

Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the period 2019 – 2023

The core activities of the European Regional Focal Point (ERFP) for Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) for the period 2019-2023 are defined in this Multi-Year Programme of Work. This MYPOW is the follow up of the 2015-2018 MYPOW and takes into account recommendations based on a SWOT analysis of ERFP.

This MYPOW is developed within the framework of the ERFP Terms of Reference which describes the mission, vision, objectives and operational structures of ERFP.

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1 Improving the effectiveness of the ERFP structure

1.1 Further development of the ERFP Secretariat

The Secretariat plays a central role in the functioning of the regional platform and network. Since its establishment ERFP has worked with a rotating Secretariat, the Assembly electing a new Secretariat every 4 years. Based on the outcome of a SWOT analysis in 2018, the ERFP Steering Committee will assess the pros and cons of setting up a permanent ERFP Secretariat in the future, in order to further improve the functioning and effectiveness of ERFP. A Task Force will be established to undertake a study to explore and determine potential establishment of a permanent Secretariat of the ERFP. The Task Force will analyse pros and cons of a permanent versus a rotational secretariat or any intermediate options, suggest Terms of Reference for a permanent Secretariat as well as study the possible budget implications of establishing a permanent Secretariat. A list of types of institutions that potentially could be considered to host a permanent Secretariat will be analysed. The network of National Coordinators on Animal Genetic Resources (National Coordinators or NCs) will be consulted at the different stages of this process. The Task Force will report to the SC and the General Assembly within a period of two years. European networks on plant genetic resources (ECPGR) and forest genetic resources (EUFORGEN) will be used.

1.2 Involvement of the National Coordinators

As a regional network, the ERFP development relies on the strong involvement of its members, i.e. the National Coordinators and other experts. Therefore the accomplishment of the MYPOW will depend on their participation. NCs play an important role in strengthening their national network and should involve any relevant national institution or organisation in further development of national AnGR strategies and implementation of the FAO Global Plan of Action on Animal Genetic Resources (GPA AnGR) at national level.

All NCs will be encouraged to nominate experts to the ERFP Working Groups (WGs), and to propose *Ad hoc* actions.

Countries, that are currently not or less active in the ERFP framework, will be encouraged and supported to intensify the collaboration. There will be special efforts, with the help of FAO, to reach countries with no officially appointed NC or less reachable NC. Members of the Steering Committee are specifically targeted to help with this task.

ERFP will also determine in more detail what the expectations of different stakeholders and users are. The Horizon 2020 Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) GenRes Bridge(<http://www.genresbridge.eu/>) is expected to contribute to answer such questions.

1.3 Funding

All European countries will be encouraged to financially support ERFP and hence contribute to the ERFP activities.

The budget allocated to the various activities should be used in a cost efficient way and justified according to the reimbursement rules.

The Steering Committee will revisit the ERFP Reimbursement rules and the ERFP Voting and Election procedures in the context of the ERFP annual budget and the state of individual country contributions on an annual basis.

The use of different meeting tools will be promoted to improve the attendance on the meetings and to reduce costs and carbon emissions

1.4 GenRes Bridge project

The Coordination and Support Action called GenRes Bridge, supported by the European Commission (Horizon 2020), started the 1st of January 2019. One goal of the project is to coordinate the work between and to enhance the work of the three European genetic resources networks (forest, plants and animals).

GenRes Bridge has the following specific objectives:

- to increase the effectiveness of sustainable management of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GRFA) by developing a science-based, integrated GenRes Strategy and by preparing policy recommendations for its implementation.
- to widen capacities to increase the knowledge on conserved diversity of GenRes.
- to enhance the conservation status of GenRes by establishing high quality, harmonized standards for the conservation, management and description of GenRes across Europe and beyond.
- to improve the services offered to the end-users of GenRes by promoting innovative ways to share resources and services, fostering collaboration of *ex situ* gene banks and *in situ* conservation sites in Europe and beyond.

The impulse of this project is expected to be greatly beneficial for the ERFP network and will contribute to the (further) development of a European agrobiodiversity strategy.

GenRes Bridge will contribute to the implementation of the MYPOW. Follow-up actions and other outcomes are expected to influence both the Terms of Reference (ToR) and a future MYPOW.

An *Ad hoc* action will be set up within ERFP to coordinate input from the ERFP network and to fully benefit from the outcomes of the GenRes Bridge project.

2 Networking and communication

The main objective of ERFP is to serve as the regional platform to support the *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources. Information sharing and communication between National Coordinators and other experts within the ERFP network, and coordination of activities within the network and involving a wide range of stakeholders, and communication to the wider the general public, are key activities of ERFP and its Secretariat.

The following two specific recommendations from the ERFP SWOT analysis (2018) will be implemented:

- Develop and strengthen the ERFP communication strategy and enhance the interest of the NCs to use already available tools and modules of the new website.
- Annual NC reporting and exchange of national news items, making use of the country pages on the website, an ERFP newsletter or any other forms with the support of Secretariat.

2.1 The ERFP communication tools

A communication strategy was drafted during the previous MYPOW thanks to an *Ad hoc* action (development of communication tools in 2017). The communication strategy will be implemented by the Secretariat with the help of a Communication *Ad hoc* action and a communication specialist. There will be specific attention dedicated to the use of social media and impact of the communication strategy.

The ERFP website is a platform for the exchange of information within the ERFP network. It contains an overview of the objectives and activities of ERFP and its different bodies. Reports of ERFP meetings are published on the website. The contact data of the National Coordinators will be updated regularly with the support of FAO.

In addition, the website should be further developed towards an information portal providing news, data and activities in the field of AnGR in Europe. National Coordinators should inform the ERFP Secretariat about important developments in their countries, so that such information can be uploaded on the website.

The ERFP newsletter is also an important tool to disseminate and to exchange information. It informs about ERFP activities and news in the field of AnGR in Europe. A modernized way to create and distribute the newsletter based on the website contents will be implemented. Reports from projects, events or other activities could be published as well as information about important developments at the national and EU level.

2.2 Development of a European agrobiodiversity strategy

The GenRes Bridge project is expected to have a positive impact on exchange of information, documentation, *in situ* conservation and *ex situ* conservation of AnGR as well as further strengthening of the ERFP strategy. The ERFP Working Groups and Task Forces are closely connected to the GenRes Bridge project and a specific *Ad hoc* action will be set

up within ERFP to coordinate the involvement and contributions of the whole ERFP network to GenRes Bridge.

2.3 Follow-up of AnGR projects

The ERFP will give specific attention to the follow up of relevant European AnGR projects such as the EU Horizon 2020 Research projects Innovative Management of Animal Genetic Resources (IMAGE) and TREASURE, and recent/past projects funded by EU Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), such as the Preparatory Action, HERITAGESHEEP, EU Resource Efficiency Coordination Action (EURECA) and European Livestock Breeds Ark and Rescue Net (ELBARN).

Where relevant ERFP will develop follow up action plans in order to make sure that the contents and tools developed by those projects are still available to the AnGR community once the projects have ended. Specific attention will be given to the outcomes of the EU DG AGRI Preparatory Action, IMAGE and GenRes Bridge, and more specifically to the dissemination of new tools and best practices, and to the sustainability of databases and portals.

2.4 Collaboration with other European GR networks and organisations

The ERFP will maintain an appropriate liaison with relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations and other European networks in the same field, in particular the European Federation of Animal Sciences (EAAP), through its Animal Genetic Resources Working Group, the European Commission (EC), the SAVE Network (Safeguarding Agricultural Varieties in Europe), the European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB), other regional, European genetic resources networks such as The Nordic Genetic Resource Centre (NordGen), the International Association for the Conservation of Animal Breeds in the Danubian Region, (DAGENE) and any other relevant organisation, network and project, including in the plant and forest genetic resources domain.

These liaisons will be implemented through targeted invitations to participation in WGs, the General Assembly, and other specific meetings organised by ERFP. During the period of the MYPOW, specific efforts will be made to develop joint activities with the key networks in Europe.

2.5 Exchange of information about national activities

National activities related to AnGR published in national reports or reports from projects will be circulated among National Coordinators and other stakeholders of the ERFP. When such reports exist only in the country language, efforts should be done to provide an English abstract. The ERFP website provides the opportunity for such publications, and information can be further disseminated through newsletters and social media.

National Coordinators will inform the ERFP Secretariat about important or interesting activities in their countries. The ERFP Secretariat will circulate this information through the mailing list and/or upload it on the ERFP website.

3 Support for international processes in the field of AnGR

3.1 FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)

The ERFP Secretariat remains in a permanent contact with the FAO. Information about important issues and FAO activities will be exchanged within the ERFP network. The ERFP Secretariat will forward relevant information to all National Coordinators. A bilateral meeting between the ERFP Steering Committee and the FAO staff takes place once a year. These meetings are used to discuss important issues related to the collaboration between the ERFP and the FAO and in particular how FAO and ERFP can help individual countries on implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources (GPA AnGR). The ERFP network of National Coordinators plays an important role in preparing for the CGRFA's Intergovernmental meetings at FAO on AnGR.

3.2 CBD and the Nagoya Protocol on ABS

The Task Force "Access and Benefit Sharing" had the primary responsibility for this issue in the previous MYPOW and will be reactivated if needed. ERFP Secretariat will continue to collaborate with ABS policy experts (cf. 3.3) in order to inform NCs about international policy developments on ABS and about the EU ABS Guidance documents for Animal Breeding and for Research/Collections (cf. EU Regulation No 511/2014).

Connections will be made with the *ex situ* Working Group for the finalization of guidelines for Material transfer agreement (MTA) and Material acquisition agreement (MAA) for gene banks, accessing genetic material or acquiring genetic material.

3.3 EU policies and regulations

The aim of ERFP is to be the relevant support to the EU in the field of AnGR. Special attention will be given to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), zootechnical, veterinary and ABS policies and regulations and keeping contact with the relevant EU institutions (DG AGRI, DG RESEARCH, DG SANTE, DG ENV). At national level, National Coordinators should be in contact with the official representatives in their country to follow up proposals and evolution of different legislations.

The future development of the European strategy for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GRFA) is one of the goals of the GenRes Bridge Project. The ERFP is strongly involved in this project and could have therefore a role to play at EU level in this task.

The ERFP Secretariat and the Steering Committee, with the support of policy experts (see below), will follow and inform NCs about developments related to EU policies with impact on AnGR, like the new Animal Breeding Regulation 2016/1012 and more specifically the possible establishment of the EU Reference Centre on AnGR.

A list of policy experts will be created based on nominations by NCs. These experts will assist the ERFP network by dealing with certain specific policy/legislation issues as well as technical support.

4 Improvement of documentation of AnGR in Europe

4.1 Updating and improvement of national data and documentation

The documentation and monitoring of AnGR are important components of implementing the FAO GPA and an important basis for informed decision-making by countries, the ERFP, the European Commission and FAO. The ERFP Working Group Documentation and Information supports the establishment of national inventories for AnGR and coordinates the updating and improvement of data in the European and global database (European Farm Animal Biodiversity Information System - EFABIS/ Domestic Animal Diversity-Information System - DAD-IS). In November 2017 FAO launched a modernized version of DAD-IS. ERFP decided to transfer the EFABIS European node and national nodes to the new platform. Tools to (semi) automatically upload national data into EFABIS/DAD-IS will be developed in close collaboration between National Coordinators, ERFP and FAO.

4.2 Further development of EFABIS

EFABIS is the regional documentation system for AnGR in Europe (*ex situ* and *in situ*). Besides the European specificities in EFABIS its content is largely the same as the global database DAD-IS at the FAO. Physically, EFABIS and DAD-IS are actually the same database, managed by FAO. EFABIS is essential for monitoring and assessing the diversity of AnGR in Europe and allows for an informed decision-making by countries from a regional perspective. Both monitoring and assessment as well as user needs might require further functionalities of EFABIS which should be identified and further developed by the ERFP Working Group Documentation and Information. Before communication with FAO, the proposal should be agreed with all NCs and the ERFP Steering Committee. Assessing the convenience of implementing new data fields in EFABIS to monitor the status and trends of bees would be part of the work of ERFP during this period. A long term support by a technical expert is needed to support the ERFP network in communication with FAO, to help with further development and maintenance of EFABIS, and to facilitate exchange of data between EFABIS and related databases at European level.

4.3 EUGENA portal

The EUGENA Portal web page is the single entry point to the register of AnGR Gene banks. It is the ERFP's responsibility to organize, update and maintain this portal. A close connection will be developed with the ERFP website, EFABIS/DAD-IS and the portal that was developed by the Horizon 2020 IMAGE project.

4.4 Development and improvement of AnGR indicators

Indicators will be refined or proposed by the Working Groups (classification of endangered breeds, assessment of breeding programs, etc.).

Member countries need support in the design/creation of breeding programmes (as defined by the EU regulation) of AnGR. The aim of the assessment of breeding programs is to help identifying strengths and weaknesses of current breeding programs. A specific Task Force (TF) could be designed to address this issue appropriately through some indicators. This action could be done in connection with the other working groups according to the objectives of the breeding programmes and the type of indicators.

The GenRes Bridge project will also look further into the indicators for AnGR. ERFP long term goal is to achieve that calculation of indicators will be automatized from the data stored in EFABIS (DAD-IS).

A close attention should be given to align proposed AnGR indicators to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) especially indicator 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 on conservation of genetic diversity.

5 Improvement of *in situ* conservation of AnGR in Europe

Due to the importance of the *in situ* conservation of AnGR within the GPA and efforts towards improvement of the *in situ* conservation of AnGR in Europe, the Working Group *in situ* conservation and valorisation of AnGR was established in 2018.

This Working Group will take up the results of EU Preparatory Actions on plant and animal genetic resources in agriculture by using the reports and guidelines created by this action.

The Work Package 3 (GenRes in action) of the GenRes Bridge project should also provide useful tools and knowledge for a better *in situ* conservation.

6 Improvement of *ex situ* conservation of AnGR in Europe

6.1 Follow up of the European Genebank Network for AnGR

The ERFP Working Group *ex situ* conservation, the EUGENA portal manager and the Secretariat have the primary responsibility to further encourage countries to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and to upload their data in the EUGENA portal. ERFP should also consider adopting the IMAGE portal when the H2020 project ends.

The WG will continue the identification of gene banks at national level to increase the knowledge about the *ex situ* conservation activities in Europe and increase the inventory compiled by the Image Survey. The inventory should be the tool to disseminate information about EUGENA and the activities of the WG to a wider number of stakeholders involved in the *ex situ* conservation.

6.2 Improving gene bank management

Also as a follow up of the IMAGE project, the Working Group *ex situ* conservation will help genebank managers by their recommendations with the harmonisation of procedures, guidelines to implement the Nagoya protocol, as well as analyse the user policies and access rules of national gene banks. It will try to enhance quality management and data management by spreading the activities and tools from the IMAGE project. Specific *Ad hoc* actions will be implemented if needed.

The Working Group will also analyse the impact of new EU regulations on animal health requirements for the movements of germinal products on *ex situ* conservation within the EU, and develop recommendations for national governments regards the collection and distribution of gene bank material.

6.3 Selected support for the improvement of national activities

Despite the awareness raised by the ERFP WG *ex situ*, EUGENA and the IMAGE project, in some countries the recognition, infrastructure or technical capacities for implementation of *ex situ* conservation of AnGR are lacking or not existing. Furthermore, there might be problems to convince the responsible institutions or countries of the need for further activities. The ERFP will promote the importance of *ex situ* conservation measures for AnGR throughout Europe. National activities could be supported by the ERFP through capacity development with the support of the ERFP Working Group *ex situ* conservation or by *Ad hoc* actions.

A special attention will be paid to the *ex situ* conservation of transboundary breeds. Experts in cryobiology in each country should be identified to ease the application of *ex situ* conservation.

6.4 Follow up of CryoWeb and recommendations for future national cryo databases.

The optimal management of gene banks needs the support of useful and powerful data bases. The analysis of future development and necessary improvements of cryo databases, including CryoWeb will be planned so that the cryo databases are compatible with the FAO global database for AnGR, DAD-IS and its European node EFABIS, and the IMAGE portal. This analysis will support the development of national cryo databases.