

Request for tenders proposing hosting arrangements for the ECPGR Secretariat/EURISCO

Dear National Coordinators,

Based on the outcome of the External Independent Review of the ECPGR Programme, the ECPGR Steering Committee, during its 12th meeting in Bratislava in December 2010, considered tendering as a cost-efficient way to identify an appropriate host for the ECPGR Secretariat/EURISCO.

As a follow-up to the consensus agreement given by the Steering Committee (SC) in August 2012 to initiate the tendering process before the next Steering Committee meeting in Vienna in December 2012, I am contacting you on behalf of the Executive Committee (ExCo) to invite you/your country, to consider the preparation of a bid for the provision of a hosting arrangement for the ECPGR Secretariat and/or for EURISCO. Whereas the preferred option of the ExCo is to maintain EURISCO at the same location of the Secretariat, circumstances may require a separate hosting of the two entities and therefore, separate bids for the Secretariat and for EURISCO can be made.

ECPGR (www.ecpgr.cgiar.org) is a collaborative Programme among European countries, aimed at ensuring the long-term conservation on a cooperative basis, and facilitating the increased utilization of crop genetic resources in Europe. The Programme is financed by the participating countries and is coordinated by a Secretariat. It operates through broadly focused Networks dealing with groups of crops or with general themes related to plant genetic resources. ECPGR is guided by a Steering Committee, consisting of the National Coordinators. The Steering Committee holds the overall responsibility for the Programme; it approves its budget and provides overall technical and policy guidance to its operations. The current average annual budget is about €550 000.

Following the suggestions from the Independent External Review of ECPGR (July 2010) and the SC discussion in Bratislava (December 2010), it has been recommended that ECPGR should be able to operate with a stronger form of independence from the hosting institution and that ECPGR should improve its visibility and identity. As part of a new hosting arrangement, it is therefore essential that the ECPGR Secretariat be allowed to operate autonomously under the supervision of the Steering Committee and based on the SC-agreed budget and workplans, without interference from the hosting institution. Such type of arrangement will need to be formalized through the conclusion of an Agreement between the Chair of the ECPGR Executive Committee and the representative of the hosting institution.

Regarding the legal status of ECPGR, two options are available: either to remain dependent on the hosting institution for legal matters and to operate as an integral part of the hosting institution, or to acquire a legal status of its own, probably as a not-for-profit corporation under national law.

BID 1

1. Requirements to be met by hosting institution for the ECPGR Secretariat

The two series of essential principles and performances listed below (**A** and **B**) correspond to the two possible options (dependent or independent legal status of ECPGR). **Bidders are invited to elaborate on how they would be able to honour each** of the 11 items of the A series and/or each of the 5 items of the B series, depending on which option they would be in condition to offer to host the Secretariat.

The requirements for the hosting institution (A or B) **should all be essentially met**, in order for the bid to be eligible.

Option A) ECPGR is dependent on the hosting institution for its legal status

Requirements that are expected to be met by the hosting institution:

1. Provide suitable accommodation and working facilities
2. Facilitate the use of existing synergies between the Secretariat and the hosting institution regarding PGRFA conservation and use issues
3. Represent ECPGR as a legal entity for all purposes, including signing Letters of Agreement regarding the membership of the countries to ECPGR and other Memoranda of Understanding with partners, on behalf of ECPGR
4. Receive annual contributions from member countries or other donors and enable effective and timely disbursements of funds by the Secretariat
5. Provide ability to advance funds to a level corresponding to at least 3 months of functioning of the Secretariat, in case country contributions are delayed
6. Provide audits of the financial management
7. Employ the Secretariat staff as staff of the hosting institution, as per decisions of the ECPGR Steering Committee
8. Allow the autonomous operation of the Secretariat staff, which operates under the supervision of the Chair of the ECPGR Executive Committee
9. Provide effective administrative and financial management services
10. Provide state of the art information technology support, including necessary hard- and software (PCs, server space, computer programs, etc.) to carry out high-quality Secretariat's functions
11. Enable move and operation of the ECPGR Secretariat in the host's premises as of 1 January 2014.

Option B) ECPGR acquires a legal status of its own

Requirements that are expected to be met by the hosting institution:

1. Provide suitable accommodation and working facilities
2. Facilitate the use of existing synergies between the Secretariat and the hosting institution regarding PGRFA conservation and use issues
3. Provide effective administrative, human resources and financial management support services
4. Provide state of the art information technology support, including necessary hard- and software (PCs, server space, computer programs, etc.)
5. Enable move and operation of the ECPGR Secretariat in the host's premises as of 1 January 2014.

2. Detailed description of the offer of hosting the Secretariat

In order to provide a detailed description of the hosting arrangement offer that can be compared across the various bids, bidders are requested to elaborate on each of the items below. This information will provide the basis for the evaluators to assign weighted scores for each item.

Hosting institution description: name, contact person, mission statement, operating principles, main donors, size and the motivations for you to host the ECPGR Secretariat.

Legal status: describe the legal status of the proposed hosting institution and whether and how the ECPGR Secretariat could operate under its legal umbrella, specifying whether the ECPGR Secretariat would be able to manage the ECPGR funds under the instructions of the SC and the ExCo Chair solely. In case of an offer under option B, indicate whether you would be able to suggest a process for ECPGR to acquire its own legal status in order to operate autonomously within the hosting institution.

Taxation status: specify whether incoming contributions from European countries and/or expenditures by the Secretariat would be subject to or can be exempted from taxation (VAT or any other relevant national tax).

Location: indicate the location of the hosting institution and describe the surrounding environment, specifically the distance and means of transport to and from airports, railway station, and town.

Office space: describe the office space that could be made available to the Secretariat, keeping in mind the need for a minimum of three single offices, and the options for possible expansion. Indicate size of rooms, open space or closed space arrangement, furniture, facilities and other relevant aspects.

Office storage: describe whether storage space is available (in the range of 20 m²) to archive historic documents of ECPGR, to store publications, books and files and indicate its possible distance from the offices.

Meeting rooms: indicate availability and size of meeting rooms and facilities (beamers, video-conference, microphones, etc.).

Infrastructure: indicate availability of computers, printer/photocopier/scanner, fax, telephones, internet, wireless, email domains, video-conference facilities, servers, etc.

General working conditions: indicate presence of library, kitchen, cafeteria, catering facilities, , flexibility of access to premises outside working hours, security, etc.

Services: indicate the type and level of services that can be provided to the Secretariat, such as financial accounting, travel support and VISA procurement, insurances, human resources management, Information Technology support¹, access to legal advice, cleaning and maintenance of premises and any other service to be specified by the bidder.

Staff enrolment conditions:

(The positions indicated below correspond to those currently existing at the Secretariat. The actual composition and size of the Secretariat will be decided at the upcoming SC meeting)

- Indicate remuneration (specifying all components of such remuneration) for the positions of:
 - a) 50% Senior scientist – A PhD or other academic qualifications and experience that are equivalent. Minimum of 8 years of progressively responsible experience, preferably in an international working environment.

¹ Bidders should specify whether it is possible to import, maintain and further develop the existing ECPGR (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org>) and AEGIS (<http://aegis.cgiar.org/>) web sites. For reference of expected provisions, the current technical and resources setup is as follows: The ECPGR and AEGIS web sites are currently hosted on a Typo3 server. The web sites also show data from a "Contacts Database" in several views and reports. There is an intranet interface to the Contacts Database for updating data. The hosting of the web sites includes Development environment + Backup + Disaster Recovery + Security Protection mechanisms. This means provision of full data backup and recovery in case of disaster but also recovering from security breaches. It includes monitoring of logs and key indicators to make sure site is running and functional. Hosting resources are made available to achieve best of breed response times. Periodic training to Secretariat staff is offered. Documentation is provided for later reference. Standard procedures are followed to upgrade Typo3/PHP/Linux kernel. Bugs arising from upgrades or during the content update processes are detected and fixed. Assistance is provided to Secretariat Staff for special requests. General assistance is offered for content conversion and adaptation. Usage analysis reporting is provided.

- b) 100% Scientist – A PhD or other academic qualifications and experience that are equivalent. Minimum of 5 years of progressively responsible experience, preferably in an international working environment.
 - c) 50% Scientific Assistant – A PhD or other academic qualifications and experience that are equivalent. Minimum of 3 years professional level work experience, preferably in an international working environment.
 - d) 100% Administrative Assistant. The principal function is to provide administrative and secretarial support for a manager or group of staff. Secondary school education supplemented by office training. Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience, preferably in an international working environment.
- Describe Retirement Plan and Social Security schemes that can be provided to staff, including foreign nationals.
 - Indicate the overhead charges, if any, to be paid to the hosting institution.

Allowances/benefits/constraints: indicate if regular staff could be granted any special allowance or benefit, such as tax exemption, housing allowance, etc. and whether foreign staff would be subject to any specific constraints, such as to obtain working permit or other.

Local environment: describe the local environment in general terms, in particular regarding accessibility to international schools, hospitals, shops, banks, sporting facilities, cultural programmes, housing opportunities, etc.

Scientific environment: describe the scientific environment in the hosting institution, and the presence of other nearby scientific organizations that could offer opportunities of interaction with the Secretariat staff and provide potential synergies to the operation of the Secretariat and ECPGR.

Costs: based on the current composition of the Secretariat, indicate all the annual itemized costs that would be requested from ECPGR to host the Secretariat (excluding salary costs but including possible overhead charges).

Offers from hosting institution: indicate facilities, services, rooms, staff or others (please specify) that the hosting institution would be able to grant at no cost for ECPGR.

BID 2

3. Detailed description of the offer to host EURISCO

EURISCO is the European Genetic Resources Search Catalogue (<http://eurisco.ecpgr.org/>), currently hosted and maintained by Bioversity International. The task related to EURISCO consists of the coordination of the EURISCO network of 42 National Focal Points and the hosting of the EURISCO database and website.

For the coordination of the EURISCO network, a coordinator (currently 50% appointment) will be responsible for the proper development of EURISCO in terms of contacts with the stakeholders (National Focal Points, ECPGR, user community) and other public relations, definition of new functionalities of the website and database (and supervision of the technical implementation thereof), capacity building, improving the completeness and quality of the EURISCO data, etc.

For the hosting of the EURISCO database and website, the current technical setup, or an equivalent one, should be hosted and managed. For reference, the current set-up consists of: an Apple Xserve server (2.26 GHz Quad-Core Intel Xeon - 18GB RAM) with MongoDB and Neo4j for the database management, an Apache web server with PHP 5.4 programming and various open source software for content management (Typo3), JavaScript libraries (Knockout JS), and other functionalities of the website. New functionalities will have to be developed when required, that will include extensions of the database, improvements of the data uploading system, interactions with other databases via web services, and improvements of the website. This will require capacity of a system manager / database administrator / application developer (estimated 50% appointment, possibly distributed over a team).

- Describe the technical set-up and human resources arrangements that your institute would be able to provide for maintenance and development of EURISCO and for coordination of the network of National Focal Points.
- Indicate the annual itemized costs that would be requested from ECPGR to coordinate and host EURISCO (personnel, material, office costs and overhead charges).
- Offers should also include an indication of facilities, services, rooms, staff or others (please specify) that the hosting institution would be able to grant at no cost to ECPGR.

Instructions on the procedure to participate to the tender

[National Coordinators are invited to forward the present document to potential bidders in their country.] Offers should include a general elaboration on how each of the requirements (A and/or B group) would be met by the hosting institution AND a detailed description on how each of the items listed above in sections 2 and 3 are proposed to be implemented.

Offers should be received latest at midnight on 20 November 2012, as an email attachment sent to Geert Kleijer, ECPGR ExCo Chair (geert.kleijer@acw.admin.ch). All the received bids will be opened on 21 November 2012.

With kind regards,

Geert Kleijer
Chair of the ECPGR Executive Committee