Terms of Reference for the operational bodies of the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR)

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Introduction

ECPGR 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, which is financed by the participating countries and is coordinated by a Secretariat at Bioversity International, 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.

These Terms of Reference for the various operational bodies of ECPGR were compiled upon request of the ECPGR Steering Committee during its 9th Meeting held in Izmir, Turkey in October 2003 and have been updated to reflect developments since then. The present document (version 3 and dated October 2008) is based on the practice and decisions accumulated over the years for the operation of the ECPGR Programme (the Programme) and it was approved for the first time by the Steering Committee in April 2004. Since ECPGR is a flexible programme, this text may need revision by the Steering Committee and it is therefore considered as a permanent Working Document.

Networks

The Networks are broad organizational structures that accommodate different types of activities contributing to the general objectives of the Programme. The Networks are crop- or theme-oriented. The Networks are the structural elements through which progress of the Programme is reported and priorities are set.

Network Coordinating Groups

The **Network Coordinating Groups (NCGs)** are groups of a maximum of 5-10 people, established within each Network (crop and thematic) and composed of the Working Group or Task Force leaders plus a number of other co-opted Network members.

In the specific case of the Documentation and Information Network, the NCG is composed of National Inventory Focal Points and European Central Crop Database Managers who are appointed to reflect a geographical balance and to combine diverse expertise (including NordGen and SEEDNet representatives) and 4 ex officio representatives (EURISCO Coordinator, IT host at Bioversity International, ECPGR Coordinator and *In situ* and On-farm Conservation Network representative).

Each NCG is coordinated by a *Network Coordinator*, selected by the Group among its members and with the task of delivering the NCG outputs to the ECPGR Secretariat and to the ECPGR Steering Committee. In order to ensure proper functioning of the NCGs, the Group members have to commit part of their time to this coordinating task.

The responsibilities of the Network Coordinating Groups are:

1. To formulate proposals, in consultation with WGs, or in the case of thematic networks, with other active groups, for the attention of the SC on WG priorities and activities, following the planning and prioritizing mechanism established by the SC;
2. To define the WGs to remain prioritized during the 5-year Phase, according to the planning and prioritizing mechanism established by the SC.

In addition, the NCG of the Documentation and Information Network has the responsibility to act as specific advisory body with the function to monitor progress in the development and maintenance of EURISCO, as well as to provide advice to Bioversity International acting on behalf of the ECPGR Secretariat, for the further development of EURISCO.

Before the *Mid-term Steering Committee meeting* (two months prior to the meeting), the Network Coordinating Groups will:

1. Provide the Secretariat/SC with an assessment of the progress made by the Networks. The reports, based on information received by the WGs, will be in standard format (provided by the Secretariat) and will indicate progress and constraints in reaching the planned objectives;
2. Provide the Secretariat/SC with a report reviewing the division of tasks within the Network in the current Phase and a proposal for the subsequent Phase which should include the following elements:
   - Prioritize WGs for the subsequent Phase;
   - Give a broad indication of activities to be pursued by WGs;
   - Prioritize these activities and identify funds required, either potentially deriving from ECPGR or from other sources or as inputs in kind. These activities might consist of meetings (WG, Network, ad hoc) or alternative actions (publication products, research, collecting, regeneration, etc.).

In order to deliver this information, all NCGs should hold a meeting during the first part of year 3 of each Phase (All Network Coordinating Groups Meeting).

Before the *End-of-Phase Steering Committee meeting* (two months prior to the meeting), the Network Coordinating Groups will:

1. Provide the Secretariat with an updated assessment of the progress made by the Networks during the second half of the Phase, based on the standard report previously provided (Mid-term meeting);
2. Provide, in consultation with WGs, as appropriate, the Secretariat/SC with a draft of the division of work within the Network in the subsequent Phase, including proposals containing the following elements:
   - Specific priorities and objectives;
   - Clear, measurable targets, dates for completion and estimates of funding required from ECPGR, based on funds allocated by the SC to each Network/WG.

NCGs are expected to deliver the above outputs mainly working through email communication, except for one regular meeting to be held during the first half of year 3. NCG meetings are self-organized. Alternatively, several NCG meetings can be held together in one location, during the first part of the third year, in order to benefit from the technical support of the Secretariat.

Network Coordinator

The **Network Coordinator** is selected by the NCG among its members, with the following role:

- Ensuring that the NCG composition is representative of the Network;
- Chairing the NCG meetings;
- Coordinating the preparation of the NCG proposals and planning;
- Delivering the NCG reports to the ECPGR Steering Committee via the ECPGR Secretariat;
- Liaising with the Secretariat for exchange of information.

The Network Coordinator is selected at the end of the All Network Coordinating Groups Meeting held during the first half of year 3 of each ECPGR phase and s/he exercises her/his role until the next election. The selection of the Coordinator is made by consensus of the corresponding NCG. In case of lack of consensus, a majority vote by secret ballot is organized by the Secretariat, or by the incumbent Coordinator, if the Secretariat is not present. Only regular NCG members attending the Network Coordinating Groups Meeting have the right to vote.

In case of resignation of the Network Coordinator at any time during the course of his/her term, the Secretariat provides for the selection of an "interim" Coordinator, following a NCG consultation via email correspondence. The selected "interim" Coordinator chairs the NCG until the next regular election.