

# European Cooperative Programme for Crop Genetic Resources Networks (ECP/GR)

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## 2005 Progress Report

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### Summary

This is the second progress report of Phase VII (2004-2008), covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2005. A total of 28 countries have formalized their membership to Phase VII of ECP/GR, but 36 countries are participating in and contributing to the activities.

Activities carried out within the crop Networks consisted in the organization of several Working Group and *ad hoc* meetings (Second meeting of the Wheat Working Group, Forages Network Coordinating Group meeting jointly with Database managers, *ad hoc* meeting of the Fruit Network for the preparation of a EU project proposal, Seventh meeting of the *Prunus* Working Group, *ad hoc* meeting on regeneration methods for grain legumes, Technical meeting of the database managers of the Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network, First meeting of the Cucurbits Working Group, First meeting of the Leafy Vegetables Working Group). Within the thematic Networks, the Second joint meeting of the EURISCO Advisory Group and the Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group and a meeting of the Inter-regional Cooperation Network Coordinating Group were organized.

Following the recommendations of the EURISCO Advisory Group, several actions were accomplished, in particular helpdesk support, technical development and maintenance and public awareness activities. The ECP/GR Web site was continuously amended, in order to provide updated information on future events, meeting reports, workplans, and other relevant news. This process included the preparation of a new section on AEGIS.

Public awareness activities included the production of a special logo to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ECP/GR, which was used for all publications published during 2005. An ECP/GR brochure for the wider public has been prepared in collaboration with European NGOs, and in close contact with Pro Specie Rara, Switzerland. For the first time CD-ROMs were produced containing information related to meetings (PowerPoint presentations, papers, summaries), in order to quickly distribute the results of a meeting.

Within the AEGIS project for the establishment of a European Genebank Integrated System the four groups working on the model crops (*Allium*, *Avena*, *Brassica* and *Prunus*) have reached an advanced stage of preparation of their reports. The AEGIS Steering Committee convened in June and held a meeting with the project partners and with representatives of the Global Crop Diversity Trust. A local Task Force was established at IPGRI in order to give enhanced support to the coordination of the AEGIS project. The Task Force initiated the formulation of a "Vision Paper", describing the objectives and the advantages of a future integrated system, and proposing a mechanism and a process for its implementation. With the help of the evolving "Vision Paper", the concept of AEGIS was presented in several circles and on different occasions.'

Members of several ECP/GR Working Groups have been preparing project proposals for submission to the first call of Council Regulation (EC) 870/2004, with deadline on 30 September 2005. Besides general support for these preparations, the ECP/GR Secretariat was directly involved in the preparation of three submitted proposals in which IPGRI is a partner (the AEGIS concerted action and the targeted actions EPGRIS-2 and ONFARMSAFE).

Four reports of past ECP/GR Working Group meetings were published by IPGRI and several electronic documents were made available on the Internet with the results of the various meetings. Plans for activities and publications carried out in 2006 are also detailed in the present report.

## 1. Introduction

This is the second progress report of Phase VII (2004-2008), covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2005. During the past year, the Secretariat has interacted with the Steering Committee through the "steering listserver". Information has been provided on upcoming meetings, availability of ECP/GR reports and IPGRI publications, developments of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and of AEGIS, training opportunities and fellowships. National Coordinators have been able to nominate participants in the meetings, thereby making use of their country quotas, and to comment and take decisions on various issues or proposals, such as the "Boreal project" on climate change.

The "steering listserver" seems to still be an effective mechanism for communication and decision-making and the Nordic Gene Bank should be thanked for maintaining it in operation.

Further to the information distributed through the listserver, this report aims at providing a comprehensive overview of the activities conducted within the framework of ECP/GR during the year 2005.

## 2. Implementation of Phase VII of ECP/GR

As of the end of February 2006, a total of 28 countries have formalized their membership to Phase VII of ECP/GR. Seven other countries have not signed the Letter of Agreement, but have paid annual contributions for Phase VII. In the case of Iceland, Italy and France, formal membership and payment of contributions are still pending. However, these countries have expressed their intention to continue being members of ECP/GR during Phase VII. Azerbaijan joined ECP/GR in 2005. The list of member countries is kept updated online (see <http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/AboutECPGR.htm/>).

Other relevant documents related to the implementation of Phase VII are available from the ECP/GR Web pages. These are the following:

**ECP/GR Terms of reference:** [http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/ToRs\\_PhaseVII.doc](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/ToRs_PhaseVII.doc)

**Networks' budget allocation for Phase VII:** [http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Budget\\_PhaseVII.pdf](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Budget_PhaseVII.pdf)

**Country quota for Phase VII:** [http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Country\\_quota\\_PVII\\_New.pdf](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Introduction/Country_quota_PVII_New.pdf)

## 3. Activities carried out within the Networks

### 3.1 Cereals Network

**Priority WGs:** *Avena* and Wheat

**Lower priority WG:** Barley

A couple of changes occurred in the **Cereals Network Coordinating Group (NCG)**, as Annick Le Blanc and Wieslaw Podyma have changed jobs. The NCG now consists of six members: Helmut Knüpffer, Gatersleben, Germany (Network Coordinator); Iva Faberová, Prague, Czech Republic; Christoph Germeier, Braunschweig, Germany; Marja Jalli, Jokioinen, Finland; Andreas Katsiotis, Athens, Greece; and Gert Kleijer, Nyon, Switzerland.

**The Second meeting of the Working Group (WG) on Wheat** was held on 22-24 September 2005 in La Rochelle, France, bringing together representatives from 26 European countries. It was an important milestone for the Working Group, since its composition had changed significantly since its first meeting (Prague, November 2001).

A. Le Blanc, Co-Chair of the Working Group together with I. Faberová since 2001, gave a synthesis of the country reports received before the meeting, highlighting the amount of work carried out and the heterogeneity in the description of the collections and in the availability of data. I. Faberová, also manager of the European Wheat Database, gave an update on the status of the database which currently holds data from 55 contributing institutions from 31 countries, with a total of 152 524 records representing about 63% of the estimated total of 240 000 wheat accessions held in European countries.

The coverage of the passport information in the database has increased, both through downloading of data from EURISCO and inclusion of data sets received from contributing countries, for a total of 20 358 new records. However, the global data analysis shows important gaps in the completeness of passport and collecting data and there have been very few contributions regarding characterization data for the six descriptors agreed upon in 2001 (less than 7% of characterization/evaluation data are included in the EWDB). The six descriptors were revised by introducing the option of using simplified alternative scales.

A new workplan was established including deadlines for delivery of characterization and evaluation data and for updating safety-duplication information. Fifteen additional evaluation descriptors were agreed upon and tables to document identified genes will be added to the database. It was also agreed that *Aegilops* material would be included in the EWDB, and E. Millet, from the Institute for Cereal Crops Improvement in Tel-Aviv, Israel, offered his expertise for the consequent necessary updating of the taxonomic table in the database.

Other items discussed were the submission of a proposal to the EU RESGEN call in 2006; creation of an Action in the COST framework (see <http://cost.cordis.lu/src/whatiscost.cfm>), and collaboration with the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The ECP/GR-funded project AEGIS (A European Genetic Resources Integrated System) was also presented and discussed. A. Le Blanc having submitted her resignation due to other commitments, G. Kleijer was elected Chair of the Working Group, and I. Faberová was elected Vice-Chair.

The full report of the meeting was published in early 2006, jointly with the report of the Cereals Network meeting (Yerevan, Armenia, 2003).

The **Cereals News Bulletin**, an initiative of the Cereals Network to exchange information on work related to cereals, continued this year. This electronic newsletter includes a wide range of news related to the work carried out on cereals in Europe and is available online (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Cereals/cerealsnews.asp>).

**Collecting missions.** According to the Cereals Network plans, rescue missions should be set up to collect endangered wild oats in Italy, Morocco and Spain and rare *Aegilops* in Israel. In May 2005, a visit was made by L. Maggioni (IPGRI), with F. Branca (University of Catania, Italy), R. von Bothmer (Sweden) and G. Poulsen (Denmark) to a site of *A. insularis* in Sicily. Seed samples were collected and deposited at the University of Catania, which is planning to verify the identity of this material via cytogenetic analysis of its tetraploid status.

Plans were made for collecting oats in Morocco and Spain in 2006. A Letter of Agreement was prepared and signed between IPGRI and the Institute for Cereal Crops Improvement, Tel-Aviv, Israel, whereby a mission to collect *Aegilops sharonensis* threatened by urbanization and road constructions will take place in 2006.

A **meeting of database managers** to establish links between barley databases was planned for 2005, however this meeting was postponed until further notice, depending on availability of the database managers. The aim is to create a "single entry point" for barley germplasm information worldwide by joining forces among the European Barley Database (IPK), the Barley Genetic Stocks Database (NGB) and the Global Inventory of Barley Genetic Resources (ICARDA). In the framework of the EU RESGEN project proposal EPGRIS-2 (prepared under the coordination of the Documentation and Information Network), it is planned to establish an Internet portal for barley genetic resources, and these activities will have to be harmonized.

**The European Secale Database**, maintained by the Plant Breeding and Acclimatization Institute, IHAR, Radzików, Poland) has a new manager, Mr Marcin Zaczy ski, replacing Wieslaw Podyma.

**Other plans for the Cereals Network activities in 2006** include the organization of an *ad hoc* meeting on rye and triticale genetic resources on 27 June, back-to-back with the EUCARPIA rye meeting in June in Rostock, Germany. The aim of this meeting is to have an overview of the conservation of genetic resources of triticale and rye, to establish collaboration at the European level, to develop the CCDB on triticale and rye and to plan future activities for these crops.

### 3.2 Forages Network

#### Priority WG: Forages

Following the retirement of Loek van Soest, Chris Kik took his place as a member of the **Forages Network Coordinating Group**, which currently consists of seven members: Beat Boller (Network Coordinator), Zürich, Switzerland; Lajos Horváth, Tápiószéle, Hungary; Chris Kik, Wageningen, The Netherlands; Petter Marum, Ilseng, Norway; Valeria Negri, Perugia, Italy; Magdalena Ševčíková, Zubří, Czech Republic; and Evelin Willner, Malchow/Poel, Germany.

A meeting of the **Network Coordinating Group, jointly with some forage central database managers**, was held in Lindau, Switzerland on 21-22 April. Main objectives were to discuss progress made by the Working Group and review the workplan for the remainder of the Phase. A practical session was held with the intention of analyzing central databases and identifying the Most Original Samples. This exercise allowed the content of the databases to be improved through addition of new data exchanged during the meeting, and also allowed the identification of practical problems and possible solutions for database analysis. The database managers of the *Dactylis*, *Festuca*, *Lolium*, *Medicago*, *Phleum*, *Poa* and *Trifolium* databases should soon be in a position to make a proposal for “holders of primary collections”. The intention to submit a project proposal to the EU was developed into a decision to prepare a project proposal on *Medicago* genetic resources, including the identification of a core collection. This proposal was not ready for the first call of EC Regulation 870/2004 and will possibly be prepared for the second call, expected to be launched in early 2006. The status of safety-duplication and the table of regeneration standards adopted by the forage genebanks were reviewed. A fairly complete list of regeneration methodologies currently in use has already been published on the Forages WG Web site and is planned to be further improved, thereby considerably enhancing transparency of genebank operations. The report of this meeting was published on the Web ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Forages/Forages\\_Lindau.pdf](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Forages/Forages_Lindau.pdf)).

The report of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on Forages, Linz, Austria, March 2003 was published in early 2005.

### 3.3 Fruit Network

**Priority WGs:** *Malus/Pyrus* and *Prunus*

**Lower priority WG:** *Vitis*

The **Fruit Network Coordinating Group** was re-defined after the meeting of the *Prunus* WG in December 2005, with the inclusion of all of the fruit database managers in the Group, under consideration of the importance to discuss documentation issues across the Network. The NCG therefore now consists of seven members: Ken Tobutt (Network Coordinator), East Malling, United Kingdom; Emilie Balsemin, Bordeaux, France; Stein Harald Hjeltnes, Leikanger, Norway; Emma-Jane Lamont, Faversham, United Kingdom; Marc Lateur, Gembloux, Belgium; Erika Maul, Siebeldingen, Germany; and Jesus Ortiz, Madrid, Spain.

An *ad hoc* meeting for the preparation of an EU project proposal together with members of EUFORGEN took place in Gembloux, Belgium, 18 February 2005. This meeting was attended by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the *Malus/Pyrus* and the *Prunus* Working Groups, as well as by two representatives of the EUFORGEN Scattered Broadleaves Network (former Noble Hardwood Network). Draft elements were laid down for a project proposal dedicated to sustainable management of European fruit and forest tree biodiversity and enhancement of its practical uses. Marc Lateur from the Agricultural Research Center, Gembloux, Belgium, will be the project coordinator. The proposal was further developed during the *Prunus* WG meeting in December 2005, with the intention to submit the project to the second call for proposals. The project, entitled “Sustainable management of European Fruit Tree Biodiversity and Enhancement of its Utilization (BIODIFRUIT)”, would cover *Prunus*, *Malus* and *Pyrus*, but excluding the forest use component, due to the need to better focus and

to simplify the organization and coordination. The project foresees, *inter alia*, the harmonization of the fruit tree central databases, establishment of a common methodology for the use of molecular markers, implementation of the European collection concept according to the AEGIS "vision", and the improvement of utilization of fruit tree genetic resources on the basis of case studies.

The **Working Group on *Prunus* held its Seventh meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus, 1-3 December 2005**. The meeting was attended by representatives from 23 countries and one representative of the European NGOs.

The new *Prunus* database manager (Ms Emilie Balsemin, replacing Anne Zanetto), based in Bordeaux, France, showed progress made with the database, specifically the Cherry component, which has been made accessible and searchable on-line since September 2005. Harmonization of the database with EURISCO was discussed and agreed and plans were made to further improve the DB with additional features and to extend this model to the other *Prunus* crops, with the eventual option of increasing harmonization among all the fruit databases. The DB's potential for use in the identification of duplicate groups was shown. However, the full coverage of relevant passport data is the key element in this case.

Progress made by the *Prunus* sub-group within the European Genebank Integrated System (AEGIS) project was presented to the entire Working Group. The long-term "vision" for AEGIS was also presented. General support was expressed by the WG for this initiative and suggestions were made for the specific implementation of AEGIS for *Prunus*. The possible use of the DB to identify unique accessions for AEGIS was shown and a flow diagram for decision-making was tested. Specific descriptors related to the establishment of AEGIS were also agreed for addition to the DB. The Group made plans to identify cherry accessions in 2006 that could be designated for AEGIS.

Opportunities offered by microsatellite markers for managing *Prunus* collections were explained. A proposal for inclusion of SSR markers into the EPDB will be prepared and circulated by the DB manager. The organization of a workshop on fingerprinting, involving *Prunus*, *Malus/Pyrus* and *Vitis* representatives, is planned for October 2006 in East Malling, UK. A list detailing *Prunus* crop expertise readily available to participants was compiled and circulated to all the WG members. Ken Tobutt, UK, was reconfirmed as Chair of the Group, and Daniela Benediková Vice-Chair. The proceedings of the Sixth (Budapest 2003) and Seventh meeting (Larnaca 2005) of the WG will be printed in early 2006.

Issue 5 of the ***Prunus* Genetic Resources Newsletter** was produced by the Fruit Growing Research & Extension Station of Valcea, Romania, with inputs from several WG members and about 300 copies were distributed by IPGRI in September 2005. The production of issue 6 is planned for 2007.

*Ad hoc* workshops on synonymy and on *in situ* and on-farm conservation of *Prunus*, *Malus/Pyrus* and *Vitis* were planned for 2007 and 2008, respectively.

### **3.4 Oil and Protein Crops Network**

**Priority WG:** Grain Legumes

The **Oil and Protein Crops Network Coordinating Group** consists of four members: Mike Ambrose (Network Coordinator), Norwich, UK; Siyka Angelova, Sadovo, Bulgaria; Gérard Duc, Dijon, France; and Wojciech Świącicki, Poznan, Poland.

An *ad hoc* meeting on conservation, management and regeneration methods for Grain Legume genetic resources was organized by task force members of the ECP/GR Working Group on Grain Legumes (WGGL) and was held in Valladolid, Spain, 22-23 September 2005. This was part of an ongoing survey into the current status and methodologies employed in the regeneration of Grain Legumes species. Twenty-six people attended the meeting in Valladolid, Spain on 22-23 September 2005, including WGGL members and invited experts from Canada, Europe and Morocco, and representatives from ICARDA and CIMMYT. The meeting aimed to review and discuss the preliminary findings of the recent on-line questionnaire on current management practices of GL genetic resources; to exchange experiences and share expertise and to plan strategies on how to make headway on key issues. The topics covered included mating systems, pollinators, multiplication

methodologies, statistical methods for monitoring genetic erosion during multiplication and complementary conservation strategies. Overviews of GL genebank activities from a number of institutions were also presented. The on-line questionnaire prepared by the task force was set up with IPGRI support and achieved a 42% response rate with responses from 23 countries from both public and private sectors. The data represent an important compilation of the current status of knowledge, management practices and key issues associated with the maintenance of GL germplasm. A report of the preliminary results is available on-line ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/grain\\_legumes/grain\\_legumes.htm](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/grain_legumes/grain_legumes.htm)).

From the results of this workshop, information on mating systems of GL species was considered too general and often missing for a number of species. Working experiences relating to mating behaviour of individual species were not universally shared. Recent findings on the range and behaviour of pollinating insects show that the current guidelines for spatial isolation are significantly out of date and therefore create uncertainty. Storage conditions in genebanks vary considerably. In a significant number of cases regeneration is being carried out every 5-9 years. A strong recommendation arising from the discussions was to promote the greater use of base collections and a reduction in the frequency of regeneration as ways to offset these problems. The task force made plans for a number of action points for the near future, including analysis and research, with the objective of producing revised guidelines and protocols on mating systems and regeneration procedures.

A CD-ROM incorporating all of the meeting presentations, the survey analysis and the executive summary is available from the ECP/GR Secretariat. Relevant information is also available on the WGGL Web pages ([http link?](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/grain_legumes/grain_legumes.htm)).

### **3.5 Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network**

**Priority WGs:** *Beta* and Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp)

**Lower priority WG:** Potato

Following the retirement of Loek van Soest, the **Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network Coordinating Group** now consists of five members: Lothar Frese (Network Coordinator), Braunschweig, Germany; Andrea Carboni, Bologna, Italy; Bruno Desprez, Cappelle-en-Pévèle, France; Roel Hoekstra, Wageningen, The Netherlands; and Martin Pavelek, Šumperk, Czech Republic.

A **technical meeting of the Network's Central Crop Database managers** was held in Braunschweig, Germany, 28 July 2005 to discuss the data models for flax and hemp, the progress achieved and the steps needed to upgrade the databases. Funding of a specific technical project through the NCG budget was discussed as the most useful way to bridge the gap between the reiterated recommendations made during Network meetings and the possibility for their implementation in practice. It was agreed that a proposal for the development of a tool that could serve all five crop database managers and at the same time provide assistance for the development of the International Flax Database would be prepared. The project proposal, to be refined by the NCG and submitted to the Steering Committee for approval during 2006, will include the transfer to the Flax Database and test use of the database module developed at BAZ, Braunschweig. In this way, the module will be debugged and further improved and the Flax DB manager will be able to identify duplicates in a more efficient way. A component of the project will also be dedicated to characterization and evaluation data, with data collection from donors and test analysis on characterization and evaluation data of the application GENOTYPDATA, which was developed by the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Biosafety of Nitra, Slovakia. The minutes of this meeting and the presentations made are available on the Network's Web site ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Indus\\_crops/indus\\_crops.htm](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Indus_crops/indus_crops.htm)).

The **Third joint meeting of the ECP/GR *Beta* Working Group and World *Beta* Network** was originally planned in October 2005, but was postponed to March 2006, in Tenerife, Spain, organized in collaboration with the Instituto Canario de Investigaciones Agrarias. The agenda includes sessions on scientific, technical and financial aspects of *in situ* management, *in situ* management of wild *Beta* for breeding, review of the status of national collections and of the International Database for *Beta*.

A one-day **Potato WG ad hoc meeting** was planned in 2005, but the Secretariat did not receive further indication from the Working Group on the need to hold this meeting and this was temporarily suspended.

The **First meeting of the Working Group on Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp)** is planned to be held in Wageningen, The Netherlands, on 14-16 June 2006. The agenda includes briefings on the status of flax and hemp collections in Europe and the development of the respective databases.

### **3.6 Vegetables, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network**

**Priority WGs:** Cucurbits, Leafy Vegetables, Medicinal and Aromatic plants, and Umbellifer Crops

**Lower priority WGs:** *Allium*, *Brassica* and Solanaceae

The **Vegetables, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network Coordinating Group** consisted of eight members: Grégoire Thomas (Network Coordinator), Rennes, France; Dave Astley, Wellesbourne, United Kingdom; Dea Baričević, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Ietje Boukema, Wageningen, The Netherlands; Marie-Christine Daunay, Montfavet, France; Maria José Díez, Valencia, Spain; Joachim Keller, Gatersleben, Germany; and Aleš Lebeda, Olomouc, Czech Republic. In early 2006, due to a change in his responsibilities as director general of Agrocampus Rennes, G. Thomas decided to step down from the ECP/GR direct involvement. His role as Network Coordinator was taken up by D. Astley. A new member W. van Doojeweert, Wageningen, The Netherlands was added to the NCG, while A. Lebeda also left the Group.

The **Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP)**, in collaboration with IPGRI's specialist, has made progress during the year on the preparation of minimum characterization descriptors for *Achillea*, *Artemisia*, *Carum*, *Gentiana*, *Hypericum*, *Mentha*, *Melissa*, *Origanum*, *Salvia* and *Thymus*. Plans to submit a project proposal to the first call of Regulation 870/2004 did not materialize and the opportunity was postponed to the second call in 2006.

The **Cucurbits WG met for the first time in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 1-2 September 2005**. The meeting, attended by representatives from nine countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey), set the basis for further improvement of the quality and coverage of passport data in the European Central Cucurbits Database (ECCUDB), which was established by the Institute for the Conservation and Improvement of Agrodiversity (Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain). At present it holds the passport data of 22 815 accessions of 21 genera conserved in 37 holding institutions and is searchable on-line ([www.comav.upv.es/eccudb.html](http://www.comav.upv.es/eccudb.html)). Plans were made to include characterization and evaluation data, starting with a number of descriptors agreed by the Group for melon, cucumber, watermelon and *Cucurbita* species. Guidelines with general practices for good regeneration were drafted as a preliminary document. Some members of the Group were involved in the preparation of a project, which was submitted for the first call for proposals of Regulation 870/2004, to undertake regeneration, characterization and evaluation activities. The ECCUDB will be completed and enhanced using the results obtained in the project. Core collections will also be established and the participation of NGOs will promote the utilization of the materials by organic farmers. M.J. Díez (Spain) was elected Chair of the Group and W. van Doojeweert (The Netherlands) Vice-Chair. The draft report of this meeting was uploaded on the ECP/GR Web pages ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Cucurbits/Cucurbits\\_Plovdiv\\_revdraft.pdf](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Workgroups/Cucurbits/Cucurbits_Plovdiv_revdraft.pdf)).

The **Leafy Vegetables WG met for the first time in Olomouc, Czech Republic, 13-14 October 2005**, with participants from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

The WG took stock of the achievements to date, following the meeting of an informal group on Leafy Vegetables in Skierniewice, Poland, May 2003. The ECP/GR International *Lactuca* Database, maintained by the Centre for Genetic Resources (CGN), Wageningen, The Netherlands, is available on-line at [www.cgn.wur.nl/pg](http://www.cgn.wur.nl/pg) and includes passport data and additional descriptors for about 12 000 accessions, of which about 10 000 are *L. sativa* and 1375 are *L. serriola*. It also includes *L. virosa*, *L. saligna*, *L. perennis*, and other species. The ECP/GR Spinach and *Cichorium* databases are also being

developed, under the responsibility of CGN and GEVES, Brion, France respectively. These two databases will be able to develop rapidly, especially in the event of funding of the leafy vegetables project, submitted to the first call of proposals for Regulation 870/2004. This project, coordinated by CGN and involving several members of the WG, focuses on lettuce, spinach, chicory and the minor leafy vegetables lambs lettuce and rocket. Planned activities include documentation, regeneration and characterization, evaluation for resistance and abiotic characters, and evaluation for marketing and use.

The WG reviewed the minimum characterization descriptors previously agreed for cultivated lettuce, wild *Lactuca* species, spinach, leaf chicory, witloof, endive and root chicory. Plans were also made to draft minimum descriptors for *Asparagus* and *Valerianella*. Information was collected and updated on safety-duplication status, level of regeneration and characterization and regeneration protocols in use.

The Group highlighted the presence of several gaps in the existing collections of wild and cultivated lettuce, since several important geographical areas are not represented, such as North and South Africa, Central Asia and China. Recommendations were made to establish appropriate collections from these areas. The WG will also seek information on occurrence of landraces and variation of lettuce, which is missing for the part of Eastern Europe that remains outside the European Union. The Group elected I. Boukema, The Netherlands as its Chair and K. Karlova, Czech Republic, as Vice-Chair. The report of this meeting will soon be made available on the WG Web site. The draft report of this meeting is available from the ECP/GR Secretariat.

In 2006, the *Allium* and *Brassica* Working Groups decided to use their lower priority WG funds for a joint *ad hoc* meeting, which took place in Prague, Czech Republic in January 2006. The main objective of these meetings was to inform the groups about the progress and perspectives of the AEGIS project, which uses these crops as a model. These groups also had the opportunity to give their inputs with comments and recommendations during the final stages of the AEGIS feasibility study.

### **3.7 Documentation and Information Network**

**The Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group** registered one change during 2005, since Anne Zanetto changed job and terminated her engagement with this Group. The membership is currently composed of six people: Frank Begemann (Network Coordinator), Bonn, Germany; Theo van Hintum, Wageningen, The Netherlands; Dražen Jelovac, Zemun Polje, Serbia and Montenegro (representing SEEDNet); Helmut Knüpfper, Gatersleben, Germany; Ahmet Semsettin Tan, Menemen, Turkey; and Ian Thomas, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom.

The structure of the Network was also redefined, following the decision to terminate one of the two advisory bodies, i.e. the Information and Communication Technology Advisory Group (ICT/AG) (former Internet Advisory Group). The Documentation and Information Network will however continue to offer an advisory role upon request. The other advisory body, the EURISCO Advisory Group, continues its function to monitor the progress of EURISCO and give advice on its further development.

**The Second joint meeting of the Documentation and Information Network Coordinating Group and the EURISCO Advisory Group** was held in Bonn on 11 April 2005. The role of the ECCDBs versus EURISCO was re-discussed. Several discrepancies between data available from EURISCO and from the central databases were noted and the recommendation was made to analyze the reasons for discrepancies and propose actions for improvement of data consistency. The role of ECCDBs, also including characterization and evaluation data, will be revisited in two years' time, at the EURISCO Advisory Group meeting which is planned for 2007 in Rome, Italy. Further development of EURISCO was discussed, as a central node for establishing a coherent European Information System under the auspices of ECP/GR, whereby *ex situ* and *in situ* data might be gathered, deposited and displayed through the same type of organizational and technical infrastructure. The development of a project proposal (EPGRIS-2) under the coordination of IGER, United Kingdom, was defined.



## EURISCO catalogue

Following the recommendations made by the EURISCO Advisory Group at its First meeting in Bonn, Germany, March 2005, several of the recommended actions were accomplished, while others are ongoing.

The services, developments and improvements made during 2005 are summarized below:

The helpdesk support is an ongoing service, responding to various requests, ranging from clarifications on the use of EURISCO to providing specific datasets to National Focal Points (NFPs), ECCDB managers and other users;

Technical development and maintenance of EURISCO were undertaken as follows:

- Site maintenance: performed by doing data integrity checks, system libraries updates, backup and periodic checks of the software;
- System development: the data check procedures have been improved to allow easier checking of the use of the required descriptor standards. Following the recent modifications, some minor syntax errors that used to be flagged as "errors", are now automatically corrected and only flagged as "warnings". In this way, the National Inventory Focal Point is not forced to resubmit the dataset;
- Periodic updates of the FAO institutes table have been made, and improvement of the download format of the institutes table has been implemented in coordination with Stefano Diulgheroff (FAO). Now the downloading of FAO tables includes Excel support. This allows the import of the table directly into Excel, making it possible to automatically update EURISCO with the FAO institutes table;
- The dataset download procedure is going through revision and improvement, and is expected to be ready during early 2006.

Coordination and management of the EURISCO Catalogue activities consisted in maintaining close contacts with NFPs and consequently facilitating an increased contribution of country data, as well as of data quality. The amount of accessions data has increased to over 970 000 and two new National Inventories (NIs) (Greece and Poland) have joined. Other National Inventory data are foreseen to be added during 2006 from countries in which NIs are still under development (<http://eurisco.ecpgr.org>);

Public awareness and dissemination activities have been carried out at several international *fora*, consisting in demonstrations, PowerPoint presentations and the preparation of a technical poster. A EURISCO poster was prepared and other public awareness materials are being developed (fact sheet, poster, bookmarks and stickers). The awareness about and interest in EURISCO is expected to attract new data into the catalogue. EURISCO was also presented in a workshop organized by the IPGRI's Regional Office for the Americas in Cali, Colombia (September 2005). On this occasion, a demonstration was given of the possible adoption of the EURISCO model for the implementation of an accession-level platform (AMERISCO) in the Americas region. Articles on EURISCO and related activities can be found in the IPGRI Regional Newsletter for Europe (issues 30 and 31) (<http://www.ipgri.cgiar.org/regions/europe/news.asp>);

Two monitoring surveys are currently ongoing, targeting the EURISCO Catalogue as well as the National Inventories development and implementation at the country level.

The implementation of Web logs for identification of users and analysis of their needs is an ongoing process, aiming at better targeting the work for improving EURISCO.

In addition to the tasks described above, the Secretariat has analyzed the reasons for the discrepancy between the data available from EURISCO and those available from the ECP/GR Central Crop Databases and/or from the Working Groups' reports. A number of reasons were identified:

1. WG members may not be sufficiently informed about the EURISCO Catalogue (and the descriptors used) or the role of the respective National Inventory Focal Point;
2. The NFPs may not be sufficiently aware of the flow of data provided by the Working Groups' members to the different ECCDBs.

It seems evident that the communication/information and awareness channels between NFPs and WG members and *vice versa* need to be reinforced. A way forward will be to make NFPs and country

WG members aware of each other's roles. This will increasingly be possible through communication during the WG meetings. This awareness raising is also considered part of the role of the National Coordinators.

### **The EPGRIS-2 project proposal**

A project proposal on the "Establishment of a European Plant Genetic Resources Information Infrastructure-2" (EPGRIS-2) was submitted for funding under the first call for proposals of EC Regulation 870/2004. The project intends to further develop the EURISCO Catalogue by specifically focusing on the following objectives:

- Increasing the quantity and quality of data in EURISCO, including characterization/evaluation data as well as passport data;
- Providing more efficient, user-friendly methods for data exchange between data providers and EURISCO;
- Training and supporting National Focal Points and others as well as strengthening the human network to promote and disseminate EURISCO and maximize its usage throughout Europe;
- Implementing demonstrator portals for four important crops in Europe (Barley, Beet, Lettuce and *Lolium*), bringing together information about the crops, their uses, plant genetic resources and other useful data;
- Providing a GIS Web-based service for visualizing geographical origins of populations and the distribution pattern of associated characterization and evaluation data;
- Improving the quality of plant names in EURISCO and original providers' databases, and extending EURISCO search capability to include synonyms and common names in European languages.

The project is coordinated by IGER, United Kingdom, and partners include INRA, France (Modeling of passport, characterization and evaluation data), the Nordic Gene Bank (XML schema and infrastructure), IPGRI (Capacity building), CGN, The Netherlands (Pilot Crop Portals), IBV, Germany (GIS-Visualization) and IPK, Germany (Taxonomy). All the European countries contributing data to EURISCO are expected to benefit from the project via training and from the final results.

### **The EGRISI project proposal**

The preparation of a project proposal for the development of a "European Genetic Resources *in situ* Inventory" (EGRISI) was also advanced. The proposal is expected to be submitted in early 2006 under the second call for proposals of EC Regulation 870/2004.

This project's aim is to inventory European crop wild relatives (CWR) and crop landrace (LR) *in situ* resources and make the information available via a decentralized, permanent and widely accessible Web-based information system. To achieve this, EGRISI has five subordinate objectives:

- To create an easily accessible Web-based *in situ* PGR inventory of baseline biodiversity data for European CWR and LR;
- To agree on ECP/GR data structures for inventorying CWR and LR information, identify CWR data sources via National PGR coordinators, collate existing CWR data and establish a permanent mechanism for updating the European CWR and LR inventories;
- To undertake threat and conservation assessment, linked to gap analysis of CWR and LR, as a move towards rationalizing the conservation of *in situ* genetic resource diversity in a minimum number of designated genetic reserves and on-farm sites across Europe;
- To document available characterization or ecogeographic data for *in situ* crop wild relatives and landraces using existing knowledge bases, farmer-based knowledge and GIS techniques to pinpoint material as being most likely sources of useful and relevant genes;
- To communicate project results to the widest possible group of European stakeholders, policy-makers and legislators as a means of aiding the efficient and effective conservation and use of European CWR diversity.

The ECP/GR Web site was continuously amended, in order to provide updated information on future events, meeting reports, workplans, and other relevant news. This process included the preparation of a new section on AEGIS. A second edition of the *Cereals News Bulletin* was published on the Cereals Web pages section (see above, Cereals section).

The **Web entry pages of the European Central Crop Databases (ECCDBs)** have been continuously updated. There are currently 60 ECCDBs managed by 50 database managers. Of the 60 ECCDBs, 57 have a Web entry page and 38 provide on-line access to the data, with an additional 7 that provide at least off-line download possibilities. Fifteen databases are under construction. Of the 57 Web entry pages, 34 are maintained by the ECP/GR Secretariat. Access to the ECCDBs is facilitated through a single entry point at <http://www.ipgri.cgiar.org/links/selectcrop.asp>.

Besides passport data, characterization data are also available from ten databases, as follows:

1. ECP/GR Barley Database (IPK- Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research, Gatersleben, Germany)
2. ECP/GR International Database for *Beta* (BAZ, Braunschweig, Germany)
3. ECP/GR Eggplant Database (Botanical and Experimental Garden, Nijmegen, The Netherlands)
4. ECP/GR Maize Database (Maize Research Institute "Zemun Polje", Zemun-Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro)
5. ECP/GR *Malus* Database (National Fruit Collections, Wye College, University of London, Kent, UK)
6. ECP/GR Cultivated Potato Database (SASA, Edinburgh, UK)
7. ECP/GR Wild Potato Database (CGN, Wageningen, The Netherlands)
8. ECP/GR *Prunus* Database (INRA Bordeaux, France)
9. ECP/GR *Vitis* Database (BAZ, Siebeldingen, Germany)
10. ECP/GR Wheat Database (RICP, Prague-Ruzyne, Czech Republic)

### **3.8. *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network**

The ***In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network Coordinating Group** is composed of six members: Nigel Maxted (Network Coordinator), Birmingham, UK; Lothar Frese, Braunschweig, Germany; Paul Freudenthaler, Linz, Austria; José Iriondo, Madrid, Spain; Valeria Negri, Perugia, Italy; and Zdenek Stehno, Prague, Czech Republic.

The Task Force on Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves continued to be involved in the EU-funded project on "European Crop Wild Relative Diversity Assessment and Conservation Forum – PGR Forum". The project, coordinated by Nigel Maxted and Brian Ford-Lloyd at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, held one workshop in 2005, focusing on **threat and conservation assessment** (Korsør, Denmark, 27-30 April 2005). Additionally, the **final dissemination conference** was organized as part of the First International Conference on Crop Wild Relative Conservation and Use, held in Agrigento, Italy, 14-17 September 2005. The conference was attended by several members of the Task Force on Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves. Additionally, the ECP/GR Network funded the participation of 10 participants from Albania, Armenia (2), Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Italy, Poland, Russia and the United Kingdom.

During the conference, methods and experiences from various countries around the world were presented to an audience of 170 scientists. Elements for a Global Strategy on Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) were developed as a contribution to implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. Supportive policies, sustainable use and raising public awareness were identified as major priority areas, as well as the need for the identification of a network of key national and European sites for *in situ* CWR conservation.

The main results of PGR Forum were showcased, one of which is the PGR Forum CWR catalogue for Europe and the Mediterranean which provides a comprehensive inventory of CWR with ancillary data and links to external data for CWR in Europe made available by the Web-based Crop Wild Relative Information System (CWRIS) (<http://cwr.is.ecpgr.org>). As part of the exit strategy for PGR Forum, the documentation product of this project (i.e. the CWR catalogue and CWRIS) were handed over to be hosted by IPGRI on behalf of ECP/GR.

For more information about PGR Forum, including the Newsletter and workshop reports, visit [www.pgrforum.org](http://www.pgrforum.org).

In addition to EGRISI, a project proposal focused on the development of a European Genetic Resources *In situ* Inventory (see above), another proposal titled ONFARMSAFE, was prepared and

submitted to the first call for proposals under the European Council Regulation 870/2004. Valeria Negri, University of Perugia, Italy, coordinated this proposal. It is dedicated to describing on-farm conservation experiences in Europe, thereby facilitating information exchange on methods, techniques, utilization and marketing of products obtained from landraces.

The Network plans to hold a meeting of the On-farm Conservation and Management Task Force in June 2006 in Schorfheide-Chorin, Germany.

### **3.9 Inter-regional Cooperation Network**

The **Inter-regional Cooperation Network Coordinating Group** is composed of five members: Eva Thörn (Network Coordinator), Alnarp, Sweden; Marcello Broggio, Florence, Italy; Ladislav Dotlačil, Prague, Czech Republic; Vladimir Meglič, Ljubljana, Slovenia; and Bert Visser, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

A **meeting of the Network Coordinating Group** took place on 5 April 2005 in Ljubljana, Slovenia (as already reported in the 2004 progress report).

This was attended by Raymond Vodouhe, coordinator of the West Africa PGR network GRENEWCA. He conveyed the message that the concept of sharing of responsibilities, as publicized by ECP/GR, had taken root in that region, which was a gratifying result. GRENEWCA is anxious to continue collaboration with ECP/GR. In particular, training of trainers in various areas was requested. In order to facilitate contact and possible collaboration between regions, it was considered very important that the individual coordinators of the regional networks should be given the chance to meet and exchange information and ideas. Therefore a meeting between the African networks, IPGRI Central West Asia and North Africa Region (CWANA) and ECP/GR coordinators was proposed. It was proposed to use the small funds available to the Network to invite persons outside the ECP/GR region to relevant meetings. As a follow-up to the joint ECP/GR–GRENEWCA workshop held in Cotonou, Benin, in 2003, it was proposed to raise funds for training initiatives related to the EURISCO system (and other relevant documentation aspects) and to invite key persons from other regions to these training activities. The minutes of this meeting are available from the Network's Web site ([http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Inter\\_reg\\_coop/Minutes\\_interregcoop\\_NCG.doc](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Inter_reg_coop/Minutes_interregcoop_NCG.doc)).

Considering that the workplan of the ECP/GR inter-regional cooperative programme foresees a meeting between coordinators of the African network, the CWANA region and ECP/GR, the idea to extend this type of initiative to a global approach was discussed within IPGRI. Plans were tentatively made for a global meeting/workshop in 2006 of regional crop network coordinators. One of the objectives would be to develop approaches and platforms to facilitate the cooperation among regional PGR networks. Other objectives would be focused on clarifying the roles and responsibilities of networks vis-à-vis PGR *ex situ* conservation and on defining strategies for network operations and securing networks' long-term sustainability.

## **4. Thematic cross-cutting issues**

This budget line is dedicated to thematic actions of cross-cutting interest for several Networks, such as in the area of *in situ*/on-farm conservation and management and overall policies for *ex situ* conservation. Proposals for specific actions can be raised by the NCGs and submitted to the Steering Committee for approval. The point was raised whether these actions should be strictly proposed by the NCGs or can also be proposed by other bodies or individuals. The Secretariat has adopted a loose interpretation of this rule, but the Steering Committee may want to clarify this point during its next meeting.

As planned in the Networks' budget allocation document, during 2005 some funds were used by the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network, to allow PGR genebank representatives to attend the Crop Wild Relative Conference in Agrigento in 2005 (see *In situ*/On-farm Conservation Network). The initiative to submit a project on "Evaluating cooperation systems between the formal sector and the NGOs in four model countries" is under elaboration by Pro Specie Rara, on behalf of the NGOs.

The initiative taken by the ECP/GR Secretariat to strengthen collaboration between genebanks and the private sector for the regeneration of endangered vegetable accessions was not continued in 2005 due to the little interest shown by the genebanks to use the services of the breeders (see 2004 annual report for details).

A proposal to hold a workshop on Genetic resources in the Northern part of Europe, focusing on the present state and future vis-à-vis the expected climate and environmental changes, was proposed with the support of a number of national programmes and partners in the Nordic countries. The proposal was approved by the Steering Committee. This meeting will bring together a limited number of national representatives, including actors from the area, genebank curators as well as some key experts in fields of global warming and plant population biology working with northern marginal conditions. The outcome of the meeting will likely be the establishment of an expert group that will initiate the review of the present state of plant genetic resources in northern Europe and make strategic plans for their conservation in respect to global change.

The meeting, which is planned to be held in Rovaniemi, Finland, in September 2006, is also expected to address the view that climate change issues are not only relevant to the Northern part of Europe and that this workshop should possibly offer a model for similar actions in other parts of Europe, as well as indications on the opportunity and relevance for ECP/GR to invest funds in this area in the future.

A proposal was originally put forward for consideration and approved in 2004, i.e. the organization of a meeting on genebanks and genomics (should genebanks dedicate their efforts to DNA collections or molecular testing?). This would be a one-day meeting for seven people. The Secretariat is looking for a leading institution/individual wishing to oversee the planning of this meeting.

Remaining funds (about 7400 euro) are still available for actions and proposals are welcome.

## 5. Public awareness

In addition to the **ECP/GR Web site** (see: Documentation and Information Network), the following public awareness activities were undertaken:

- The **implementation of an ECP/GR brochure for the wider public** (to be printed in paper form and made available as an electronic template at the beginning of 2006), prepared in collaboration with European NGOs, and in closer contact with Pro Specie Rara, Switzerland. The objective is to enhance PGR visibility, encourage the public to request increased availability of PGR, and inform the public about the threats of genetic erosion.
- The **production of a new, special logo**, designed to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ECP/GR and to be used for all publications published during the year 2005.

Further public awareness initiatives proposed for action are listed below. Comments from the Steering Committee on the opportunity for the Secretariat to undertake, promote or coordinate these actions would be very welcome.

- Consultancy to gather information on the use of genebank material: what is the level of exchange of seed samples from European genebanks? What is the destination of the seed samples? What use is made of them?
- Development of a package of seeds of traditional varieties to be grown for display and multiplied by genebanks for distribution to the general public. Development of a common strategy to promote this type of initiative as a Europe-wide public awareness effort (five people for a 1-day meeting).

## 6. AEGIS project for a European Genebank Integrated System

In order to give enhanced support to the coordination of the AEGIS project, a Local AEGIS Task Force was established at IPGRI in March 2005, composed of Birgitte Lund (AEGIS project manager), Ehsan Dulloo, Jan Engels, Jozef Turok and Lorenzo Maggioni.

The first task of the Local AEGIS Task Force at IPGRI was to formulate a draft "Vision Paper" of a European genebank integration system, with input from the AEGIS Steering Committee.

Several meetings were then held in June 2005 at IPGRI headquarters, in order to present and discuss this paper with project partners and other actors:

- The AEGIS Steering Committee met on 20 June to discuss the draft of the "Vision Paper" presented to them by the Local AEGIS Task Force and agree on how to present and discuss this with the Project Partners;
- On 21 June a joint meeting between the AEGIS Steering Committee and the Global Crop Diversity Trust took place at FAO. The main purpose of this joint meeting was to share information, discuss collaboration and establish an effective link between the two bodies. The Trust is interested in collaboration with AEGIS and the ECP/GR. In particular, AEGIS may play a role on technical issues related to conservation strategies such as developing standard quality management systems in genebanks. It was agreed that the ECP/GR Networks could be helpful to ensure involvement of European institutions in the development of global crop conservation;
- The Project Partners had their mid-term meeting on 23- 24 June. The four crop subgroups *Allium*, *Avena*, *Brassica* and *Prunus* revised their workplans in order to meet the goals set out in the AEGIS Project Document.

Following circulation to the ECP/GR Steering Committee in October, the "Vision Paper" was thoroughly revised and turned into "A Strategic Framework for the Implementation of a European Genebank Integrated System". This document was resubmitted to the ECP/GR Steering Committee early in 2006 for endorsement.

Following the recommendation of the AEGIS Steering Committee, a proposal for concerted action, with IPGRI as the action leader and coordinator of six partners, was prepared and submitted at the end of September to the EU under the first call for proposals of Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004. Due to higher costs than expected in the implementation of the AEGIS feasibility study so far, this type of fundraising has become necessary to enable the fulfillment of this study. The objectives of the proposal are: a) to improve the coordination activities and prepare the final report of the ongoing feasibility study on the four model crops; b) to improve exchange of the existing data of *ex situ* collections among all the ECP/GR member countries in order to be able to clarify the concept and indicate lists of the Most Original Accessions / Most Appropriate Accessions; c) to organize a seminar with the purpose of disseminating to a larger group of stakeholders the AEGIS "vision" and recommendations resulting from the feasibility study. A total amount of euros 95 964 was requested from the European Commission with this proposal.

A regular meeting of the ECP/GR *Prunus* Working Group (December 2005) and two *ad hoc* meetings of the *Allium* and *Brassica* Working Groups (January 2006) included discussion focused on AEGIS. During these meetings, the respective Groups were able to compare their views with the "Vision Paper" and to better formulate their proposals and their needs, as part of their reports for the AEGIS feasibility study.

The next steps of the AEGIS feasibility study include, in 2006:

- Preparation of four crop subgroup reports by the respective project partners;
- Preparation by the ECP/GR Secretariat of a draft of a Collaboration Agreement that countries would need to adhere to in order to join AEGIS;
- Compilation of the final AEGIS project report by the ECP/GR Secretariat;
- Final AEGIS project meeting during summer 2006;

- Submission of AEGIS project report to the ECP/GR Steering Committee, as an agenda item for the meeting in September 2006.

A **Web Site on the AEGIS project** contains all the information, relevant documents, meeting reports and updates on activities (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/AEGIS.htm>).

## 7. ECP/GR and the EU Programme on genetic resources for agriculture

Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004 was published in the Official Journal of 24 April 2004, establishing a Community programme on the conservation, characterization, collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1467/94. The first call for proposals was launched in July 2005 with a deadline for submission on 30 September 2005.

The ECP/GR Secretariat, besides providing general support to the members of the various Working Groups, was directly involved in the preparation of three submitted proposals, in which IPGRI acts as a partner:

1. Targeted action EPGRIS 2 (Establishment of a European Plant Genetic Resources Information Infra-Structure-2). This project, prepared within the context of the Documentation and Information Network, is a follow-up of the project that led to the creation of the EURISCO catalogue (see above).
2. Targeted action ONFARMSAFE (On-farm safeguard of plant genetic resources), aiming to sustain and promote on-farm conservation of landraces through use, where their current and potential value is greatest in Europe. This project was prepared within the context of the *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network (see above).
3. Concerted action on AEGIS, aimed at strengthening the activities of the AEGIS feasibility study (see above).

Other projects that were prepared within the ECP/GR Working Groups include the Cucurbits, Leafy Vegetables and *Vitis* project proposals. Projects proposals on EGRISI (see above), *Avena*, Forages, Fruit, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and Umbellifer Crops aim at submission to the second call (expected in early 2006).

## 8. Link with other Networks and initiatives

The following interactions between ECP/GR and other Networks and initiatives took place during 2005:

- **SEEDNet.** The ECP/GR Coordinator attended as permanent observer, the Regional Steering Committee meetings of the Sida-funded South East Europe Development Network on Plant Genetic Resources (SEEDNet). The second and third meeting were held respectively in Podgorica, Serbia and Montenegro (January 2005) and in Osijek, Croatia (September 2005). Participation of SEEDNet representatives in the ECP/GR Documentation and Information NCG meeting in March 2005 and in the AEGIS project meeting in June was ensured with financial support from Sida. The design of the SEEDNet logo was prepared by IPGRI staff as a contribution to the Network.

Among the examples of the useful interaction between ECP/GR and SEEDNet, it can be mentioned that the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants WG of SEEDNet has adopted the same characterization descriptors selected by the respective ECP/GR WG. The suggestion was put forward that Serbia and Montenegro, within the context of SEEDNet support, could offer the maintenance of an ECP/GR database on Sunflower.

Collaboration with SEEDNet was also extended with the participation of the AEGIS project manager, B. Lund, in the first meeting of the SEEDNet Maize and Cereals WG (May 2005, Serbia and Montenegro). This was an opportunity to inform the Network about the AEGIS "Vision Paper" and to discuss its opportunities and implications.

- **Global Crop Diversity Trust.** Close interaction with the Trust initiative and staff is being maintained and developed, especially in the context of the AEGIS project. The ECP/GR Secretariat is regularly approached with requests for advice on European experts and relevant contacts, with the aim of contributing to the development of crop strategies for the Trust. The ECP/GR *Avena* database manager, L. Frese, was selected by the Trust as facilitator for the development of the strategy for oats (*Avena* sp.). The Chair and Vice-Chair of the ECP/GR Wheat Working Group (G. Kleijer and I. Faberová) have been appointed as members to the Strategy Advisory Committee for the wheat, rye and triticale strategy.
- **EC Sixth Framework Programme:**  
The ongoing **project SIGMEA** (Sustainable Introduction of Genetically Modified Crops into European Agriculture) (<http://sigmea.dyndns.org/>) is trying to identify the distribution of the cultivation of maize landraces in Europe in order to define potential impact of the introduction of GMOs in European agriculture. The ECP/GR Secretariat, in collaboration with R. Papa, University of Ancona, Italy, has circulated a questionnaire to get preliminary information on the occurrence of maize landraces on-farm in Europe. The response was very good, covering most of Europe. The results are being elaborated by the University of Ancona for circulation and as a basis for further research and collaboration.
- The **project CRYMCEPT** on “Establishing Cryopreservation Methods for Conserving European Plant Germplasm Collections” (<http://www.agr.kuleuven.ac.be/dtp/tro/crymcept/CRYMCEPT.htm>) held two training workshops in Leuven, Belgium (September 2005) and in Montpellier, France (October 2005). General presentations were developed by the ECP/GR Coordinator, with focus on AEGIS and the importance of cryopreservation for a genebank integrated system.

## 9. Publications

The following **ECP/GR publications** were produced in 2005 and can be obtained free of charge from the Secretariat. These publications are also available in electronic format through the ECP/GR Web site ([www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Publications/Publications.htm](http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Publications/Publications.htm)).

### ECP/GR reports:

- Report of a Working Group on Forages. Eighth meeting, April 2003, Linz, Austria;
- Report of a Vegetables Network. Joint Meeting with an *ad hoc* group on Leafy Vegetables, May 2003, Skierniewice, Poland;
- Cereal genetic resources in Europe. Report of a Cereals Network. First meeting, July 2003, Yerevan Armenia / Report of a Working Group on Wheat. Second meeting, September 2005, La Rochelle, France.

### Electronic documents:

- Report of a Network Coordinating Group on Forages. *Ad hoc* Meeting, April 2005, Lindau, Switzerland;
- Minutes of a Network Coordinating Group on Inter-regional Cooperation, April 2005, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Summary of a Network Coordinating Group on Documentation and Information and the EURISCO Advisory Group. Joint meeting, April 2005, Bonn, Germany;
- Minutes of the Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops NCG and database managers. Technical Meeting, July 2005, Braunschweig, Germany;
- Conservation, management and regeneration of Grain Legume genetic resources. Executive report of an *ad hoc* meeting, September 2005, Valladolid, Spain;
- Report of a Survey on Conservation, Management and Regeneration of Grain Legume Genetic Resources;
- Part I of the Report of a Working Group on Cucurbits. First Meeting, 1-2 September 2005, Plovdiv, Bulgaria;
- Part I of the Report of a Working Group on Leafy Vegetables. First Meeting, 13-14 October 2005, Olomouc, Czech Republic.



## CD-ROMs

For the first time CD-ROMs were compiled, containing information relating to meetings (i.e. PowerPoint presentations, scientific papers, summary reports). During 2005, two CD-ROMs were prepared relating to the Second meeting of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Working Group held in December 2004 and the *ad hoc* meeting on regeneration methods for Grain Legume genetic resources (September 2005).

A cover image has also been designed for the CD-ROMs. The CD-ROMs were distributed to all participants in the meetings and relevant Working Group members, and advertised on the Web and in the Regional Office for Europe Newsletter. Copies of CD-ROMs are available upon request from the ECP/GR Secretariat.

Issues 30 and 31 of the **IPGRI Newsletter for Europe** were also published in 2005 with contributions and partial financial support from the ECP/GR.

- The following poster was presented at the XLIX Italian Society of Agricultural Genetics Annual Congress, 12/15 September 2005, Potenza, Italy: Bitocchi, E., A. Giardini, L. Nanni, S. Strajeru, L. Maggioni, P. Valoti and R. Papa. *In situ* conservation of maize landraces in Europe;
- The following paper was presented by M.J. Díez at the Third International Cucurbit Symposium 2005, 11-17 September 2005, Townsville, Australia: Díez, M.J., F. Nuez, L. Maggioni and W. van Dooijeweert. The ECP/GR Cucurbits Working Group. *Acta Horticulturae* (in press).

## Publications in preparation:

- Report of a Working Group on *Prunus*. Sixth Meeting, June 2003, Budapest, Hungary, and Seventh Meeting, December 2005, Larnaca, Cyprus;
- Report of a Working Group on *Vitis*. First Meeting, June 2003, Pali, Serbia and Montenegro;
- Report of a Working Group on Solanaceae. *Ad hoc* meeting, September 2004, Bari, Italy;
- Report of a Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. Second Meeting, December 2004, Strumica, Macedonia FYR;
- Report of a Working Group on Cucurbits. First Meeting, September 2005, Plovdiv, Bulgaria;
- Report of a Working Group on Leafy Vegetables. First Meeting, October 2005, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

## 10. Forthcoming ECP/GR meetings

### Meetings held in early 2006

- *Ad hoc* meeting of the *Allium* and *Brassica* Working Groups, with focus on AEGIS (January 2006, Prague, Czech Republic).

### Other meetings planned for 2006

- Third meeting of the Working Group on *Beta* and World *Beta* Network, including *Beta in situ* assessment day (8-11 March 2006, Tenerife, Spain);
- All Networks Coordinating Groups Meeting (29-31 March 2006, Bonn, Germany);
- First Meeting of the Working Group on Fibre crops (flax and hemp) (14-16 June 2006, Wageningen, The Netherlands);
- Second Meeting of the On-farm conservation and management task force (19-20 June 2006, Schorfheide-Chorin, Germany);
- *Ad hoc* meeting on Rye and Triticale genetic resources (27 June 2006, Rostock, Germany);
- *Ad hoc* workshop on fingerprinting of *Malus/Pyrus*, *Prunus* and *Vitis* (11-12 October 2006, East Malling, United Kingdom);
- Tenth Meeting of the Steering Committee (6-9 September 2006, Israel);
- Workshop on climate change and genetic resources in the Northern part of Europe (18-19 September 2006, Rovaniemi, Finland);
- Third Meeting of the Working Group on *Malus/Pyrus* (tentatively November-December 2006, Tbilisi, Georgia);
- First Meeting of the Working Group on Umbellifer Crops (to be confirmed).

## **11. Coordinating Secretariat and IPGRI**

The following staff members have worked as part of the ECP/GR Secretariat at IPGRI (ECP/GR personnel budget): Lidwina Koop (as half-time ECP/GR Programme Assistant); Elinor Lipman (as half-time Scientific Assistant, based in Montpellier, France, involved in the compilation and layout of ECP/GR publications); Aixa Del Greco (as half-time Scientific Assistant involved in the support to the Crop Networks, Web development and public awareness); and Birgitte Lund as Project manager for AEGIS. Sónia Dias, Programme Specialist, dedicated 50% of her time to EURISCO and documentation-related activities in Europe. Samy Gaiji, Dag Terje Endresen and Milko Skofic have dedicated part of their time to the maintenance and development of EURISCO. Ehsan Dulloo, Jan Engels and Jozef Turok have actively contributed as members of the local AEGIS Task Force. The contributions made to the work of ECP/GR by these and many other IPGRI colleagues during the year 2005 are gratefully acknowledged.

★★★

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**Rome, 28 February 2006**

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