



Minutes of the Ex Situ Conservation Working Group (DRAFT).

2nd June 2021

Chair: F. Tejerina.

Minutes: Coralie Danchin, Nina Saether and Fernando Tejerina

Participants: a total of 30 persons attended to the meeting. See attached list in the annex II.

Presentations of the meeting can be downloaded from:

<https://www.animalgeneticresources.net/index.php/event/virtual-meeting-of-the-ex-situ-working-group/>

Welcome-opening

F. Tejerina welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. He explained the objectives and outlined the program. The participants agreed to the agenda (Annex I).

1. Report on the WG activities.

Fernando Tejerina reported the activities of the WG in the last year, the most relevant achievements have been:

- Finalization of the following Ad Hoc Actions:
 - Development of specifications for a modern gene bank documentation software.
 - Support the development of EUGENA, to identify candidate EUGENA gene banks, and improve the information about the gene banks in Europe
- Approval by the ERFP steering committee and development of the Ad Hoc Actions Strengthening national capacities towards the development of a national Gene Bank strategy. In this AHA the next countries are involved: Albania, Austria, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain.
- Dissemination of IMAGE outputs and collaboration with ERFP Secretariat in the dissemination of information and knowledge in the ERFP Webpage and Social Media.
- Collaboration with others ERFP WGs in the development of the Ad Hoc Action Transboundary breeds in Europe.
- Oral presentation, *EUGENA: the European Genebank Network for Animal Genetic Resources*, in the International Congress on the Breeding of Sheep and Goats.
- Development of EUGENA.
 - New gene bank on board: Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies.



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- Update of information in the EUGENA webpage.
- Collaboration with Ad Hoc Action GenRes Bridge Project – European Strategy on Animal Genetic Resources.

Finally, the WG Chair informs that the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/686 Supplementing Regulation entry into force in the 21 of April. This regulation recognises for the first time a specific status for gene banks in the European animal health regulation. Link to the document:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0686&from=ES>

2. Final Results of the AHA on Development of specifications for a modern gene bank documentation software (CryoWEB 2.0) and further steps.

Previous to the presentation, the next question was submitted to the attendances: *“Do you believe your government is going to invest money in the development of a new genebank documentation software by the ERFP?”*, the results were Yes: 29%, No: 71%

Zhivko Ducheve reports on the final results of the AHA and the conclusions after the ERFP General Assembly, the member of the G.A. supported a common action for all ERFP members.

After the assembly, Zhivko Ducheve has developed a document with the basic requirements, which were presented during the WG meeting. This document will be used to ask for budgets to different software companies to estimate the cost of the software and their annual maintenance.

The opinion of the Chair is that it is not realistic to develop a software for all ERFP members, because not all the countries have resources to be involved in this project. The first step should be the estimation of the cost of the development/maintenance and the second to identify the countries with interest and capacities to participate in a common project, which will allow to save money for all of them.

After the presentation the initial questions was launched again, and in this case the results were: Yes: 38%, No: 63%

The German representative informs about his national genebank. They use a software which is a good tool and cheap. The representative from Portugal informs that they also have a specific software for their genebank.



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Countries representatives from Norway and Greece propose the utilization of the Animal Grin software by USDA (Zhivko explains the organization of this system), and country representative from United Kingdom supports the idea to establish core fields and then the development of more sophisticated tools.

The WG agreed to the document with the basic requirements. It will be reviewed further by the members and they will send their comments and suggestions by June 15th.

3. Final Results Ad Hoc Action to support the development of EUGENA, to identify candidate EUGENA gene banks, and improve the information about the gene banks in Europe.

The Chair presented the results of this Ad Hoc Action, which has allowed identified 125 institutions hosting genebanks in the European Region. The inventory of genebanks is being used to disseminate information on ERFP and EUGENA.

The information and conclusions on this AHA is in the Final Report:

https://www.animalgeneticresources.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2_ERFP_Exsitu_FinalResults_EUGENA.pdf

4. Update of the EUGENA status. Proposals to facilitate the enrolment of new members

The Chair presented the current status of EUGENA in relation with:

- Countries members
- Genebanks members
- Species, type of material and amount of material in EUGENA.

During the presentation the next question was launched to the attendances: *Do you believe the current Terms of Reference of EUGENA (demand a Memorandum of Understanding and Letter of Agreement) is an obstacle to join your country to EUGENA?* The results were: Yes: 72%, No: 28%.

Despite the positive evolution of EUGENA in the last years, the net is far from the size of similar initiatives in Plant and Forest Domains. The Chair presents a proposal to make more flexible the process of enrolment of countries and genebanks in EUGENA. The most remarkable modification in the ToR will be a new single step procedure to enrolment, which allow without signing a MoU (the main burden in the current process of enrolment) to incorporate a genebank with only a



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nomination by the National Coordinator or other valid competent authority. The country will also be included in the net as soon as its first genebank enroles.

All country representatives who took the floor agreed in making the current procedure in ToR more flexible.

A consultation process is opened till 30th June, then a new version will be worded and send again for comments before the new version will be presented for approval to the GA.

5. European Strategy for the Conservation and Use of animal genetic resources – presentation of part for Ex-situ conservation and key commitments

The Chair presents the procedure to develop this chapter of the European Strategy for the Conservation and Use of animal genetic resources, which origin is the strategic recommendations agreed by the WG members in April 2020. After describing the main issues in the chapter the Chair presents the proposal of Key Commitments, for the discussion of all WG members.

New comments or suggestions to this chapter could be send by 15th June.

6. Feedback on European Strategy key commitments on *Ex situ* conservation.

The attendance was divided in two groups to discuss the key commitments, a rapporteur per group presented the main findings. Nina Sæther collected these findings (discussion results are in Annex III) and presented it in the Joint meeting of the three Working Groups on 3rd June.

7. Outcomes from Ad Hoc Action to strengthening national capacities towards the development of a national Gene Bank strategy

Christina Ligda reported about the achievements of the AHA, which main objectives are assessing the current situation, needs and barriers and define solutions and priorities to support national efforts towards the development of a national cryo-conservation strategy.

The actions in the AHA have been:

- Designing of a questionnaire to assess current situation and main drawbacks.
- Collection information with the questionnaire in the participant countries.
- Develop a list of drawbacks and rand them by their relevance.



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- Identify solutions in a Workshop on 26th May.

The Chair makes a call for the collaboration in this interesting AHA and the collection of solutions. It will be opened till the 15th of June by filling the template (ppt slide) design in the AHA.

8. Election of the Chair WG for 2021-2024 period.

Fernando Tejerina was re-elected as Chair of the WG for the next term 2021-2024. The Chair thanks and acknowledges the group for all the work done.

9. Ad Hoc Action proposals.

The Chair explains that, by the reduction in the expenses in face to face meetings, the ERFP has funds to develop new AHA. The Chair encourages members to propose new AHA, and he makes the first proposal and AHA on recommendations to develop a balance national animal health regulation for the genebanking of AnGR, which main objectives will be exchange experiences of friendly animal health regulations for the genebanking and develop guidelines to countries governments to avoid the unjustified obstacles to the ex situ conservation activities in their animal health regulations.

The representative from the Netherlands proposes another AHA for the development of the new documentation software.

10. Workplan for 2022. (To be approved by the General Assembly).

The chair presented a proposal of workplan for 2021-2022. After the meeting a consultation period will be opened to send comments to the proposal (by 15th June), and also for a prioritization of the tasks (with the exception of EUGENA development, which is the high priority for the WG).

11. AOB.

The Chair makes a call for collaboration with the ERFP communication strategy to disseminate information on Ex situ Conservation and Genebanks topics.

The Chair acknowledges the collaboration and work developed by Martina Henning (retired in the last year) and Eva-Marie Stålhammar (that will retire soon) in the Working Group.



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The deadlines agreed by the Working Group for each issue in the agenda are recapped.



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ANNEX I: AGENDA.

June 2 nd	<i>Meeting of the Ex situ Conservation Working Group</i>	
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome and Introduction Objectives of the meeting - Report on the WG activities	Chair.
09:15- 10:00	Final Results of the AHA on Development of specifications for a modern gene bank documentation software (CryoWEB 2.0) and further steps.	Zhivko Ducheve.
10:00- 10:10	Final Results Ad Hoc Action to support the development of EUGENA, to identify candidate EUGENA gene banks, and improve the information about the gene banks in Europe.	Chair.
10:10-10:50	Updating of EUGENA status. Proposals to facilitate the enrolment of new members. Further steps.	Chair + WG Members
10:50-11:20	Break	
11:20-11:40	European Strategy for the Conservation and Use of animal genetic resources – presentation of part for <i>Ex situ</i> conservation and key commitments	Chair
11:40-12:15	Feedback on European Strategy key commitments on <i>Ex situ</i> conservation.	Chair + WG members
12:15-12:30	Outcomes from Ad Hoc Action to strengthening national capacities towards the development of a national Gene Bank strategy	Christina Ligda
12:30-12:50	Election of the Chair WG for 2021-2024 period.	All Together.
12:50-13:10	Ad Hoc Action proposals.	All Together
13:10- 13:25	Workplan for 2022 (to be approved at Assembly)	Chair
13:25-13:35	AOB - conclusion	All Together



ANNEX II. ATTENDANTS.

NAME	COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION.
Lumturi Papa	Albania
Beate Berger	Austria
Zhivko Ducheve	Bulgaria.
Jelena Ramljak	Croatia
Coralie Danchin	ERFP Secretariat
Delphine Duclos	France
Holger Göderz	Germany
Christina Ligda	Greece
Dimitrios Tsiokos	Greece
Gustavo Gandini	Italy
Gita Jansone	Latvia
Milena Đokić	Montenegro
Jaana Peippo	Nordgen
Mervi Honkatukia	Nordgen
Maria Kjetså	Nordgen
Karl Kerner	Norway
Nina Sæther	Norway
Agnieszka Chełmińska	Poland
Ewa Sosin	Poland
Grazyna Polak	Poland
Rosa Maria Lino Neto Pereira	Portugal
Srdjan Stojanovic	Serbia
Danijela Bojkovski	Slovenia
Tina Flisar	Slovenia
Montse Castellanos	Spain
Fernando Tejerina	Spain/Chair
Eva-Marie Stålhammar	Sweden
Markus Neuditschko	Switzerland
Marjolein Neuteboom	The Netherlands
Natallia Reznikova	Ukrain
Marcus Bates	United Kingdom

ANNEX III: Main findings from the discussion on key commitments chapter *1.3.1 Develop and implement ex situ conservation programs and infrastructure for AnGR.*

Key commitments (inputs from *ex situ* WG meeting in red)

2.3.3 Develop and implement *ex situ* conservation programs and infrastructure for AnGR

1. Maintain an official EU inventory of all facilities development *ex situ* conservation (in vivo/in vitro).
 - Development or developing?
2. Stimulate European genebanks to ensure the long-term conservation of AnGR and provide access to use the material in *in vivo* conservation programs and breeding activities.
 - Should we mention national animal breeding legislation (trade with material)
 - Include health regulation?
 - Can we link bullet 2 to the new FAO guidelines. and say Long term conservation of ANGR in core collections and use of material ... through working collections
3. Promote that all European countries have specific animal health derogations for material intended to be stored in gene banks, and for the use and distribution of material.
4. Reinforce and expand EUGENA promoting the enrolment of new countries and genebanks and develop and implement quality management systems for EUGENA gene banks.
5. Initiate projects and studies on development and standardization and implementation of new technologies in cryoconservation, mainly focused on species/**tissues where relevant technology and infrastructure is lacking.**
 - (Why focus on minor species?)
 - Should we mention the new FAO guidelines for cryoconservation
6. Provide facilitated access to animal genetic resources under the control of European countries and in the public domain, as well as – subject to applicable law – associated non-confidential data, for research, breeding and training.
7. Promote and support initiatives and collaboration for *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of transboundary breeds, and facilitate exchanges of material between genebanks, mainly in transboundary breeds
 - Separate this point into two; 1) overall collaboration 2) transboundary breeds
 - Why only transboundary?



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General comments:

New topics:

- Could we refer to the SDG indicator 2.5.1?
- Is it possible to promote embryo collection for genebanking?
- Promote «good practices» in genebank organization (core/working collection, duplicates)
- Development of quality system in all EU genebanks?
- Should we mention core collection as an initial recommendation?
- Promote research on cryoconservation
- We have solved the problem with the Animal Health Law. The next problem is Animal Breeding Law (use of old material). Should this be mentioned? **Answer: Is this a problem?**
- What about the cryoconservation of insects (e.g. honeybees)
-

Editorial

- Separate the points relevant with research – policies
- Maybe rephrase/re group to have less key commitments?
- Should we simplify the language for better communication to a broader audience? Or will the commitments then be too general?
- Keep EU or European in all the bullets?

Outside the scope of *ex situ*?

- Is it possible to link national genebanks with EUGENA, not being a member?
- How can we establish the ecosystem services on AnGR? (Is this an aspect of ex situ conservation?)