Minutes of the
36th ECPGR Executive Committee meeting

26 October 2026

Online via Teams (15:00 – 17:00)

Present:
Jens Weibull (Chair)
Imke Thormann (Germany)
Petra Engel (Italy)
Dainis Ruņģis (Latvia)
Maja Boczkowska (Poland)
Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat)

Invited Observers:
Angelos Kyratzis (Cyprus)
Sandra Goritschnig (ECPGR Secretariat)
Rosemary Navarrete (ECPGR Secretariat)

Introduction
Jens Weibull, ExCo Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming for the first time as observers Angelos Kyratzis and Rosemary Navarrete, who will respectively take the role of ExCo member for the Region South and ECPGR Secretary as of 1 January 2027.

Launching of the Fourth Call of the Grant Scheme (deadline, budget, priorities)
The new FAQ page prepared by the Secretariat was noted and appreciated by the ExCo.
The ECPGR Secretary summarized the situation regarding expenditures and commitments for ECPGR activities in 2024–26, totalling approximately €260,200 (€205,100 allocated to six Grant Scheme proposals and €55,100 dedicated to meetings). The remaining budget for 2026 is therefore approximately €148,000 (comprising the 2027 annual allocation of €102,000 plus €46,000 in unspent funds from previous years). This amount can be used to fund a Fourth Call for Proposals and any subsequent requests for Working Group (WG) meetings.
The ExCo recommended launching the new Call with a submission deadline of 15 February 2027. Proposals must address either Priority 1 (P1) or Priority 2 (P2) activities of the revised Phase XI workplan. It was recommended to clarify on the web pages that Working Group meetings can be requested at any time through a different procedure than the Grant Scheme.

Update on transition to new Secretary
Rosemary Navarrete informed the meeting that, although she will join ECPGR/Bioversity only on 1 December, she has already started her induction with Lorenzo and is familiarizing herself with relevant documents; she also regularly attends the weekly Secretariat meetings. Additionally, she is planning to participate in two events in November: the 'Connecting European Plant Genetic Resources Conference' in Rome, 12–13 November, organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences and Marche Polytechnic University, and the Genebank Managers Network and AEGIS Plus meeting in Radzików, Poland, 24–25 November. She also attended FAO's global exhibition 'From Seeds to Foods' in Rome on 13 October, following an invitation from the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture of Georgia (SRCA) to a side event on Georgian Wheat Culture: Traditions and Rituals.
During the week of 14–18 December, Jens, Lorenzo and Rosemary will all be present in Rome at the ECPGR office to continue the introduction through direct interactions.

Involvement of ECPGR in the Nature 2027 application

Sandra Goritschnig informed the Committee about the Horizon Nature 2027 Living Labs call. She explained the scope of the call and the status of progress of the preparations, in which she is closely involved, supporting the coordinator, Nigel Maxted. The draft proposal aims to use real-life policy experiments to promote in situ PGR conservation within the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation. The approach features three regional living labs (Nordic/Baltic, Central European, and Mediterranean) focused on conserving crop wild relatives and landraces. ECPGR is proposed to co-lead work packages on policy integration and dissemination.

She highlighted the opportunity to tap into Rosemary's expertise in the policy field (when she gets on board) for her advice and contribution already during proposal preparation.

On behalf of the Committee, Jens appreciated the effort made by the Secretariat and was looking forward to a successful proposal.

Situation of Italy not being a member of ECPGR – what to do with Italian WG Chairs

Petra Engel informed the Committee about her recent efforts addressing the fact that the Italian Ministry of Agriculture did not respond to the numerous solicitations to rejoin ECPGR during Phase XI. In particular, she approached FAO Deputy Director-General Maurizio Martina, who signalled availability to try to identify possible appropriate steps on the matter, in consultation with FAO colleagues from the Plant Genetic Resources departments.

In the meantime, considering that Italy has lost eligibility to receive funds from ECPGR, the Committee discussed how to deal with the fact that four WG Chairs are currently from Italy.

There was agreement that the position of WG Chair is held in a personal capacity and not as a representative of a country. Consequently, the current Chairs can maintain their position and continue coordinating their groups, if they are willing to do so. However, they would not be able to receive funding from ECPGR for their travel or activities. While all Italian WG members will receive observer status in their groups, the Chairs will maintain fully active status and exercise all the expected functions.

Proposed change in the visibility of data of deleted accessions in EURISCO

Lorenzo Maggioni informed the Committee of a request received from the EURISCO Coordinator. In the context of strengthening the integration between the EURISCO and Genesys databases, a synchronization issue has emerged. Genesys maintains records of all data once they have entered the database; if these are no longer resubmitted by the National Inventory (NI) Focal Points, the records are simply flagged as 'HISTORIC'. Until now, NIs had the option of retaining important data in EURISCO by actively using the HISTORIC flag, even if the corresponding accessions no longer existed. This option was almost never used. Usually, at the request of the NIs, data were actively deleted if accessions no longer existed or were no longer intended to be visible in EURISCO.

To eliminate this discrepancy and ensure that published data remain permanently accessible, it was requested to amend the EURISCO update process. Under the new approach, EURISCO would no longer delete data, but would instead retain them and mark them as historical, mirroring the Genesys treatment.

Regarding the legal framework, the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) signed by the countries submitting data to EURISCO states that:

"The National Inventory (NI) has at any time the right to request Bioversity to remove, within three (3) months from the NI's request, data from EURISCO. Such requests should be made to Bioversity in writing. Bioversity will make reasonable efforts to have these data also removed from other databases using EURISCO where EURISCO is a source."

Therefore, no amendment to the DSA is required, provided that EURISCO continues to guarantee the removal of data upon formal request.

During the discussion, it was clarified that the proposed 'HISTORIC' flag would apply to the *data* (historical data) and not to the *accessions* themselves (historical accession). The decision on whether an accession has historical value – even if it is no longer available – would remain at the discretion of the NI.

The Committee agreed that the changed approach is acceptable, on the condition that it guarantees data (including data with a DOI) can be made no longer visible in EURISCO following a formal request, thereby ensuring continued compliance with the DSA.

Any other business

- Imke Thormann noted a discrepancy on the ECPGR website regarding the number of ECPGR member countries. In fact, a list of 31 members is outlined, but the accompanying map identifies 35 members, split into two categories: those who have signed the Letter of Agreement (31) and those who have not but have paid their contributions (4).
  A discussion followed about the correct definition of "ECPGR member country" and the possible need to publish a table indicating which country has signed the LoA and/or paid the contributions.
  The Committee resolved that there is a need to further reflect on the definition of "ECPGR Member country" and eventually bring up the issue at the Steering Committee level, in case the need to revise the Terms of Reference is identified.
  For the time being, it was agreed that the website should reflect in a list all the 35 countries that are considered members, with a specification for those that still need to sign the Letter of Agreement.

- Jens Weibull and Lorenzo Maggioni informed the Committee that they were both invited, in representation of ECPGR, to a Roundtable discussion entitled ‘Achievements and Prospects of the Plant Genetic Resources System of Ukraine,’ which will take place in Lviv on 10 November. They will both attend online.