducted in all crops. During 2025, the project also implemented a preparatory action to extend the EVA Framework to perennial crops, in line with ECPGR priorities in Phase XI. This activity consisted of stakeholder mapping, an in-person workshop and the development of a roadmap for an EVA Perennials network, available [online](#).

Four in-person project meetings took place in 2025. All crop networks had regular virtual meetings for updates and planning. Links to reports of the annual meetings are available in Section 4 of this report.

Some key indicators for the EVA Networks in 2025 are listed in Table 3, and individual highlights are listed below for each network.

**Table 3.** Key indicators for the EVA networks in 2025

EVA Network	Countries involved	Public partners	Private partners	Meetings held in 2025 <sup>1)</sup>	Trials planned in 2025	Accessions evaluated in 2025
EVA Wheat and Barley	20	21	26	1	6	810
EVA Carrot	9	9	9	1	3	50
EVA Lettuce	8	6	5	2	0	0
EVA Pepper	16	19	5	1	0	0
EVA Maize	13	15	9	2	2 <sup>2)</sup>	105
EVA Legumes	23	33	13	3	17	331
Total	37	73	57	10	28	1,296

<sup>1)</sup> Including annual and coordinating project meetings. Only the reports from annual meetings are made publicly available.

<sup>2)</sup> in the frame of the MALANIRS Grant Scheme Activity

The [EVA Wheat and Barley](#) Network finalized evaluations of SSD lines provided by the AGENT project in 2025, including in on-farm trials organized by an organic farmers' network. Exploitation of data is ongoing and a prerequisite for follow-up experiments or the development of new accession sets for evaluation.

The [EVA Carrot](#) Network continued statistical analysis of the phenotypic evaluation data, with several publications in preparation. The Network also compiled a second set of carrot landraces for evaluation, including accessions from five genebanks, which are being evaluated for agronomic and priority stress traits in different environments.

The [EVA Lettuce](#) Network is also focusing on the exploitation of generated data, finalizing genotypic and association analysis of a *Lactuca serriola* collection, which had been tested with various *Bremia* isolates.

The [EVA Pepper](#) Network has been expanded by partners of the Grant Scheme Activity EuroPepLand, during which activities were conducted, which will ultimately provide material for future multilocation trials within the network.

The [EVA Maize](#) Network met twice in 2025, once within the EVA project in Bergamo (March 2025) and on the sidelines of a conference organized by MRIZP in Belgrade, Serbia (October 2025), both times jointly with the MALANIRS Grant scheme Activity. Work in 2025 has focused on data analysis and exploitation of results, with the outputs of MALANIRS directly feeding into the EVA Network and eventually providing material for additional multilocation evaluations.

The [EVA Legumes](#) Network conducted regeneration activities in 2025 for six crops, as well as field trials in common bean and chickpea, evaluating material regenerated in 2024. On-farm evaluations are being conducted on chickpea, bean and cowpea through a farmers' network in Italy. Virtual meetings were held for work planning and coordination within the individual crop groups, and an in-person project meeting in Athens, Greece (November 2025) provided an opportunity to review first results and plan activities aligned with available material and capacity.

Activities towards establishing an [EVA Perennials](#) Network were conducted in the framework of the EVA Boost project, consisting of stakeholder mapping, the organization of a workshop involving relevant ECPGR Working Groups (*Malus/Pyrus*, *Prunus*, Berries), related Horizon projects and stakeholders, and the preparation of a roadmap towards implementation. Some adjustments to the EVA framework may be necessary, and follow-up activities are underway by various crop stakeholder groups to identify funding opportunities.

In 2025, the EVA and EVA Boost projects partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 15,953 and € 16,966, respectively.

### 3. LINKS WITH OTHER NETWORKS AND INITIATIVES

#### 3.1. EUROPEAN COMMISSION-FUNDED PROJECTS

- [AGENT – \(Activated GENEbank NeTwork\) – A Coordination and Support Action on Establishing an innovative gene bank network \(2020–2025\)](#)

The project, coordinated by the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) in Gatersleben, Germany, was concluded in April 2025. The AGENT bioinformatic tools were presented during a final webinar series in February and March 2025. The four webinars introduced the wider public to the main outputs of the project, including the [AGENT data portal](#), where all project data are available. This includes historic and new phenotypic data on nearly 80,000 wheat and barley accessions from 13 project partner genebanks. Genotypic data are available for almost 13,000 phenotyped accessions. Data management and analysis tools were also developed and can be used by genebank managers and researchers to better manage their collections and plan further research and breeding. Video recordings and presentations are available [\[here\]](#).

The AGENT wheat and barley collections will be further exploited by the EVA Wheat and Barley Network. The ECPGR Secretariat, as a project partner, contributed to capacity building for genebanks, conducted genebank reviews, and extended a third set of AGENT accessions to the EVA Wheat and Barley Network. All reports from the genebank reviews are available on the [AEGIS website](#).

As a partner in AGENT, ECPGR mobilized a total budget of € 276,825 from the European Commission between 2020 and 2025. In 2025, this budget partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 19,492.

- [PRO-GRACE - Promoting a Plant Genetic Resource Community for Europe \(2023–2025\)](#)

PRO-GRACE (Promoting a Plant Genetic Resource Community for Europe) was a project coordinated by the Agenzia Nazionale per le Nuove Tecnologie, l'Energia e lo Sviluppo Economico Sostenibile (ENEA), Italy. It aimed to lay the foundations for a European Research Infrastructure (RI) dedicated to the conservation, management and study of European plant genetic resources. ECPGR coordinated

Work Package 5 of PRO-GRACE: 'Research Infrastructure concept, social and regulatory aspects, governance, and financial plan.'

The project was extended until 31 October 2025 to enable finalization of the remaining deliverables. In 2025, project partners focused on developing a proposal for the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). However, despite receiving letters of support from numerous European research organizations, the proposal did not secure sufficient political and financial support from the minimum number of countries required to participate in the call by the submission deadline.

While contributing to finalizing the draft structure and governance framework of the future infrastructure, the ECPGR Secretariat, in consultation with the Executive Committee, proposed that GRACE-RI could adopt – as far as possible and convenient – the existing framework, structure and governance of ECPGR, based on its Steering Committee, at least for services related to the conservation and access to PGR material and data. Essentially, a splitting of tasks between the current ECPGR Secretariat and the future GRACE-RI hub was proposed, with a memorandum of understanding to be established between the GRACE General Assembly and ECPGR as a starting point. However, this approach did not receive sufficient attention from the project coordination and was eventually dropped.

The project concluded in October 2025 with its final project meeting, followed by the 2nd International Workshop on Plant Genetic Resources at the Conference Centre of the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICh) in Crete, Greece. The programme featured sessions on the project's results and legacy, engagement with the private sector, and opportunities for collaboration and synergies with other research infrastructures and international organizations. ECPGR was represented by Sandra Goritschnig from the Secretariat, along with several Steering Committee members and Working Group Chairs who participated in the meeting. The event concluded with the 1st GRACE-RI General Assembly, which was restricted to signatories of the GRACE Memorandum of Understanding. During the Assembly, MAICh was elected Chair, with IPGR Sadovo (Bulgaria) and CARC (Czech Republic) as co-vice chairs.

As a partner in PRO-GRACE, ECPGR mobilized a total budget of € 185,000 from the European Commission between 2023 and 2025. In 2025, this budget partially covered staff costs at the ECPGR Secretariat, amounting to € 13,483.

- [INCREASE – Intelligent Collections of Food Legumes Genetic Resources for European Agrofood Systems \(2020–2025\)](#)

The Horizon project INCREASE, coordinated by Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy, aims to improve the sustainable use of PGR by enhancing the status of chickpea, common bean, lentil and lupin genetic resources. In 2025, the project continued its interaction with the EVA Legumes Network and provided SSD lines of bean, chickpea and lentil for regeneration and future evaluation. The EVA Coordinator S. Goritschnig provided an update on the EVA Boost project at the INCREASE annual project meeting (online), and progress on INCREASE was reported also during the EVA Boost Legumes meeting.

- [COUSIN – Crop Wild Relatives Utilization and Conservation for Sustainable Agriculture \(2024–2028\)](#)

The COUSIN project, funded by Horizon Europe and led by Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid, aims to improve the use and conservation of CWR for sustainable agriculture and to raise awareness of their value. It involves research institutes, breeding companies, farmers, civil society, and new potential users. Several members of ECPGR Working Groups are involved in the project. The EURISCO Coordinator is involved in the data management work package.

COUSIN's main objectives are to: (1) identify pathways to use CWR to strengthen sustainable agriculture, (2) recognize preferred *in situ* genetic reserves, (3) determine stakeholder-demanded

characteristics of CWR, (4) implement CWR into breeding and farming activities, (5) provide information about CWR in an accessible format to stakeholders and potential users, and (6) train and raise awareness about the value of CWR in society. COUSIN focuses its activities on five crops – wheat, barley, pea, lettuce, and brassicas.

ECPGR Secretary Lorenzo Maggioni contributed to an article on the biodiversity of Sicilian brassicas in the COUSIN Newsletter 1/2025.

- [BELIS - Breeding European Legumes for Increased Sustainability \(2023–2028\)](#) and [Legume Generation - Boosting innovation in breeding for the next generation of legume crops for Europe \(2023 – 2028\)](#)

These two projects, funded through the same Horizon Call, work on improving legume breeding activities and connect with the EVA Legumes network via stakeholder engagement activities, contributing expertise, plant material and evaluation capacity to the network and developing common standards for phenotypic evaluation. They provided updates during the EVA Boost Legumes project meeting.

### 3.2. LIAISING WITH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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In 2025, collaboration between ECPGR and the European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP) remained ongoing for the joint support of the *Genetic Resources* journal. ERFP contributed both in kind, through editorial support of its members, and with a contribution of €10,000 against the running costs of the journal management.

In June 2025, the ECPGR Secretariat organized a webinar in collaboration with **the Crop Trust** focused on the Global Conservation Strategies for Eggplant and Capsicum.

The ECPGR Secretariat participated in the ‘Seeds for Tomorrow’ workshop co-organized by the Crop Trust and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, on 8–9 Sep 2025. The workshop aimed at engaging stakeholders involved in crop diversity in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), creating an interdisciplinary community of practice, which would contribute to filling the knowledge gap on crop diversity in IPBES Global Assessments.

The ECPGR Secretariat contributed to the **FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture’s Third Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**. Information was provided on EURISCO, including its expansion to cover data on *in situ* crop wild relative populations, as well as on AEGIS and the European Collection, the European Evaluation Network (EVA), and the *Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe*. European countries highlighted ECPGR’s key role in PGR networking, standardizing documentation and conservation practices, and capacity-building efforts. The full report is available at <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4711en>

Back-to-back with the Sixth Meeting of the **FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)** Scientific Advisory Committee on the Global Information System, held on 7–8 May 2025, a special event on *Strengthening Partnerships on PGRFA Information Exchange and Knowledge Sharing* took place on 6 May 2025 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. At this event, the ECPGR Secretary shared updates on recent ECPGR activities and initiatives relevant to the Global Information System. The Committee recommended that GLIS and ECPGR closely collaborate on further developments related to the expansion of the new *in situ* section in GLIS and the publication of CWR *in situ* data in GLIS.

ECPGR members or partners contributed to the development of key descriptors published in 2025 by **FAO-ITPGRFA**:

- Key descriptors for peas [[link](#)]
- Key descriptors for foxtail millet [[link](#)]
- Key descriptors for fonio millets [[link](#)]

Within the framework of a strategy outlining the restoration of the Ukrainian genebank system – developed with the support of the international community and adopted by Ukrainian authorities – **FAO-Ukraine** invited the ECPGR Secretary to brief the Coordinating Committee of the Ukrainian National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) online on 27 May 2025 on the benefits and implications of joining ECPGR. In November 2025, the ECPGR Secretary delivered a short speech via video link at the inauguration ceremony of the Duplicate Centre for Plant Genetic Resources of Ukraine. The Centre was handed over to NAAS with the financial support of the European Union (EU) and in partnership with the ITPGRFA, the Crop Trust and NordGen. Following the emergency evacuation of 51,000 samples from the National Gene Bank in Kharkiv to a temporary site in western Ukraine, the new Centre now provides a permanent and secure home for these collections.

A smooth interaction was maintained with all departments of the **Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT**, with special support received from Human Resources for the preparation of the terms of reference and the announcement for the recruitment of a new ECPGR Secretary in 2026. Preparations were also started for the two-year renewal of the hosting agreement between ECPGR and Bioversity International, which expires at the end of 2026 and is to be approved by the Steering Committee at its Mid-Term meeting in June 2026.

## 4. PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

### 4.1. PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED IN 2025

#### 4.1.1. Administrative and operational documents

- ECPGR [Annual Progress Report 2024](#) and [Financial Report 2024](#)

#### 4.1.2. Reports from ECPGR bodies

Executive Committee meeting minutes:

- [Thirty-second meeting](#), 13 March 2025, online
- [Thirty-third meeting](#), 2 September 2025, online

Working Group meeting reports:

- Working Group on Documentation and Information, [Ad hoc Workshop](#), 18-19 September 2024, Tallinn, Estonia
- Working Group on *Allium*, [Ninth Meeting](#), 21-22 May 2025, Gatersleben, Germany
- Working Group on Berries, [Second Meeting](#), 17-19 June 2025, Kaunas, Lithuania
- [Joint Meeting](#) of Maize Working Group, MALANIRS and EVA Maize Network, 2 October 2025, Zemun Polje, Serbia

#### 4.1.3. Grant Scheme Activity reports and related data

- Inventorying wheat on-farm diversity ([INWHEATORY](#)) – by L Raggi
- Increasing the efficiency of conservation of *Vitis sylvestris* genetic resources in Europe ([Sylvestris](#)) – by G. Merkouropoulos et al.
- Chances for the conservation and re-cultivation of central European club wheat (Binkel) through a nutritional and genetic differentiation towards other wheat species ([BiDifferent](#)) – by R Vögel et al
- Fostering the need for implementation of the ECPGR European Evaluation Network (EVA) on grain legumes ([ForEVA](#)) – by C Brezeanu et al

#### 4.1.4 AEGIS

##### Genebank manuals

- Albania, [Operational genebank manual of the National Genebank of Albania](#) (April 2025)
- Austria, [Operational genebank manual of AREC](#) (March 2025)
- Belgium, [Operational genebank manual of CRA-W – Potato Genetic Resources Collection](#) (October 2025)
- Czech Republic, [Operational genebank manual of the Czech Agrifood Research Center \(CARC\), Czech Republic](#) (May 2025)
- Georgia, [Operational genebank manual of the LEPL Scientific Research Center of Agriculture, Georgia](#) (February 2025)
- Hungary, [Operation genebank manual of the National Centre for Biodiversity and Gene Conservation \(NCBGC\) Tápiószele, Hungary](#) (April 2025)
- Ireland, [Operational genebank manual of Tops Potato Propagation Centre](#) (December 2025)
- Italy, [Operational genebank manual of the Germplasm Bank of the University of Pavia](#) (March 2025)
- Italy, [Operational Genebank Manual of the National Research Council Institute of Bioscience and Bioresources, CNR-IBBR, Bari](#) (May 2025)
- Latvia, [Operational genebank manual of the Latvian Gene Bank of Cultivated Plants](#) (January 2025)
- Portugal, [Operational Genebank Manual of the Banco Português de Germoplasma Vegetal \(BPGV\)](#) (March 2025)
- Portugal, [Operational Genebank Manual of the ISOPlexis Genebank of the University of Madeira](#) (July 2025)
- Romania, [Operational genebank manual of the "Mihai Cristea" Plant Genetic Resources Bank, Suceava, Romania - SVGB](#) (March 2025)
- Sweden, [Operational genebank manual of the Swedish National Gene Bank for Vegetatively Propagated Horticultural Crops](#) (March 2025)
- United Kingdom, [Operational genebank manual for the Germplasm Resources Unit at the John Innes Centre](#) (January 2025)
- United Kingdom, [Operational genebank manual for the UK National Fruit Collection \(NFC\)](#) (April 2025)

##### Genebank peer review reports

- [Austrian Genebank, AGES – Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety, Linz, Austria](#)
- [Genebank of the Czech Agrifood Research Center \(CARC\), Prague, Czech Republic](#)
- [LEPL Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture, Tbilisi, Georgia](#)
- [National Centre for Biodiversity and Gene Conservation \(NBGK\), Hungary](#)

- [Latvian Gene Bank \(LGB\), Genetic Resource Centre, Latvian State Forest Research Institute 'Silava', Latvia](#)
- [Centre for Genetic Resources, The Netherlands \(CGN\)](#)
- [Banco Português de Germoplasma Vegetal \(BPGV\), INIAV, Portugal](#)
- ['Mihai Cristea' Plant Genetic Resources Bank \(BRGV\), Suceava, Romania](#)

#### Crop-specific genebank standards

- [Berries crop-specific field genebank standards](#) (agreed by the Berries Working Group, June 2025)
- [Maize crop-specific genebank standards for orthodox seeds](#) (agreed by the Maize WG, October 2025)

#### 4.1.5. European Evaluation Network (EVA)

- [Report of the 2025 Annual meeting of the EVA for Maize and MALANIRS kick-off meeting](#), 27-28 February 2025, Bergamo, Italy
- [Report of the EVA Boost Perennials kick-off meeting](#), 13-14 March 2025, Ancona, Italy
- [Roadmap for the Development and Establishment of the EVA Perennials Network](#)
- [Report of the joint ECPGR Maize Working Group, MALANIRS project and EVA Maize meeting](#), 2 October 2025, Zemun Polje, Serbia
- [Report of the EVA Boost Legumes Project Meeting](#), 26-27 November 2025, Athens, Greece

#### 4.1.6. ECPGR Information Bulletin

The Bulletin was published in April (issue no. 33), September (no. 34) and December (no. 35). The Bulletin is distributed by email to all Steering Committee and Working Group members and is also available [online](#).

#### 4.1.7. Genetic Resources Journal

The open-access journal *Genetic Resources* ([www.genresj.org](http://www.genresj.org)) is published by Bioversity International on behalf of ECPGR, which manages the editorial office of the journal, and ERFP, which has provided funding support to the journal in 2025.

The journal aims to disseminate global knowledge and tools used by the community of practitioners of plant and animal genetic resources involved in monitoring, collecting, maintaining, conserving, characterizing and using genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry, welcoming contributions from all world regions. *Genetic Resources* is indexed in relevant open-access indexing services such as Scopus, CrossRef, DOAJ and Google Scholar.



In 2025, the journal published two full issues with 26 articles, plus a [Special Issue on 'Ex Situ Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources in Europe'](#), featuring 16 original contributions, including 11 genebank reports and 5 review or position papers.

The two issues are accessible at:

Vol. 6 No. 12 (2025) - <https://doi.org/10.46265/genresj.2025.12>

Vol. 6 No. 11 (2025) - <https://doi.org/10.46265/genresj.2025.11>

Articles were further disseminated through the ECPGR [LinkedIn](#) account. The journal's website usage statistics confirm a global readership and surging interest in the journal among genetic resources stakeholders. In 2025, the unique visitors rose by 47% and total visits increased by 46% compared to 2024. This growing interest is further reflected in the rising number of submissions and published articles.

Manuscript submissions from ECPGR stakeholders are welcome.

#### 4.1.8. External publications with contributions from the Secretariat

- De Paola D, Taranto F, Mousavi S, Mercati F, Sabetta W, Tumolo M, Islam S, Pieruschka R, Scaloni A, Adam-Blondon AF, **Maggioni L**, **Goritschnig S**, **Guzzon F**, Ianigro M, Vendramin GG, Giuliano G, Bucci G. A gap and synergy analysis of the European research infrastructure (RI) ecosystem: advancing the novel GRACE-RI dedicated to plant genetic resources. *Ann Bot.* 2025; 136(2):275–285. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/aob/mcaf092>
- Fenu G, Beshko NYu, Branca F, Khabibullaev BS, Ilardi V, **Maggioni L**, Shomurodov KF, Orsenigo S (2025) Global and regional IUCN Red List Assessments: 19. *Italian Botanist* 20: 187–200. <https://doi.org/10.3897/italianbotanist.20.177927>
- **Goritschnig S**, **Weise S**, **Guzzon F**, **Maggioni L**, van Hintum T, Steffensen LL, Stein N and Giuliano G. Strengthening European Research Cooperation on Plant Genetic Resources Conservation and Use. *Genetic Resources* 2025; S2:119-34. <https://doi.org/10.46265/genresj.LUZI7324>
- **Guzzon F**, **Goritschnig S**, **Capozio N** and **Maggioni L**. Editorial: *Ex situ* conservation of plant genetic resources in Europe – A journey through history, mission, challenges and future opportunities, *Genetic Resources*, 2025. S2: 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.46265/genresj.BLDS6319>.
- **Maggioni L**, Bengtsson T, Poulsen GB, von Bothmer R. Survey and genetic diversity of wild *Brassica oleracea* L. germplasm from the northern coast of Spain. *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution*. 2025 Feb;72(2):1937-59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10722-024-02070-8>
- Maxted N, Adam-Blondon AF, Aguilar CH, Barata AM, Bartha B, Bocci R, De Paola D, Fitzgerald HS, Fresta LJ, Fusani P, Giuliano G, Guzzon F, Holzherr P, Holubec V, Iriondo Alegría JM, Labokas J, **Maggioni L**, Magos Brehm J, Palmé A, Phillips J, Prohens J, Raggi L, Ralli P, Ruņģis D, Sarikyan K, Šuštar-Vozlič J, Thormann I and Zdunić G. A significantly enhanced role for plant genetic resource centres in linking *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation to aid user germplasm access. *Genetic Resources* 2025; S2:203–23. <https://doi.org/10.46265/genresj.UNVV5571>
- van Hintum T, Bartha B, Niggli C, Avagyan A, Vogl S, Achathaler L, Holubec V, Papouskova L, Ferrari F, Rossi G, Simon A, Horvath L, Kowalik R, Boczkowka M, **Weise S**, Oppermann M, van Zonneveld M, Obreza M, Wijnker E, Chayut N, Chairi F, Axelsson J, Steffensen LL, **Guzzon F**. A proposal for genebank metrics to enhance collection management. *Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization*. 2025, pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S147926212510021X>

#### 4.2. OTHER PUBLIC AWARENESS PRODUCTS

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Various communication materials about ECPGR projects were produced and disseminated in 2025, including:



CWR in EURISCO video

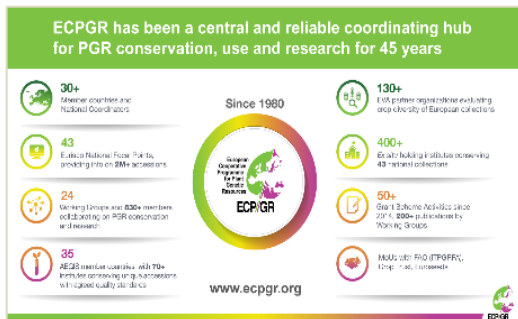
- A 2-page factsheet on the EVA Boost project, describing its main features and expected results [[link](#)]
- An interactive 4-page brochure on the Crop Wild Relatives in EURISCO project, summarizing the main project outputs and providing an overview of the contributions made by each participating country [[link](#)]
- A short video on the same project, developed for sharing on social media [[link](#)]
- A 4-page brochure summarizing the outcomes of the New AEGIS project [[link](#)]

EVA Boost factsheet

NEW AEGIS factsheet

CWR in EURISCO brochure

All materials were disseminated via social media, email, the ECPGR Bulletin, and are available on the ECPGR website.



The ECPGR Secretariat also developed a flexible [slide deck](#) to support National Coordinators in presenting ECPGR to their respective audiences. The deck covers the organization’s mission, objectives, key facts and figures, Working Groups, and major initiatives including AEGIS, EURISCO, EVA, the Genetic Resources Journal, and the Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe. National Coordinators can select the slides most relevant to their needs. The deck will be regularly updated to reflect the latest developments.

Two webinars for the ECPGR community were organized in 2025 to showcase activities funded under the ECPGR Grant Scheme:



In May, G Merkouropoulos and F Röckel presented the ‘Sylvestris’ project, focused on increasing the efficiency of conservation of *Vitis sylvestris* genetic resources in Europe [[Link](#) to recording and presentations].



In September, R Vögel and A Serfling shared the results of the ‘Bi-Different’ activity, which explored the potential of European club wheat (Binkel) as a valuable and resilient crop. [[Link](#) to recording and presentations].



In June 2025, a webinar organized in collaboration with the Crop Trust focused on the Global Conservation Strategies for Eggplant and Capsicum [[Link](#) to recording and presentations].

### 4.3. WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The ECPGR website continued to grow in 2025, recording significant increases across all key metrics compared to the previous year: unique visitors rose by 28%, total visits by 27%, and total pageviews by 14%. These figures reflect the growing interest in ECPGR’s work and the value of maintaining an up-to-date, accessible online presence. The website is continuously updated with new content and serves as the primary information hub for ECPGR members, providing comprehensive resources on projects, Working Groups, publications and key initiatives.

The ECPGR LinkedIn account, launched in September 2024, reached 1,000 followers in 2025 – a milestone that highlights the growing visibility of ECPGR within the professional community. LinkedIn's focus on professional networking makes it a particularly effective platform for engaging with the scientific, academic and policy audiences that are central to ECPGR's mission. This is reflected in the profile of ECPGR's followers, who come primarily from research services, higher education, farming, biotechnology research and government administration. The account will continue to be used to share updates, promote outputs, and strengthen connections across the plant genetic resources community.

#### 4.4. PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

The Secretariat represented ECPGR in the meetings listed below, offering presentations and/or contributing to project planning and/or attending as observers.

- AGENT final meeting, 1–3 April 2025, Versailles, France
- Special Event on Strengthening Partnerships on PGRFA Information Exchange and Knowledge Sharing (in the context of the Sixth Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on the Global Information System), 6 May 2025, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy
- Croatian Agriculture Symposium, 2–6 June 2025, Bol, Croatia
- Seeds for Tomorrow workshop, 8–9 September 2025, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
- INCREASE Annual project meeting, 22–26 September, Bucharest, Romania (online)
- International Conference Crop Science and Technology: Shaping the Future of Agriculture 80 Years of Science - Growing the Future, 29 September–1 October, Belgrade, Serbia
- PRO-GRACE final meeting and 2nd International Workshop on Plant Genetic Resources, 7–10 October 2025, Chania, Greece
- Annual meeting of the Deutsche Gemeinschaft zur Förderung von Pflanzeninnovation e. V. (GFPi), section cereals, 5 November 2025, Bonn, Germany (online)

## 5. ECPGR MEETINGS HELD IN 2025

### 5.1. GRANT SCHEME ACTIVITIES

- MAize LAndraces traits phenomic prediction using Near InfraRed Spectra ([MALANIRS](#)):
  - Kick-off meeting (jointly with EVA Maize meeting), 26–27 February 2025, Bergamo, Italy;
  - Update meeting (jointly with EVA Maize and ECPGR Maize Working Group meeting), 2 October 2025, Zemun Polje, Serbia
- Implementing a trans-EUROpean PEPper LANDrace collection for resilient agriculture ([EuroPepLand](#)), 14 May 2025, online
- Genotyping-by-sequencing of the European garlic collection to develop a sustainable ex situ conservation strategy ([Garli-CCS](#)) meeting (jointly with the *Allium* Working Group meeting), 19–22 May 2025, Gatersleben, Germany
- A Regional Initiative for a Cross-Border Cryobank in the Western Balkans and the Caucasus – A case study based on a sample of fruit tree and grape local accessions ([CryoConnect](#)):
  - Kick-off meeting, 25 June 2025, Tirana, Albania

- Training School on Fruit Germplasm Cryopreservation *In Vitro*, Čačak, Serbia, 25–29 August / 2–6 September 2025
- Improvement of Fruit Tree Data Inclusion in EURISCO ([FRUITTREEDATA](#)), 26 September 2025, online

## 5.2. ECPGR BODIES

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- [Thirty-second meeting](#) of the ECPGR Executive Committee, 13 March 2025, online
- [Thirty-third meeting](#) of the ECPGR Executive Committee, 2 September 2025, online

## 5.3. EUROPEAN EVALUATION NETWORK (EVA)

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- [EVA Maize meeting](#), 26–27 February 2025, Bergamo, Italy (jointly with MALANIRS)
- [EVA Boost workshop](#) to establish an EVA Perennials network, 13–14 March 2025, Ancona, Italy
- [EVA Maize meeting](#), 2 October 2025, Zemun Polje, Serbia (jointly with MALANIRS and Maize Working Group)
- [EVA Boost Legumes](#), 26–27 November 2025, Athens, Greece

## 5.4. WORKING GROUPS

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- [Ninth Allium Working Group meeting](#) (jointly with Garli-CCS meeting), 19–22 May 2025, Gatersleben, Germany
- [Second Berries Working Group meeting](#), 17–19 June 2025, Kaunas, Lithuania
- [Maize Working Group meeting](#), 2 October 2025, Zemun Polje, Serbia

## 5.5. OTHER GERMAN-FUNDED PROJECTS

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- [New AEGIS](#) project meeting (jointly with Genebank Managers Network fifth meeting), 22 May 2025, Prague, Czech Republic

## 5.6. GENE BANK MANAGERS NETWORK

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- [Fourth meeting](#), online, 12 February 2025
- [Fifth meeting](#) (jointly with New AEGIS project meeting), 20–22 May 2025, Prague, Czech Republic

## 6. COORDINATING SECRETARIAT

During 2025, the following staff employed by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT have worked for the Coordinating Secretariat: Vanessa Bryant (half-time Administrative Assistant, February to June 2025); Nora Capozio (Specialist, editing and communications), Sandra Goritschnig (Scientific Officer – Horizon Projects coordination, EVA coordination and editorial management of the *Genetic Resources* journal); Filippo Guzzon, (Research Specialist, working on the Horizon project PRO-GRACE, as well as supporting the EVA coordination, the *Genetic Resources* journal special issue and ECPGR communication activities, January to May 2025), Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretary); Loredana Maria (Senior Administrative Assistant – assisting in all administrative and financial matters and database maintenance). Stephan Weise (IPK, Gatersleben, Germany) acted as EURISCO Coordinator.

The scientific and technical contributions, as well as management and administrative support provided by other staff from the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and from IPK to the work of ECPGR, are duly acknowledged.



**Lorenzo Maggioni**  
ECPGR Secretary

(with inputs from Nora Capozio, Sandra Goritschnig, Loredana Maria and Stephan Weise)

Rome, 15 April 2026

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