

Minutes of the ERFP Steering Committee meeting

June 8th 2021 webconference

Participants:

Chair: Sipke Joost Hiemstra, The Netherlands

National coordinators, members of the SC:

Christina Ligda, Greece

Srdjan Stojanović, Serbia

Montserrat Castellanos Moncho, Spain

Ruta Šveistienė, Lithuania

Jan Hendrik Schneider, Germany

Secretariat:

Coralie Danchin-Burge and Eleonore Charvolin-Lemaire (France)

Sipke Hiemstra welcomes the participants and introduces the agenda.

1. Follow-up of the Working Groups

Cf. slides.

The general feeling is that the virtual meetings were fruitful. From a logistic point of view, these type of meetings require two people in the organization to ensure that the process is carried out smoothly. The SC thanks the WG chairs and the secretariat for all the work done.

In the *ex situ* Working Group, one of the main discussions was about the replacement of Cryoweb. There are still several options, from general information to all genebank managers about existing software to the design of such software, paid by ERFP. If we want to move forward, we would need an estimation of a budget for this solution by the General Assembly.

A suggestion is to draft a summary of the main outcomes of each WG for communication purposes, equivalent to a press release.

Based on the outcomes of the meeting, the chairs are developing action plans for next year that will be presented at the SC and GA. Each chair will receive a template by the secretariat for the yearly reporting presented during the GA.

2. Follow-up of the ongoing AHA (1/2/3) and discussion of the new AHA proposals

The SC wants to thank Nina Sæther for the preparation done for the ITWG which allowed the Europe region to make very clear statements.

The following Ad Hoc actions were presented to the SC for 2021/2022, with only some of them that had a detailed plan sent to the SC:

Network for small native horse breeds in the Baltic Sea region and Northern Europe (cf. application received by the SC); The AHA will be presented in more details at the next SC.

Infographics for genetic management (cf. application received by the SC). A three pages infographic was developed in the Netherlands about the definition of inbreeding and its impact in livestock breeding. The document is addressed to breeders and was very well received. The SC agrees to finance this AHA but would like to limit it to English in a first step.

ERFP award (cf. presentation done during the joint Working Group).

Transboundary breeds: this action could become a Task Force; to be discussed in the General Assembly.

Sanitary legislation for Genebanks (cf. *Ex Situ* plan of action);

Follow-up of the strategy: this AHA is necessary in order to achieve a wide implementation of the strategy in Europe; Sipke Hiemstra is suggested as responsible for this action, which he accepts.

Database interoperability: this AHA was meant to start this year but there has been difficulties to find a leader for the task. It needs a connection with each Working Group. Eleonore Charvolin-Lemaire will take the lead for now and organize a first meeting before the GA.

Assessment of breeding programs. Montse's presentation during the Working Group joint meeting triggered a lot of positive feedback. The work to be done seems too important to be done in a year period, therefore it is suggested to present this action as a Task Force during the GA, for validation. A task leader is needed for this action as Spain will provide its experience but cannot spend a lot of time to lead it. It is suggested to involve Germany, at least, as well as scientific representatives that have worked on similar issues such as Etienne Verrier (INRAE, France). The outcome of the TF would be the drafting of guidelines.

Merino network: The secretariat needs to ask Fabio Pilla if he wants to proceed with his AHA for the 2021/2022 period.

It is reminded that from a formal point of view, AHA can be approved either by the GA or the SC. It means that new proposals can be sent till November, provided the budget voted during the GA is not exceeded.

3. Progress of the AnGR Strategy and next steps

The progress on the overall strategy (EGRS) are slow despite a tremendous amount of work from all the partners. Some issues are controversial between networks and time is needed to find common ground.

The Key Commitments for the Animal Strategy were discussed in each WG. During a AHA meeting, Nina Saether (Norway) suggested to hire an external expert that would help us with the language, finding better phrasing and “polishing” the document. Her suggestion was welcomed and validated by the SC through emails exchanges. A contract was drafted by the Secretariat between Karl Kerner (Biotext) and IDELE, with a payment made by ERFP for a total of 5,000 €. The expectations are that an advanced draft will be delivered by the end of July.

The EGRS will need to be formally approved during the GA, hopefully the last version will be released not too late this summer so NCs have time to proofread it. During the GA, time will be devoted only to discuss the AnGR and its action plan.

The EGRS will be officially released in November, during a dissemination event to be held in Brussels. The ERFP objective is to finalize the AnGR strategy by then.

4. Organization of the General Assembly

Cf. slides

The objective is to hold a physical meeting; a preregistration form will be sent by the secretariat with a final deadline for July 8th. A short SC will be held July 9th to decide whether the Assembly will be a physical or virtual one, the local organizers are setting a minimum of 30 participants so the Assembly could be held in Bern.

NCs will be also reminded by the secretariat of the EAAP challenge session about the strategy. They will be also asked if they want to share experience / knowledge about Animal Genetic Resources in their country.

5. Communication activities and plans

Montse Castellanos presents the evolution of the number of followers on the ERFP social media.

Social Media	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
General Assembly 2020	100	155	55
June 2021	152 (> 300 tweets)	207	154

Two other communication media are in the process, one is a flyer, which should be achieved by the end of the summer (cf. templates provided to the SC), and one is a video (cf. script provided to the SC). A first version of the video should be provided for the GA.

A meeting between Alcandora, Montse Castellanos, Coralie Danchin and Lauriane Llareus is planned by the end of June to review the terms of the contract renewal. It will include a review of what has been done, what improvements are needed and new ideas for the coming period.

Alcandora organized an interview of Sipke Hiemstra by Claudia Vasquez Alarcon, Original Story's founder (<https://www.origenastory.com/about-origenastory/>) who has a fairly large audience in the sectors of agrifood, food and ingredients. The idea was to increase the visibility of ERFP through the interview. However the script of questions provided as well as a first exchange between Sipke and Claudia showed that there will be lot of difficulties to reach common grounds; which would send wrong messages. The SC validates Sipke's idea to give up the interview for now.

ERFP Flyer: the last proposal was sent to the SC which has a week to react to the secretariat before Alcandora develops the last version.

The AHA communication was postponed since the work on the Strategy is taking a lot of efforts from the ERFP network. More time and effort is needed to find useful information to be disseminated and to create a link with the WGs. Sipke Hiemstra suggested to hire part time Lauriane Llareus (IDELE) as a communication officer. The proposal will be presented at the GA.

6. Planning of the next SC meeting

Cf. 4.

7. Replacements members for the SC and chair

The secretariat will send the CV of the candidates for chair and SC in July, while asking for any other candidacies.

8. AOB

EFFAB and FABRE-TP organized a fourth session of webinar series focusing on Genetic Diversity and Responsible Animal Breeding. The audience is composed mostly of EFFAB members. Sipke Hiemstra agreed to participate by presenting the GenResBridge project and focussing on the strategy. The audience is planned July 1st or 2nd, to be validated with EFFAB.

The next meeting of the SC will be held virtually July 9th 2021

The meeting closed at 13:00.