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EPSO Research Partnership with Developing Countries

A research partnership with one of the best labs in the US or Australia is for many EPSO members common routine. In these partnerships, we exchange ideas, material and people. Links of European labs with developing countries are also common, but often these links are more arbitrary, and are restricted to the work with individual students or based on short-term projects.

When we discussed this issue a few years back among EPSO members, we came across much interest for more engagement in research partnerships with developing countries, but also much hesitation. Work in developing countries can be confusing and time-consuming, the outcome may be rather unpredictable, and many European researchers feel that this work is considered "less excellent" compared to other options they have for their group.

In 2010, EPSO started a dialogue with FAO and other globally leading institutions on opportunities for increased engagement of excellent European plant science in development-related work. This dialogue started with a high-level FAO-EPSO Workshop in Rome, and has continued since then. With some surprise, we noted how scientists from regional institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America or from development agencies were excited to meet EPSO and EPSO scientists. Many people around the world feel that the best science and the best scientists are required to help to solve the problems in developing countries. In this sense, EPSO and institutions like FAO are natural partners.

But beyond interest and excitement, the tedious reality starts. There are so many plant species, so many countries, so many environmental constraints, and so many possible solutions. Where to start and how to select the most important approach? And in Europe, funding opportunities for development related research are very different between countries, and often not directed to include new ideas and new players.

Since the Rome workshop, EPSO together with FAO and other partners has tried hard to bring a north-south plant science partnership higher up in the European agenda. We have argued for better visibility and better funding of this topic in Horizon 2020 and, for example, in the COST programme. In the case of cassava, where many technological avenues for crop improvement are already open, EPSO members work on the whole value chain to translate better genetic understanding in the lab into better field crop performance.

An EPSO-FAO pilot initiative on underutilized food and vegetable crops has achieved much attention, and a proposal to the EU for funding is on the way. It is very challenging to combine latest methodology in detecting genetic diversity and in plant composition analysis with efforts to make better use of this diversity in feeding and income generation in some of the poorest areas of the planet.

The discussion with plant breeders from developing countries may help to give a new perspective to some of the open questions in plant science technology. Agroforestry systems, often suggested for new resilient European land use, can be studied in countries where they exist since centuries. An EPSO research partnership with developing countries offers

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many opportunities. It also became clear in the last two years that many European ministries and agencies are interested to find new solutions that can help people to live better in countries with little income and at present little hope of fast economic growth. Plant production and plant use are often central activities in such countries. I am looking forward to discuss the current status and next steps in the EPSO research partnership with

developing countries at the upcoming EPSO General Meeting. We have to decide whether we like to follow up this activity, together with our partners in plant research from other parts of the globe.



Contact: Eckhard George

EPSO Activities

Exciting agenda for the EPSO General Meeting – Executive Committee, 6.5.2014 (Horizon 2020, a brochure on plant science and the new EPSO Early Career Network)

The EPSO Executive Committee met in Brussels, 6 May 2014 and prepared an exciting agenda for the EPSO General Meeting to take place in Dublin on 22 June.

This will focus on:

- Election of the new Board Members from excellent candidates
- The EPSO / Plants for the Future ETP input to the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes 2016/17 (see next article), developing Operational Groups under the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.
- Your success stories for a brochure to demonstrate the high quality of plant science in Europe
- Utilise the ERASMUS+ programme to better link scientists from eastern and western countries
- Finalise the concept for the EPSO 'Early Career Scientist Network'

In the meantime the European Commission invited EPSO to reply to its consultation on its strategy towards Societal Challenge 2 in the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2016/17. Individual scientists can submit replies too.

In addition, we will discuss our engagement in future activities in European and global science and policy,

EPSO events and activities of our working groups, specifically 'Basic Plant Science', 'Agricultural technologies' and 'Horticulture'.



Last but not least you can hear first experience from Marina, our internship expert from Grossbeeren / DE and Eckhard, head of the institute which benefits such a stay can bring to your organization as well. We look forward to discuss with you, our representatives, at the General Meeting on 22 June 2014 in Dublin.

The ExCo discussed further how best to collect facts and figures on the social and economic benefits that plant research and innovation proposed for the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes can have in future, looking at indicators such as human health, jobs, economic growth, global competitiveness, collaboration with developed as well as developing countries.

Finally, the preparation for the next Fascination of Plants Day will start shortly after the General Meeting, to even break the 2013 record of 1033 events around the globe. Everybody is welcome to organize events and encourage others to do so around the 18 May 2015, the 3rd FoPD!

Contact: [Karin Metzloff](#)

The view after three months at EPSO—Marina Korn

After three months as Internship Expert I already learned a lot by working at the European Plant Science Organization. I visited institutions I did not know before and I met interesting people – interesting from the professional and personnel perspective. And there is still more to come – as contacting the Representatives of the institutional Members to update our information on their fields of interest, which gives EPSO the possibility to support plant sciences on the EU level on their specific areas. I will attend and support the yearly General Meeting as well as the FESPB/EPSO conference in Dublin.

And I am involved in writing H2020 – proposals, to give

just some examples. Besides all this I strengthened my contacts to the Brussels office of Leibniz, KOWI and others.

I am really looking forward to the next three months in Europe's capital at the EPSO office. And until now I did not regret a second taking the chance to work here when I was asked if I was interested. This is a strong recommendation for every other scientific manager, especially the ones which are not yet familiar with the whole EU-Business in detail, to use the opportunity to come and learn.



Contact: [Marina Korn](#)

EPSO General Meeting

June 2014, Greece



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information

FESPB-EPSO Conference

22-26 July, Dublin



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information

EPSO Blog

Calling Young Plant Scientists



Contact [Calum MacKichan](#) for more information



ERA-CAPS PROGRAMME attracts researchers from All Over the globe

An impressive 142 pre-proposals were submitted to the Second ERA-CAPS call for proposals that closed on the 14th of March 2014.

More than 600 research groups from 29 different countries mostly from Europe, but also including New Zealand, Israel, USA, China, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Chile, teamed up to form a transnational consortium and jointly prepare a proposal.

On the 7th and 8th of May, the 140 eligible pre-proposals were considered by the Review Panel taking into account the criteria as set out in the Call Notice. Consortia that received the highest scores against these criteria were invited to submit a full proposal by the 18th of July 2014. Subsequently, the evaluation by the Review Panel resulted in 62 consortia being invited to submit a full proposal.

For the ERA-CAPS Network, the success of this Second call in terms of applications and geographical coverage is a token of the attractiveness of the ERA-CAPS Programme in support of high quality collaborative transnational research in fundamental molecular plant science.

Managers of Plant Science programmes from 20 countries meet in Vienna

On 28 March 2014, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) hosted the 5th meeting of the ERA-CAPS Management Board (MB) in Vienna. Representatives of Research Councils, Funding agencies and Ministries in charge of

plant science funding from 20 countries and Karin Metzloff as observer for EPSO gathered to discuss the ERA-CAPS Network's current activities and future actions. The adoption of a common data sharing policy which is to be applied to all ERA-CAPS grants from the Second call onwards is among the major outcome of this meeting.

On the 12th and 13th June 2014, investigators from the 14 ERA-CAPS projects funded from the First call met in Rome for a workshop hosted by the Italian Ministry in charge of Scientific Research (MIUR). The workshop was an activity of the ERA-CAPS Network and served as a kick-off event for the projects. Moreover, the meeting provides grant holders with the opportunity to network, share resources, tools and information across the different consortia. The ERA-CAPS Management Board members and the Scientific Advisory Body were observers at the meeting.

Upcoming activities:

Plant Science Database

An important aim of the ERA-CAPS members is to set-up an online Plant Science Database containing information on research programmes, institutions, infrastructure and individual researchers in the field per country. Significant steps towards the implementation of the database have been taken and the ERA-CAPS Network is hoping to announce the launch of the database very soon through the ERA-CAPS [website](#).

Contacts: Coordination: [Paul Wiley](#); Communication: [Freia Van Hee](#)

Involve your colleagues more in our work - institutes discuss with EPSO director

In recent months Karin Metzloff, Executive Director of EPSO, has travelled to member institutions for a series of meetings and seminars. The interactions have proved rich and fruitful, strengthening the relationship between the member institutions and the work of EPSO in Brussels.

This included a visit to one of EPSO's newest institutional members at the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (USAMV) in Cluj-Napoca, Romania's second most important academic city. Being the best ranked university in this field in Romania, with a good international recognition, USAMV, represented by rector Prof. Doru Pamfil and vicerector for research & innovation, Prof. Carmen Socaciu, showed its interest to lead the Romanian Cluster as an EPSO member. Other representative institutions from Romania, specialized in fundamental & applied research in Plant Science, joined immediately. This includes the following: Faculty of Biology from University "Babes-Bolyai", including the well known Botanical Garden from Cluj-Napoca, the Research Biology Centres from Cluj-Napoca and Jibou,



Institute for Bioresources from Bucharest. Other institutions are keen to become EPSO members.

Another new member is the University of Potsdam where Plant Genomics and Systems Biology represents one of the four central Research Foci. The groups involved closely interact with colleagues from the non-university institutes located on campus. As a member of EPSO, the University of Potsdam envisages to further strengthen its European networking activity and affect future EU work programs towards an enhanced placement of regional research needs on the European plant research agenda.



At the Julius Kühn-Institut in Germany Karin provided a key talk in the frame of a symposium organized by JKI on plant research in the frame of Horizon 2020. She provided insight in the role of EPSO to support plant research in Europe, especially in EPSO's activities to place plant research topics onto the agenda of research funding in Europe.



After these successful visits we encourage you to consider how EPSO can collaborate more closely with your institute through local meetings or seminars.

Contact: [Karin Metzloff](#)

Outreach and Public Dialogue Activities

In May [13 countries celebrated the unofficial Fascination of Plants Day 2014](#). Among the countries that took part were [Argentina](#), [Bolivia](#), [Chile](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [India](#), [Japan](#), [Lithuania](#), [Norway](#), [Philippines](#), [Switzerland](#), and the [United Kingdom](#).

The 3rd Fascination of Plants Day will take place on [18th of May 2015](#). We invite you to organize for the 18th of May 2015 a fascinating activity related to plants attracting and interacting with the public. May 18th will be the very Fascination of Plants Day and most events will be organised for this day. In addition, where this is

not suitable, events will be organised throughout the weeks of 3-31 May 2015. Just contact your national coordinator or the EPSO Coordinator Trine Hvoslef-Eide trine.hvoslef-eide@umb.no to discuss and get guidelines for participating in the Fascination of Plants Day

Contacts:
[Trine Hvoslef-Eide](#) and
[Karin Metzlauff](#)



In Brief

.. [EU member states back compromise on GMO crop approval](#) ... EFSA is looking for biochemists for its **GMO** panel. [Apply online](#)... International PhD School in Plant Development Sep 10-12 in Retzbach, Germany, [preliminary program announced, registration open](#) ... PhD summer course at Copenhagen Plant Science Centre (CPCS): "[Synthetic Biology in Photosynthetic Organisms](#)" ... Euroscientist [Special Issue](#) on Alternative Research Funding ... [EU to back alien species blacklist](#) ...

Upcoming Meetings

[1st conference of the International Society for Molecular Farming, 17-19 June 2014, Berlin-Dahlem, Germany](#)
[Agronomic Decision Making in an Uncertain Climate, 18-20 June 2014, University of Leeds, UK](#)
[Joint EPSO-FESPB Conference, 22-26 June 2014, Dublin, Ireland](#)
[22nd European Biomass Conference and Exhibition, 23rd-26th June 2014, Hamburg, Germany](#)
[XVI International Congress on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions, 6-10 July 2014, Rhodes, Greece](#)
[7th Annual International Symposium on Agriculture, 14-17 July 2014, Athens, Greece](#)
[34th New Phytologist Symposium on the Systems biology and ecology of CAM plants, 15-18 July 2014, Tahoe City, USA](#)
[New Phytologist next generation scientists, 29-30 July 2014, Norwich, UK](#)
[10th Annual International Conference on Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change, August 3-7 2014, University of Oxford, UK](#)
[Lignin 2014 - biosynthesis and utilization, 24-28 August 2014, Umeå plant science centre, Sweden](#)
[EMBO workshop on Intercellular Communication in Plant Development and Disease, 24-29 August 2014, Bischoffsheim near Strasbourg, France](#)
[5th International Symposium of Biofumigation, 9-12 September 2014, Harper Adams University, UK](#)
[IARU Sustainability Science Congress, 22-24 October 2014, Copenhagen, Denmark](#)
[Crop Production in Southern Britain: Precision Decisions for Profitable Cropping, 25-26 November 2014, Peterborough Arena, UK](#)
[Conference on Plants & Environmental Pollution, 3-6 December 2014, Lucknow, India](#)
[Sustainable Intensification - Annals of Applied Biology Centenary conference, 9-11 December 2014, Marston, UK](#)
[Expo 2015: "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", 1 January-1 May, 2015, Italy](#)
[Joint EPSO-FESPB Conference, 27 June - 1 July 2016, Prague, Czech Republic](#)
[EuroScience Open Forum, July 22-27 2016, Manchester, UK](#)

More upcoming meetings are listed on our website: <http://www.epsoweb.org/events/plant-meetings-agenda/list>.
Announce your meeting by contacting [EPSO](#)

Career Opportunities

[Post-doctoral position in plant genomics, Fondazione Parco Tecnologico Padano, Italy, Deadline June 27](#)
[PhD position in Rhizosphere-Plant Interaction, King Abdullah University of Sciences and Technology, Saudi Arabia](#)
[PhD position in Chromatin Biology, King Abdullah University of Sciences and Technology, Saudi Arabia](#)
[Post-doctoral position in Cellulose nanocrystals to stabilise Pickering emulsions, INRA Nantes, France](#)

For more information on these positions: <http://www.epsoweb.org/careers/jobs>. Send your job announcements to: [EPSO](#)