

EURISCO Updates and News

This "EURISCO News" is a series of e-bulletins to provide feedback to National Focal Points (NFP) as well as being a forum for NFP and others to put forward their comments and suggestions.

In order to make the EURISCO Catalogue sustainable and meeting the NFPs and users needs I would like to invite all of you to contribute to the e-bulletin. All ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions are [welcome](#).

This e-bulletin provides information on: [Recent and ongoing activities, Dissemination activities and News, and Planned Meetings](#)

Recent and ongoing activities

As announced in the previous E-Bulletin (December 2007), the fourth meeting of the EURISCO Advisory Group was held on 12 March 2008, with the participation of the EAG members, the ECPGR and EURISCO coordinators. The meeting was held and organized by the Central Office of the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Bonn, Germany.

The meeting's objectives were to analyze the status of EURISCO and to make plans for its technical and organizational progress.

The EAG agreed that the EURISCO 2008 work plan should focus on:

1. Continue supporting National Inventories (NIs) and National Focal Points (NFPs):
 - a. The remaining countries should be included, giving Turkey priority considering its large number of accessions, followed by: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Malta and Moldova;
 - b. A manual for the National Inventory Focal Points needs to be prepared, explaining how to compile a National Inventory.
2. Seek integration into EURISCO of additional mechanisms in support to the International Treaty:
 - a. Standard Material Transfer Agreement (sMTA) reporting procedure;
 - b. Registration procedure for the Multilateral System (MLS).
3. Intranet-uploading mechanism to be revised and improved;
4. Improve access to accurate information in EURISCO:
 - a. Taxonomy data. Need guidelines on how to resolve the issue of taxonomy;
 - b. Need to re-run the taxonomy checker and continue providing reports of errors to the NFPs, for them to forward these to the individual contributing genebank curators for improving the quality of

their original data.

5. Further improve the website management and search components (highest priority);

These important actions for EURISCO, are to be addressed, in some cases, through the EPGRIS3 initiatives and by the respective activity leaders (for more information see full article in Newsletter for Europe 36).

To have access to the Minutes of the EURISCO Advisory Group meeting - Bonn, Germany, 12 March 2008, please follow the link: http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/Networks/Info_doc/info_doc.htm

As also announced, the EPGRIS3 meeting to discuss Activities 2-06 Link to ECCDBs; 4-03 sMTA reporting and; 4-04 MLS and AEGIS, took place on 13 and 14 March 2008, also held and organized by the Central Office of the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Bonn, Germany (for more details on the outcome of the meeting see full article in Newsletter for Europe 36).

Between December 2007 and April 2008, an external evaluation of EURISCO was carried out through an external, independent consultancy, commissioned by Bioversity International.

The survey was conducted with a questionnaire of 58 questions that was circulated to all the National Inventory Focal Points (NFPs) and a modified version with 52 questions intended for the Central Crop Database (CCDB) Managers. From the 39 NFPs contacted, 27 responded to the questionnaire, while from the 45 CCDB managers, 25 replies were received.

While this evaluation identified some weaknesses it also highlighted several strengths. Some examples:

Weaknesses:

- o The number of accessions in EURISCO is inflated by the presence of about 200,000 records of *Arabidopsis* accessions that are included in the UK inventory. Moreover, these *Arabidopsis* records are not complete in many descriptors, which is influencing the percentages indicating overall completeness of data
- o Latitude and Longitude are present in different percentages and this is an indication of incompleteness of data
- o Several errors can be identified in the taxonomy and crop name description
- o The current Web application offers only 19 out of 34 descriptors for searching and display and this is leading to data invisibility. This should be addressed by the new EURISCO front-end
- o Several spelling mistakes are present in the text fields
- o Two thirds of NFPs expressed their need for specialized training (5% urgently, 38% in a short term and 24% in a future perspective) dedicated to data conversion and upload to EURISCO
- o Apparently a number of descriptors are not properly understood by NFPs (examples: provision of description, latitude and longitude of the holding institute rather than of the collecting site; both fields - <donor> and <donordescr> - are filled in in the same record; holding institution and donor are identical; etc.)

Strengths:

- o 40% of the respondents state that EURISCO was the driving force behind the establishment of the respective NI
- o 36% of the total passport data is online only via EURISCO, since the National Inventories providing these data are not available on line
- o EURISCO holds data on 96% of the countries that have nominated a National Inventory Focal Point
- o 80% of the NFPs informed that the EURISCO upload mechanism has helped them to correct their original

dataset

- o 77% of the respondents confirm that the reports generated for Taxonomy and GIS, sent to the NFP by EURISCO Coordinator, have helped them to improve data quality by correcting the original datasets
- o 63% of the respondents are of the opinion that EURISCO is an important tool to be used for the reporting procedure under the sMTA of the MLS of the ITPGRFA as well as for the registration procedure of the MLS

The EURISCO coordinator participated at the recently held ECPGR Cereals Network – 2nd meeting, held at Foça, Turkey, 21-24 April 2008, making a presentation highlighting the following key issues:

- o increase sustainable participation of genebanks/National Programmes in exchanging information about germplasm they hold
- o explore ways to integrate the collections in the NIs/EURISCO and in ECCDBs
- o promote standards within our scientific communities
- o raise awareness within existing networks about the value of such information resources

Dissemination activities and News

New EURISCO website

The new EURISCO website is in its final stage of preparation. Very soon, a test version will be circulated among the EAG members and a group of selected power users, for comments and suggestions, after which the revised final product will be made widely and publicly available, hopefully early July. More details will be available in the special issue in July.

Workplan for 2008

While continue to supporting National Inventories (NIs) and National Focal Points (NFPs) for the remaining countries to be included (Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Malta, Moldova and; Turkey), priority will also be given to improving access to accurate information in EURISCO, through the re-run of the taxonomy checker and continue providing reports of errors to the NFPs, for them to forward these to the individual contributing genebank curators for improving the quality of their data sets at the data provider level.

After the EAG consideration, the 2008 workplan and EURISCO 2009-2013 Logframe, will be circulated in the July issue.

Changes in the EURISCO Advisory Group

Given that there was a large overlap of the members of the Documentation & Information NCG and the EAG, a proposal to reduce duplication of coordinating bodies was made, with a suggestion to incorporate all the tasks in the NCG, including the advisory role to EURISCO. The composition of the NCG will be enlarged, maintaining a balanced number of Central Crop Database managers and NFPs, including NordGen and SEEDNet representatives, as well as four *ex officio* standing guests (*In situ* and On-farm Network Coordinator, EURISCO Coordinator, ECPGR Coordinator, and the IT representative of the institute hosting EURISCO). In conformity, the EAG agreed to terminate itself in its present form and to transfer its EAG function to the Documentation & Information NCG, which will continue to operate also as EURISCO Advisory Group.

EURISCO facts and figures

In the previous e-bulletin (December 2007) it was announced that EURISCO was almost making available information on 1.1 million accessions. Today, we are very proud to inform that EURISCO has passed that barrier and we are now making available information on over 1.1 million accessions.

Although the number of participating NIs is still 35, the number of holding institutes has risen now to 239, and the number of genera amount now to 1,380 representing 8,657 species.

As the old adage goes: "One grain does not full the granary, but it helps its companion", we endeavour to continue making steady progress in achieving the goal of making information available on the estimated 2 million

accessions being held in European *ex situ* collections, while continue to making specific efforts to further improve the quality of data made available in the EURISCO Catalogue. Data quality is a concern and a major challenge for the EURISCO data providers and data curating. If data quantity matters, data quality matters even more!

The EURISCO public awareness and dissemination activities start to yielding results. If the Catalogue was, in 2006, being accessed from 68 countries, it is now, in 2008, being accessed from a total of 125 countries.

The actual two fact sheets are available in 10 languages and further efforts will be made to have them available in other European languages. The fact sheets, in the different languages, have been a tool of an inestimable value for the dissemination and public awareness activities regarding the EURISCO Catalogue. If you would like to contribute to these translations in you home country language [let us know](#).

Planned meetings

Meeting	Venue	Date
AEGIS model crops curators and database managers	Radzików, Poland	1-3 July 2008
11 th ECPGR Steering Committee	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	2-5 September 2008



Bergama View -Turkey

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