PHASE XI (2024–2028)

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

Approved by the Steering Committee
June 2023

CONTENTS

PREAMBLE

to the

RULES OF PROCEDURES
AND
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR OPERATIONAL BODIES AND MECHANISMS
Phase XI (2024-2028)

At the Seventeenth meeting in Portugal, 30 May-1 June 2023, the Steering Committee approved the document 'ECPGR Rules of Procedures and Terms of Reference for Operational Bodies and Mechanisms'.

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At the Sixteenth Steering Committee meeting in June 2022, it was requested to establish an ad hoc task force to revise/update the role, function and mode of operation of all the existing bodies of ECPGR, in particular its Working Groups (WGs) – including the WG objectives, guidelines for the mode of operation, appointment of Chairs and members and their expected commitment, the expected number of virtual and physical meetings, communication across WGs, reporting duties, relationship with the European Evaluation Network (EVA), etc.

The task force was set up and used the document *ECPGR goal, rules of procedures and terms of reference for the operational bodies (second edition, February 2018)* as a starting basis.

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 the 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.

These *Rules of Procedures and Terms of Reference for Operational Bodies and Mechanisms* can be revised and amended by the Steering Committee on a needs basis.

RULES OF PROCEDURES OF THE ECPGR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Rule 1. Phases

ECPGR operates in 5-year phases and for each phase, the objectives and work programme are revised/updated by the Steering Committee (SC) as well as its provisional associated budget.

Rule 2. Membership

1. Membership in ECPGR is open to countries in the European region.[1]
2. Full membership is granted following a signed Letter of Agreement (LoA) between the National Authorities responsible for PGRFA in the respective country and the Director General of the hosting institute of the Secretariat for the respective Phase.
3. All eligible countries are considered Associate Members before they sign the LoA. Associate Members are represented by Focal Persons designated by their respective national authorities.
4. Each member country will designate a National Coordinator (NC) who is de facto member of the SC.
5. The Membership fee is calculated using the UN Scale of Assessments.
6. In case of non-payment of (the) outstanding membership fee(s) for two calendar years, the member country will lose the right to use any ECPGR funds and the right to vote as long as the contributions have not been paid. A 3-month advance notice of this occurrence will be sent to the national authority having signed the LoA (NC in copy).

Rule 3. Operational Structure

The operational structure of ECPGR is elaborated by the SC. Any change to this operational structure must be approved by the SC.

Rule 4. Selection and appointment of the Secretary

The ECPGR Secretary is the head of the ECPGR Secretariat. The ECPGR Secretary is selected by the SC of ECPGR, and appointed by the hosting institution.

Rule 5. Election of the Executive Committee (ExCo)

1. The ExCo Chair is elected by the SC for the current phase, with the possibility of extension for subsequent phases.
2. The other ExCo members are elected for a 4-year term of office and represent the European subregions (North, West, East and South, in a broad sense).
3. To ensure continuity, except for the ExCo Chair, one member of the ExCo is replaced annually by a new member from the same subregion on a rotational basis. This member will be elected by the SC upon ExCo's proposition. Re-election is possible only after a break period of five years.

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[1] The countries listed below are eligible for membership in ECPGR: Albania; Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Türkiye; United Kingdom; Ukraine.

Rule 6. Meetings

1. The SC of ECPGR will meet physically every two and a half years.
2. The SC may invite Focal Persons of Associate Members and other Observers to attend the SC meetings. Associate Members and Observers do not have the right to vote.
3. The ExCo meets several times a year – virtually or physically – on a needs basis. The decision to meet must be taken by the ExCo members on the proposal of the Chair or another ExCo member. The minutes of these meetings will be sent to the members of the SC as appropriate.
4. The travel and lodging costs of the ExCo in-person meetings will be covered by the ECPGR budget and are subject to available funds.
5. Meetings of Working Groups, Task Forces and other bodies and mechanisms will be organized when necessary. Meetings can be organized virtually or physically, based on the availability of funds.

Rule 7. Decision-making procedure for the ExCo and Steering Committee meetings

1. The ExCo shall take decisions by consensus. Decisions can also be taken by electronic means when it is deemed necessary to do so.
2. The SC shall make every effort during its meetings to reach agreement on all matters by consensus. If all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, subject to paragraph 7.3, the decision shall, as the last resort, be taken by a two-thirds majority of the Members of the SC present at that meeting and voting. The SC can only take decisions with a quorum of two-thirds of the Members.
3. Notwithstanding paragraph 7.2, all decisions concerning financial and budgetary matters involving amounts larger than € 5,000, shall be taken by consensus.
4. Decisions of the SC can also be taken by electronic means when deemed necessary. Any decisions taken by electronic means shall be taken by consensus. In the case of decisions taken by electronic means, a lack of response, in a fixed period of time, shall be interpreted to mean that the issue at stake/proposal is accepted.

Rule 8. Agenda and documents for the Steering Committee meetings

1. The ExCo shall prepare a provisional agenda, subject to approval by the SC at the beginning of each meeting.
2. Any Member of the SC may request the ExCo to consider the inclusion of specific items in the Provisional Agenda.
3. The Provisional Agenda shall be circulated by the ECPGR Secretariat at least two months in advance of the session to Members of the SC, Associate Members and Observers.
4. Documents to be submitted to the SC at any meeting should be provided by the ExCo to the Members of the SC, Associate Members and Observers one month in advance of the session.

Rule 9. Reports of Steering Committee meetings

1. Before closing each Meeting, the SC of ECPGR shall approve a meeting report.
2. The approved SC meeting report shall be circulated by the Secretariat to all Members of the SC, Associate Members and Observers and will be made available on the ECPGR website.

Rule 10. Language

The official language of ECPGR is English.

Rule 11. Expenses

1. Expenses incurred by National Coordinators or their alternates for their participation in sessions of the SC shall be borne by ECPGR.
2. Observers, additional country representatives and Focal Persons of Associate Members participating in the SC meetings are self-funded.
3. The ExCo can deal with financial issues up to € 5,000, without the approval of the SC.

Rule 12. Amendments and suspension of the Rules of Procedure

1. Proposals for amendments, additions or suspensions to the Rules of Procedure can be made in writing by Member Countries of ECPGR.
2. Proposals for amendments, additions or suspensions should be submitted to the ECPGR Secretary, who will notify the SC.
3. Proposals for amendments, additions or suspensions of any of these Rules may be adopted by consensus by the SC, provided that not less than six weeks' notice has been given.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE OPERATIONAL BODIES OF ECPGR

National Coordinators

The Member Countries of ECPGR are represented by National Coordinators (NCs) in the ECPGR Steering Committee (SC). The NCs are responsible for the coordination of ECPGR-related activities within and between Member Countries and between their respective country and the ECPGR Secretariat.

The responsibilities of the National Coordinators are:

- To nominate members and identify contact persons in the various Working Groups, based on instructions provided in Annex I
- To participate in SC meetings
- To maintain close contact with their country's Working Group members and follow up on progress and potential problems
- To seek periodical confirmation of commitment by Working Group members of their respective countries
- To suggest representatives in task forces that might be established during SC meetings
- To nominate the *ex situ* and *in situ* National Inventory Focal Point(s)[2]
- To obtain necessary governmental commitment to the Programme in general and, more particularly, to take steps to obtain the support required by the national institutions and other relevant actors to contribute to the implementation of the Programme. These activities are the basis of the success of the Programme.
- To coordinate the maintenance of the National Inventories of Plant Genetic Resources and ensure that responsibilities vis-à-vis EURISCO are fulfilled
- To act as coordinators for AEGIS at the national level, if applicable, with responsibilities as indicated in Article 7 of the AEGIS Memorandum of Understanding.
- To delegate, if necessary, part of their tasks as defined above to nationally appointed Technical Experts, as appropriate and in consultation with the appropriate ECPGR body.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) holds the overall responsibility of the ECPGR Programme. The SC consists of all National Coordinators. Representatives of the European Commission, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, Euroseeds, the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA), the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen) and a non-governmental organization (NGO) are invited to attend the SC meetings as permanent observers on a self-funded basis. Other observers can be invited to a specific SC meeting on a needs basis for consultation or information on specific topics. Representatives of countries that are encouraged to become members of ECPGR (Focal Persons of Associate Members) are invited to attend the SC meetings as observers on a self-funded basis.

The responsibilities of the Steering Committee are:

- To revise and update the objectives and work programme for each new phase
- To approve the budget[3] of the ECPGR Programme for each Phase
- To provide overall technical and policy guidance to the operations of the Programme
- To approve and provide guidelines for ad hoc activities

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[2] See section on the European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (EURISCO).

[3] Formal decision concerning payment of member annual contributions is taken by the competent authorities within each country.

- To mandate and oversee the Secretariat to carry out its decisions
- To monitor and follow up on the implementation of activities carried out by Working Groups (WGs) and Task Forces (TFs), including those carried out under the Grant Scheme
- Take decisions regarding the scope of WGs and TFs, including their establishment or termination
- To select and nominate the ECPGR Secretary, based on the agreed recruitment procedure[4]
- To select the hosting institution and approve the hosting agreement[5] for the ECPGR Secretariat.

Meetings and schedule

The SC meets on a regular basis as defined by Rule of Procedure 6. In between meetings, the SC makes use of a dedicated listserver[6] to communicate and make management decisions. The decision-making procedures are defined by Rule of Procedure 9. National Coordinators may be accompanied by additional country representatives who will attend as observers on a self-funded basis.

During the _Mid-term Steering Committee meeting (year 2 or 3)_, the SC will:

- Review the progress made by all operational bodies and mechanisms, during the first part of the Phase
- Update priorities for the current Phase, if needed
- Provide guidance to all operational bodies and mechanisms for the remainder of the Phase
- Establish broad priorities and objectives for the subsequent Phase
- Mandate the Secretariat to prepare a budget proposal for the subsequent Phase.

During the _End-of-Phase Steering Committee meeting (year 5)_, the SC will:

- Review the activities carried out during the current Phase and the progress made so far
- Assess opportunities for future activities, considering progress and proposals of all operational bodies and mechanisms, as well as developments in the global environment related to PGRFA
- Adopt objectives and a programme of work for the subsequent Phase including clear priorities and associated activities
- Approve the final budget for the subsequent Phase.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (ExCo) consists of a Chair, four other members elected by the SC and _ex officio_ the ECPGR Secretary who has no voting rights. The procedure for the election of the ExCo Chair and members is explained in Rules of Procedure 5.

The responsibilities of the Executive Committee are:
- To support and supervise the activities of ECPGR and the Secretary as decided upon by the SC
- To prepare the SC meetings supported by the ECPGR Secretariat
- To identify strategic issues important for ECPGR and bring related proposals to the attention of the SC
- To mandate the Secretariat to carry out its decisions and offer guidance to the Secretariat
- To prepare the Calls for proposals, evaluate proposals and approve projects to be financed by the Grant Scheme
- To select Working Group Chairs based on proposals by the WGs or the NCs in case no suggestion has arisen from the WGs
- To convene meetings with other ECPGR bodies as necessary to discuss relevant issues

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[4] The recruitment process will be suggested by the ExCo, approved by the SC and annexed to these ToRs.

[5] The hosting agreement should specify the use of office facilities, IT services and other administrative staff management support to the ECPGR Secretariat.

[6] The listserver includes all the National Coordinators and their authorized delegates, Focal Persons of Associate Members, permanent observers in the Steering Committee and Secretariat staff.

- To establish Advisory Groups (AG) for short-term and well-defined purposes as required and develop their Terms of Reference (ToRs)[7]
- To report on its activities and outputs to the SC at each SC meeting.

ExCo Chair

The ExCo Chair is appointed by the Steering Committee (SC) in his/her personal capacity and leads the work of the ExCo. An operational budget line provides support for part-time activity of the ExCo Chair.

The responsibilities of the ExCo Chair are:

- To lead and coordinate the work of the ExCo
- To chair SC meetings and coordinate their preparation within the ExCo
- To represent ECPGR externally, including to the EU and other relevant international and European organizations and assure the good visibility of ECPGR, taking the role of 'ECPGR Ambassador'
- To make proposals to the ExCo members to meet when necessary
- To supervise the activities of the Secretary.

ECPGR Secretariat

The ECPGR Secretariat is a permanent body, currently hosted by the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Rome, Italy.

The tasks of the ECPGR Secretariat are:

- To ensure the implementation of the Programme in accordance with the mandate given by the SC
- To coordinate the activities carried out in the framework of the Programme, in close collaboration with the ExCo and the SC
- To be responsible for the preparation of the budget and the financial management of the Programme
- To provide annually the technical and financial reports to the SC for approval
- To provide support to WGs and other ECPGR operational bodies and mechanisms for the implementation of agreed activities
- To provide support to WG Chairs and, where necessary, to assist in preparing the evaluation of WG activities and the formulation of work plans and priorities
- To initiate ad hoc activities in accordance with guidance provided by the ExCo and SC
- To set up and manage the ECPGR Grant Scheme for funding WG activities through Calls for proposals
- To support or facilitate the ECPGR mechanisms such as AEGIS, EURISCO and EVA
- To gather and distribute information and facilitate communication among ECPGR bodies and members
- To assist in the formulation of project proposals for joint activities in various European projects (Grant Scheme, EU-funded projects, etc.) and to implement projects, as agreed by the SC
- To search for donors to support particular elements of work plans and ad hoc activities
- To contribute to raising public awareness about the Programme and its activities
- To participate in the SC meetings without the right to vote
- To undertake any further activity as agreed mutually with the SC.

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[7] These AGs can be composed of up to five experts. The AGs report directly to the ExCo or may also report to the SC if so requested by the ExCo.

ECPGR Secretary

The ECPGR Secretary is the Head of the Secretariat and provides and directs the staff required by the Secretariat.

The responsibilities of the Secretary are:

- To be responsible for the tasks of the Secretariat
- To provide and direct the staff required by the Secretariat
- To participate *ex officio* in the meetings of the SC, ExCo and the EURISCO Advisory Committee, supporting the meetings' organization and drafting the respective meeting reports
- To provide feedback on the annual reports and work plans drafted by the EURISCO Coordinator.

Working Groups

WGs are composed of experts nominated by the NCs as members of a WG, 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 in their area of competence to the development and implementation of the ECPGR mechanisms (AEGIS, EVA, EURISCO, etc.)
- 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 of 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 act as national contact person, as mandated by the NC, in case the need arises to provide centralized feedback at country level to the WG or Secretariat
- To actively communicate with the respective NCs and/or the national contact person nominated for the WG
- To interact with members of other WGs as relevant
- To collectively propose and suggest WG Chairs to the ExCo whenever a new Chair needs to be appointed.

Working Group Chair

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 and to organize physical meetings when necessary and based on the availability of funds
- 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
- To provide advice to the SC as needed, i.e. through joint meetings of ExCo and WG Chairs.

Election of Working Group Chairs

At the beginning of each Phase, the ExCo will consider and propose changes to who should act as WG Chairs. If it is recommended that the current Chair remains in the role, the Secretariat will verify the interest and availability of the Chair to continue. In case a new Chair needs to be appointed, the WG will collectively 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.

Task Forces

The SC may recommend and initiate the establishment of Task Forces (TF) to fulfil certain tasks in a given timeframe. The members of a Task Force are appointed by the ECPGR Secretariat, based on suggestions received from the NCs and possibly representing all subregions of ECPGR. The TF leader will be either appointed by the SC or selected by consensus of the TF members. The mandate of a TF is described in the Terms of Reference approved by the SC.

The responsibilities of the TF are:

- To carry out specific tasks mandated by the SC in a given timeframe with the support of an allocated budget, if needed
- To report to the SC on work progress, difficulties and results when appropriate, and formally at every regular meeting of the SC
- To deliver a final report to be discussed and approved by the SC who will conclude either on the termination of the TF or the extension of its work[8].

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[8] Following the review process, the SC has several options:

- The assigned task has been executed in due time by the TF, then the TF will be terminated
- The task has not been achieved but the completion of the task will be in the foreseeable future, then the mandate may be extended by the SC
- The task has been achieved and opens on new questions and tasks: in this case, the SC may consider extending the mandate of the TF with new ToRs or establishing a new TF.

ECPGR MECHANISMS

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
- Concepts or draft proposals should be circulated to all members of the involved WG(s) for potential interest to participate
- 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 with no objections by the participating WG members
- Potential participants in an activity compile an 'Expression of Interest', where they 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[9]
- Final proposals should be circulated to all members of the involved WG(s) for their information
- 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.

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

A European Genebank Integrated System (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 ITPGRFA. A country's Membership in AEGIS is formalized through the signature of a [Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)](link) by the respective national authorities.[10]

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).

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[10] In exceptional cases the SC may accept a declaration of intent.

The ECPGR European Evaluation Network (EVA) for PGRFA

The ECPGR European Evaluation Network (EVA) for PGRFA – established in 2018 – aims 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

Any person or entity 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).

Role 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 Working Groups
- Promoting cooperation with other relevant EU infrastructures and collaborations related to the scope of the network.

The European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (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)), and medicinal and ornamental plants.

EURISCO is supportive of 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 are following the mandate and guidance given by the ECPGR SC.

Subject to approval and renewal by the SC in each Phase, EURISCO is hosted by a relevant and capable institution, located in an ECPGR member country.[11] 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.

Roles and responsibilities

EURISCO Coordinator

A EURISCO Coordinator[12] is employed by the hosting institution to carry out tasks related to the maintenance and development of EURISCO on behalf of ECPGR. They are responsible for the following:

- Ensure the maintenance and further development of EURISCO, including its web interface, in accordance with the advice of the EURISCO Advisory Committee
- Ensure management and upload of data provided by the NIFPs, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the EURISCO Data Sharing Agreement
- Promote communication and provide basic help desk assistance to the NIFPs identified in European countries for (PGR) inventories
- Organize training and capacity building for EURISCO data providers and users
- Contribute to ECPGR reports, e-bulletins and other information as requested by the ECPGR Secretariat

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

[12] 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.

- Raise awareness about EURISCO through various communication tools
- Contribute to raising funds for the EURISCO maintenance and further development.

National Inventory Focal Points[13]

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

- Coordinate the regular updating of data in the National Inventories (NIs) by contributing institutions/partners and, if necessary, assist partners in doing so
- Validate and regularly upload the updated NIs in EURISCO
- 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)
- Approve uploaded C&E datasets before they are published
- Timely inform contributing institutions/partners on EURISCO-related novelties such as new functions, tools and data standards
- Consult with contributing institutions/partners on agenda items of the Documentation and Information WG (Doc&Info WG) meetings prior to these meetings
- Provide clearance for the online publication of country passport data.

EURISCO Advisory Committee

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 ECPGR ExCo, based on suggestions received from the Chair of the Doc&Info WG and 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. The Chair of the EURISCO Advisory Committee has the following responsibilities:

- 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.

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[13] 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).

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 Letter of Agreement (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.
- **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.
- **ExCo Chair:** Head of the ECPGR ExCo, appointed by the SC.
- **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 public–private partnerships networks that generate standardized crop evaluation data.
- **The European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (EURISCO)**: A 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' members

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

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

National Coordinators are invited to nominate as many experts as they wish from their country for membership in any WG in which they wish to be represented, by informing the Secretariat of their selection. In each of these WGs, they are to identify one 'contact person' in each relevant WG, with responsibility to act as country coordinator within the specific WG, in case the need arises to provide centralized feedback to the WG or Secretariat. The pool of experts constituted for each WG will be regularly updated upon request from the Secretariat or notification from the National Coordinators.

As the participants in the ECPGR-funded Activities will be recruited from the pools of WG members, based on an 'expression of interest' by the members to participate in any given Activity, it will be important to make sure that members are timely nominated to allow their participation in Activities in their field of competence.

In order to facilitate and guide the nomination process, it was decided by the Steering Committee to establish a list of relevant categories of experts.

The members can come from the public as well as the private sector. Academia as well as non-governmental organizations are important sources of experts. Whenever possible, governmental officers should also be included to facilitate implementation and possible upscaling of Activities.

The main categories of expertise for the WGs are listed below. Examples of relevant types of specialists are provided between brackets.

1. Curators of germplasm collections (e.g. seed, *in vitro*/cryopreservation, field genebanks; on-farm specialists, *in situ* specialists)
2. Crop specialists (e.g. botanists, taxonomists*,* agronomists, physiologists, geneticists, phytopathologists)
3. Information management and documentation specialists
4. Plant breeders
5. PGRFA-related policy and law specialists.

National Coordinators are invited to fill the table below to nominate experts for all the WGs of specific competency, and update respective information where applicable. Several names can be indicated in each cell, while not every cell needs to be filled. National contact persons should be indicated.

Members nominated for the Working Groups

(Please provide full contact details of all members in a separate sheet). National contact persons should be indicated

Working Groups	Categories of expertise				
	Genebank Curator	Crop specialist	Information / documentation	Plant breeder	Policy and law
Crop					
Allium					
Avena					
Barley					
Berries					
Beta					
Brassica					
Cucurbits					
Fibre Crops (flax and hemp)					
Forages					
Grain Legumes					
Leafy Vegetables					
Maize					
Malus/Pyrus					
Medicinal and Aromatic Plants					
Potato					
Prunus					
Solanaceae					
Umbellifer Crops					
Vitis					
Wheat					
Thematic					
Crop Wild Relatives					
Cryopreservation					
Documentation and Information					
On-farm Conservation and Management					

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

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

I herewith declare my personal interest and the institutional commitment that allows me to serve as the Chair of the ECPGR Working Group (WG) ....during the period from ….. to …… and certify that the information provided below is correct and reflects my current position in the institute/organization.

Name: …....................................... Position: …...................................…...........................

Institute name: …...................................……...

Country: …..

Field of interest: ....

Range of expertise: ....

Based on: i) the current knowledge of the situation in Europe related to the crop(s) or theme(s) of the WG; ii) the priorities for ECPGR Phase XI); iii) the ToRs of WG Chairs);

I am planning to promote the following main activities of the WG during Phase XI:

   a.   ....

   b.   ....

   c.   ....

I confirm that I am aware of the ToRs of a WG Chair and that I am available and committed to fulfilling the related obligations.

I have obtained the endorsement from my National Coordinator (Mr/Ms ....) for this Expression of interest   Yes / Not yet

My direct supervisor (Mr/Ms ....) is supporting my engagement as Chair of an ECPGR Working Group   Yes/ No/ Not applicable

Signature   Date

…………………….   ………………….

Enclosed:

   -   CV

   -   References of 3–5 relevant publications

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

Working Groups (WGs) carry out activities mandated by the Steering Committee or proposed by WGs and approved by the Executive Committee. Participants in an Activity are selected on the basis of an 'Expression of interest', where the potential participants indicate their commitment. Selection of participants for an Activity is made by the WG Chair and/or the coordinator of the proposed activity.

The Expression of interest to participate in a proposed ECPGR Activity is completed by any individual belonging to the WG(s) proposing the activity, as well as by other individuals from WGs or other stakeholders who wish to participate on a self-funded basis.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

I herewith declare my personal interest and institutional commitment to participate in the proposed ECPGR Activity ….. (*title of proposed Activity*) and certify that the information provided below is correct and reflects my current position in the institute/organization.

Name: …..

Position: …...................................…..............................

Institute name: …........................…….................…..

Country: …...

Working Group (if applicable): …...................................…......................

The contribution that I can offer to the proposed ECPGR Activity consists of the following specific actions, services or skills (e.g. provision of expertise, research/experimental/conservation infrastructure and/or space, equipment, staff time, logistic support, others).

Please specify in detail below:

     a. ....

     b. ....

     c. ....

I have obtained the endorsement from my National Coordinator (Mr/Ms ....) for this Expression of interest   Yes / Not yet / Not applicable

My direct supervisor (Mr/Ms ....) is supporting my participation in the proposed ECPGR Activity   Yes/ No/ Not applicable

I am therefore committed to spending the full time necessary to meet/comply with the ECPGR-Activity-related obligations.

Signature   Date

………………………   ………………..