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**High Success of the 7th EPSO Conference 'Plants for a Greening Economy', Greece, 1-4 September 2013**

The Seventh EPSO Conference took place from 1-4 September 2013 in the picturesque Greek seaside town of Porto Heli, bringing together a diverse group of researchers from across the world with the aim of providing a snapshot of the state of the art in plant science. We welcomed over 350 attendees from 50 different countries who presented, discussed, and exchanged a broad range of plant science topics: from pollen to politics, from bioeconomy to biodiversity, from epigenetics to the environment.

We were welcomed by [Prof. Athanasios S. Tsaftaris](#), the Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food, himself a plant scientist, who told us that the Greek government has decided to invest in plant science and agriculture as a pillar for the country's recovery from the economic crisis. The early signs are good as the country has enjoyed a 20% increase in agricultural exports in the first half of 2013.

The ten scientific sessions were packed with talks from top quality scientists. We saw beautiful GFP images visualising plant root development from Phil Benfey, the benefits of purple tomatoes from Cathie Martin, and how Brazil has used science to transform itself from being food insecure forty years ago, to become the second largest exporter of agricultural products in the world from Mauricio Lopes. During the science policy session the latest news on the Global Plant Council and the Horizon 2020 programme, including the Societal Challenges and the European Research Council (ERC) was presented. All slides from the science policy talks are available on the [EPSO website](#). A feature on the opportunities available for plant scientists within the ERC is presented on Pages 7-8 of this newsletter.

The conference also had a high attendance of young scientists and over 220 posters were presented, and we congratulate our [three poster prize winners](#). The over 100 students present appreciated the opportunity to interact with leading scientists. Carolina a PhD student from Mexico commented "The conference has been very useful to learn about the latest research in plant science. It has been a good opportunity to present our work, get new ideas, learn how to manage our data better, and start to think about the future too." Students also commented on the beautiful location, and great Greek food and hospitality. A photo gallery of the conference is available on the [EPSO facebook page](#).

We hope new friendships were made, new collaborations forged, and we hope you will consider joining us again for our future joint conferences with FESPB in [Dublin in 2014](#), and in Prague in 2016.

**Contacts:** [K Metzloff](#); [G Skaracis](#); [K Karkala](#)

**EPISO representatives “This is our future, we have to engage in it”: News from the General Meeting**

The [EPISO representatives at their 14th General Meeting](#) discussed the past achievements, present priorities and future challenges of EPISO. The very successful efforts that EPISO has made already in supporting and positioning plant sciences in Europe were approved and on-going activities in supporting plant sciences in Europe were enthusiastically supported.

- EPISO has become a critically important and recognized voice in the public and in the policy arena for plant sciences globally.
- EPISO has a proven track record in efficiently engaging with EU policymakers for the benefit of plant sciences
- EPISO is today an important contributor to the evolution and improvement of EU Framework programs.
- EPISO has developed a strong partnership with national and international institutions on public outreach raising the visibility and recognition of plant science in Europe and internationally.



Following the meeting several representatives produced videos from which you can enjoy the compilation [on our website](#).

Three of the ten Board seats were open for election and we congratulate Ton Bisseling and Bruce Osborne to their second term and Svend Christensen to his first term! The continuing Board members are Eva-Mari Aro, Jos-Pio Beltran, Aldo Ceriotti, Eckhard George, Martin Parry, Christophe Plomion and Tomas Vanek.

To further improve and strengthen our work, the representatives discussed European and global

research and science policy: mainly the first input to the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes 2014–16 and support EPISO provides for consortia building for your proposals upon publication of the 1<sup>st</sup> call in December 2013 (page 3). In addition they discussed engaging actively in shaping the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (page 4) and contributions for the Joint Programming Initiatives on ‘Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change’ (FACCE-JPI) as well as ‘Healthy Diets for Healthy Life’ (HDHL-JPI).

There was immense interest and support for the Fascination of Plants Day, which will happen again around 18 May 2015 (page 7). The EPISO workshop ‘Horticulture for the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ and an update on the various [Working Groups](#) were presented. New from this General Meeting will be activities to involve more members as ‘supporting scientists’ and the Board was charged to develop the concept for the EPISO Early Career Scientists Network to start 2014/15, which will become the network of the best Personal Investigators / young Professors across the EPISO membership.



In parallel discussion groups they will brainstorm (1) how best to link with SMEs, extension services and farmers for H2020 projects, (2) Education and outreach activities, (3) Agricultural technologies, and (4) Basic plant science in H2020.

We very much look forward to great activities with you in the coming year and beyond to boost plant science and its contribution to our society in Europe and globally!

**Contact:** [Karin Metzloff](#)

**Abstract submission and EPISO Support Grant Applications open for the Plant Biology Europe FESPB/EPISO 2014 Congress**

Abstract submission is now open for the [FESPB/EPISO conference in Dublin, 22-26 June 2014](#). The deadline for oral submissions is 31st January 2014 for Oral submissions and 21st March 2014 for poster submissions.

Students from any European country and scientists (junior & senior) from the recent EU Member States and Eastern European countries can apply to EPISO for an [EPISO Conference Support Grant](#). The number of grants will be distributed equally between the two groups. Preference will be given to applicants from [EPISO member institutions](#) and [Personal members](#). The EPISO Conference Support Grant covers 4 nights’ accommodation in shared rooms (booked by EPISO) and the conference registration fee will be waived.

Recipients of a support grant will have to pay their own travel costs. Students also have to send a copy of their student card when submitting the support grant application form.

Students and scientists receiving an EPISO Conference Support Grant are required to submit a poster abstract and encouraged to use social media to communicate about the conference. The Application form will be available from 14<sup>th</sup> November on at [www.episoweb.org](http://www.episoweb.org) and <http://europlantbiology.org/>.

The first truly joint EPISO/FESPB conference will be held in Prague, from 27 June to 1 July 2016. For next year, until May 2014, bids to hold the 2018 joint conference are invited – a goal for you?

**Contacts:** [Karin Metzloff](#) (both conferences), [Bruce Osborne](#) (2014) and [Jana Albrechtova](#) (2016)

### EPSO first input to Horizon 2020 Work Programmes 2014–16 and support for consortia building towards the 1<sup>st</sup> call in December 2013

The European Commission (EC) is discussing its draft for the first Work Programmes under Horizon 2020 with the Member States and the stakeholders. EPSO and its partners in the Plants for the Future ETP recommended six main headings, related objectives and possible solutions for the 2014–16 Work Programmes to the EC: 'Resource use efficiency and resource stewardship; Enrich / enhance beneficial plant compounds during cultivation, harvesting, processing for healthy human nutrition & animal feed and reduce non-beneficial compounds; Improve plant composition and performance for novel (non-food) products; Resilient plants – improved plant health; Resilient plants – increase yield and yield stability in dynamic environments; Horizontal actions'.

In addition to the legal files, the EC is referring to 12 Focus Areas (including 'Sustainable food security') developed in their proposal for a Strategic Programme

for the 2014–16 Work Programmes. EPSO and our members continue discussion with the EC and the Member States.

The EC aims to publish the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the societal challenges on the 11th December 2013, including the most relevant for plant scientists 'Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy'. To prepare for this, EPSO members discussed at the General Meeting with partners from industry and the farming sector and agreed on a very efficient system to exchange partner search information between EPSO (academia), ESA (industry) and CopaCogeca (Farming communities).

In addition, Horizon 2020 will often require consortia across several sectors. EPSO has excellent links to the other 8 European Technology Platforms in Bioeconomy along the food and non-food chain and we will provide such contacts as well upon request.

**Contacts:** [Karin Metzloff](#) and [Uli Schurr](#)

### ERA-CAPS : beyond the half-way mark

In the past summer, the ERA-CAPS Network that groups 26 funding agencies from 23 countries has reached the halfway mark of its transnational programme; it is therefore timely to reflect on the past year and a half of joint activities. Certainly, the major milestone of the first period has been the successful implementation of a common call for research proposals in the field of plant science. An overwhelming 110 proposals were submitted to this call. The international review panel which assessed the proposals found their overall quality to be very high. The most excellent proposals were subsequently recommended for funding to the national research councils.



A further milestone at the level of cross-border cooperation has been reached by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Science Foundation (USA) and the ERA-CAPS Consortium (represented by its coordinator BBSRC, UK). The aim of the MoU is to coordinate funding activities in the field of plant science at the transatlantic level, and more specifically to enable US researchers to join transnational teams applying to the ERA-CAPS calls.

More recently, ERA-CAPS has welcomed a new partner to its Network: the Centre for Agricultural Research

(MTA-ATK) which is the largest agricultural research complex in Hungary. The Centre will provide technical expertise to the Network as well as linkages to the Hungarian research community in plant science. As such, it is considered to be an important asset to the Network.

Noteworthy is also the participation of ERA-CAPS in the 7<sup>th</sup> EPSO Conference allowing for exchanges between plant scientists and representatives of national funding agencies.



Future ERA-CAPS activities include the launching of a second transnational call for research proposals in early 2014 and the organisation of a workshop for ERA-CAPS grant holders in spring 2014, while discussions about a sustainability strategy for the Network will be intensified. In order to keep abreast of ERA-CAPS activities, we invite interested plant scientists to check our website or subscribe to the newsletter at [www.eracaps.org](http://www.eracaps.org)

**Contacts:** [Freia van Hee](#) and [Paul Wiley](#)



**EPSO General Meeting**  
June 2014, Dublin



**FESPB-EPSO Conference**  
22-26 June 2014, Dublin



**Blog for Young  
Plant Scientists**



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information



Contact [Calum MacKichan](#) for more information

## About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents 227 leading academic research institutes, universities and departments from 30 countries. Together they represent over 28 000 plant researchers and staff. In addition, EPSO has over 3000 personal members.

The mission of EPSO is to promote plant science and plant scientists, to represent plant scientists in discussions about future plant science programme priorities across Europe, to provide an authoritative source of independent information on plant science, and to promote training of plant scientists to meet 21st Century challenges in breeding, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, plant ecology and sectors related to plant science.

To achieve its mission, EPSO advises policy and decision makers at national and European level on science policy, as an independent body and as member of the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) and the European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future' (Plant ETP). EPSO supports plant scientists via the EPSO conferences including support grants for junior and eastern scientists, workshops, tutorships and as information broker via EPSO News and its website.

EPSO's strategy is defined by the representatives at the General Meeting and further elaborated by the elected Board. Current Board members are Heribert Hirt (President – FR); Eckhard George (DE) and Maurice Moloney (UK) (Vice-presidents); Eva-Mari Aro (FI), Jose-Pío Beltrán (ES), Ton Bisseling (NL), Aldo Ceriotti (IT), Bruce Osborne (IE), Christophe Plomion (FR) and Tomas Vanek (CZ).

EPSO's strategy is implemented by its members and staff. Contact us to join our activities:

- Science policy (EPSO, ISE, Plant ETP), members, observers, association relations: **Karin Metzloff**
- EU projects, EPSO workshops, accounts: **Karim Trabelsi**
- Newsletter, website, communications: **Calum MacKichan**
- Conferences, office, database and personal membership: **Katerina Karkala**

Since its creation in 2000, the organisation has become a strong advocate of plant research in Europe and an important voice articulating the contributions and needs of plant scientists at national and European levels and beyond.



## Disclaimer

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Correspondence regarding this newsletter should be addressed to:

Email: [calum.mackichan@epsomail.org](mailto:calum.mackichan@epsomail.org)  
Mail: European Plant Science Organisation,  
Rue de l'Industrie 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel/Fax: +32 (0)2 21362 61 / 69