

European Plant Science Organisation

Autumn Newsletter 2019

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EPSO advises on science policy: European research and innovation strategies, agricultural technologies

EPSO and its members continue their priority work on science advice to policy in three main areas: Providing input towards Horizon Europe – currently to the Strategic Planning of Horizon Europe; Supporting ERA-Networks; and Advising at European and national level on New Breeding Technologies.

Based on the political agreement of the European Parliament and the Council in April 2019, the European Commission (EC) is preparing the first **Strategic Plan (2021-24) for Horizon Europe**.

To this end, the EC published its [EC Orientation to the Strategic Planning document](#) for public **consultation**. EPSO welcomes that at the EC, appreciating advice from EPSO and others, included strong links between clusters - e.g. the 'Health' and the 'Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment' clusters (succeeding respective societal challenges in Horizon 2020), looking at healthy diets for preventing disease and at green environments improving well-being, and inside a cluster among the areas of intervention - e.g. 'Agriculture, forestry and rural areas' and 'Food Systems'. This reflects first EC steps to bring approaches tackling sustainability, climate change closer together with those towards food and nutritional security, giving FNS the attention it deserves, which EPSO most appreciates.

EPSO will now provide suggestions for major contributions from plant science and innovation towards the anticipated impacts - how crop improvement and crop management as intrinsic part of integrated approaches with ICT and machine learning, agricultural engineering, food processing, extraction of high-value compounds (biorefining), can play a key role. This will include areas such as 'increasing yield (stability) in changing environments', 'improving food crops for better nutrition and human health', 'utilising secondary plant metabolites and proteins for renewable materials, energy, human wellbeing and health', 'improving resource use efficiency and resource stewardship for resilient production', 'improving plant and crop health for resilient production', and 'improving forest resilience and productivity under anticipated future climate conditions'.

As starting point, EPSO submitted last year [mission ideas](#) to the EC: '1001 Crops: diverse crops for diverse diets and human health and resilient production', 'Planty Food: sustainable agriculture for sustainable food – smarter food production', and 'Green Factories: unlocking the potential of plant biodiversity for pharmaceuticals, flavours, fragrances, cosmetics, food and fine chemicals'.

EPSO highlights two cross-cutting issues for improvement: 1st [Close the research and innovation cycle in pillar 2](#) 'Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness': EPSO urges to give more balanced consideration to basic research in relation to the other components (applied research, demonstration and innovation actions) of the research and innovation cycle in the Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness programme. 2nd [Support new technologies – adhere to international agreements](#): Europe's position on New Breeding Technologies (directive 2001/18/EC) is not in line with the Living Modified Organism definition in the Cartagena Protocol.

As second step, the EC is inviting input from stakeholders during the [European Research and Innovation Days](#) in Brussels, 24-26.9.2019.

EPSO provides **advice as well to national funders in the frame of ERA-Networks**. EPSO is official observer in two ERA-Nets: on Molecular Plant Sciences ([ERA-CAPS](#)), which already funds projects under three calls – the 3rd one being self-sustained – and has ambitions towards a new self-sustained call, and on Sustainable Crop production ([SusCrop](#)), a COFUND ERA-Net that had its first call upon which **13 consortia were recommended for funding**. SusCrop holds targeted workshops: on 'New Breeding Technologies' (June in Madrid), and in September in Belgium linked to its first grand holders' meeting one on 'sustainability and resilience assessment' and on 'data collection and harmonisation'.

EPSO continues science advice to policy on **Agricultural Technologies**, including New Breeding Technologies (NBTs). EPSO published its [Statement on the Court of Justice ruling on mutagenesis](#) 19.2.2019 and [EPSO welcomed Commissioner Andriukaitis call for action 'NPBTs need new regulatory framework'](#), 29.3.2019. EPSO invited colleagues from national ministries to an informal science – policy meeting in September to exchange views on the current situation of genome editing in Europe and possible next steps to enable Europe better addressing climate change, achieving food and nutritional security and establishing a sustainable agriculture in Europe and world-wide. At the Agricultural Technologies Working Group Meeting in Berlin on 12 November, EPSO members will discuss next actions on the NBTs and on the Nagoya protocol.

Please contact us to get involved and collaborate with us on science advice to policy.

Contact: [Karin Metzlauff](#), EPSO Executive Director, BE



Christoph Gruber, BOKU Vienna, AT



Representatives will become more active – EPPO for / with organisations and individual scientists – News from the General Meeting 2019

The EPPO Representatives met for the General Meeting in Vienna 11-13.6.2019 to discuss and decide priorities, strategy and main actions for 2019-20 and beyond.

The meeting started with a Forum on Horizon Europe, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and bioeconomy, discussing e.g. how EPPO members can use the outcome of the EPPO SDG workshop in 2018 at national and European level for research strategies and grant proposal by 'translating your contributions from plant sciences into SDGs', e.g. at the upcoming Global Bioeconomy Summit in Berlin 19-20.11.2020.

We congratulate Alan Schulman, Ernst van den Ende and Odd Arne Rognli who were elected for into the **EPPO Board**.

The EPPO Representatives discussed how they and their colleagues can get more engaged in EPPO activities again. This starts with membership. **EPPO Representatives per country / region** will invite main players in plant science which are not member yet and main research institutes / universities (on e.g. nutritional sciences, ecology, food processing) already collaborating with plant science to join EPPO enlarging towards an integrating society on plant science at large. EPPO (Board) members will offer major plant science research organisations outside of Europe world membership to further global science collaborations and address the UN Sustainable Development Goals, backed by EC and ERA-Net calls inviting international participants. All Representatives will join forces at national / regional level to make EPPO and current activities better known to their colleagues and encourage their engagement - give feedback, join Working Groups, foster regional EPPO meetings / initiatives, discuss in skype calls, start national EPPO websites (e.g. www.epsoweb.de), link to [EPPO's job page](#), take advantage of the EPPO internship, involve young people. Karin provided examples of seminars /

presentations she gave at meetings in Brussels, Norwich, Cologne, Prague, Rothamsted and Poznan and offered to join some in 2019 / 20, supported by Board members.

The GM participants discussed on which of the diverse European research programmes and networks EPPO should **focus its advice on research strategies and science policy**. A first survey of participants' / their organisations' interest showed that the Framework Programmes on Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe) are most relevant, particularly in there the 'Societal Challenges' and 'ERA-Networks'. These are followed by 'ERC', 'Marie Curie Actions', 'Research Infrastructure' and 'multinational collaborations'. The EPPO team and Board will adjust their strategic work accordingly (see editorial).

EPPO disseminated its recent **Brief on Horizon 2020 Work Programmes 2020**, available on the members only website, broadly among its members to submit excellent proposals to Societal Challenges, ERC, Marie S Curie calls etc. , as this has the highest budget from 2014-20 and as transition to Horizon Europe with some new calls highly relevant to plant science (see WP20 article).

EPPO members discussed the Fascination of Plants Day, the main EPPO **outreach activity**, the great success in 2017 and its next issue in 2021 (see FoPD article). For **science support**, members decided to mutually support with EPPO communication (via the EPPO web, twitter, newsletter etc.) and to engage more in our **Working Groups** to advance science and provide science advice to policy – providing input and using the outcome as well at national / regional levels. The WGs on 'Plants and microbiomes', on 'Horticulture', and on 'Nutritional Security' met in 2018 and are working on respective reports / white papers in 2019. Finally, Andrea Schubert gave an update on [PBE 2020, the EPPO / FESPB conference](#) in Torino / IT, 29.6.-2.7.2020.

Contacts: [Karin Metzlauff](#), EPPO Executive Director, BE, & [Alan Schulman](#), EPPO President, FI



Fascination of Plants Day 2019 Success Stories

The biennial international **Fascination of Plants Day** public engagement initiative coordinated by EPSO was a huge success this year. **For this 5th Fascination of Plants Day there were over 862 events across 51 countries and 5 national patronages from:**

- * President of Austria
- * Ing. Miroslav Toman, CSc, Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic
- * The Association of the Private Farming of the Czech Republic
- * Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
- * National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

People also got involved on social media, sharing their photos and event stories using the hashtag [#PlantDay](#). EPSO increased the [@PlantDay18May](#) twitter account tweet engagement to 5305 profile visits and 3558 followers in May.

Some Fascination of Plants Day events were also published in outside publications and media, as well as publicised on tv, newspapers and radio.

Many thanks to the over 56 National Coordinators and thousands of enthusiastic event organisers across the

globe for engaging people from their neighborhood, city, region and even the entire country in exciting events! This Fascination of Plants Day initiative would not be possible without you and your efforts have definitely paid off.

We also thank the partners and sponsors who helped EPSO engage so many of you and provide resources to make this success possible: GPC, ISHS, Eucarpia, CopaCogeca, SPSS, BASF.

For full details of the event success stories please see our [Fascination of Plants Day Success Stories 2019](#) publication. For more information about the Fascination of Plants Day see www.plantday18may.org and our [YouTube](#) channels.

We welcome you to join us in preparing for Fascination of Plants Day 2021! Get organizing events in your country and keep tweeting about plants. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2021!

Contact: Global Coordinators: [Carmel Edwards](#), EPSO, BE; [Trine Hvorslev-Eide](#), Norwegian University of Life Sciences, NO, [Przemysław Wojtaszek](#), Adam Mickiewicz University, PL; [Karin Metzlaß](#), EPSO, BE



Plant Biology Europe 2020 conference

[Plant Biology Europe \(PBE2020\) conference](#), the joint EPSO / FESPB conference, will be held at the Centro Congressi Lingotto in Turin, Italy from 29th June – 2nd July 2020.

The themes will be: Abiotic stress, plant performance and productivity; Mobile signals; Plant metabolism; Plant and ecosystem adaptation to environmental change; Plant development and flowering; Protein modifications and trafficking; Carbon fixation and plant productivity; Regulation of plant immunity; Below-ground physiology and interactions; Genomics, epigenomics, and genome editing for crop design.

Abstract submission starts November 2019 and registration opens January 2020 so join us in Turin for a spectacular conference!

To encourage the development of ideas and imaginative thinking in the plant sciences, EPSO opens again the **EPSO Young Plant Scientist Award** in spring 2020 – watch out for the call.

As always, **EPSO** will hold its **General Meeting** linked to this conference in Turin on 2-3 July 2020. We look forward to welcoming the EPSO representatives to discuss our strategy and activities for 2020 and beyond.

Contacts: [Andrea Schubert](#), University of Turin, IT, & [Karin Metzlaß](#), EPSO Executive Director, BE



PLANT BIOLOGY EUROPE 2020



TOMRES: Maximising water & nutrient use efficiency

After the successful midterm evaluation, partners from the 3.5 year EU project [TOMRES](#) (A novel and integrated approach to increase multiple and combined stress tolerance in plants using tomato as a model) prepare for the 5th meeting at the Hutton Institute in Dundee, Scotland. As a special event, a joint meeting with scientists and stakeholders of the EU project SolAce will take place. In this particular session, partners of both Horizon 2020 projects can discuss and exchange for example about monitoring resilient traits, breeding stress tolerant plants and optimizing management strategies with the aim to identify potential solutions supporting an environmental-friendly and resource-saving agricultural production. Thus, Stakeholders of both projects will give their experience-based support to improve topic-related outcomes, while

summarizing previous discussions. EPSO coordinates the Stakeholder Group in this project and currently prepares an Opinion Paper targeting future perspectives of sustainable food production.

The TOMRES project is funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 Framework Programme.

Contacts: [Simone Schmittgen](#), University of Bonn, DE; [Andrea Schubert](#), IT (Coordinator)



CHIC: New Plant Breeding Technologies for diet and health

The first 18 months of the 4.5 year [CHIC](#) project have passed. CHIC is a highly interdisciplinary project with 17 partners. The first few months were used to coordinate in detail activities within and between the work packages, among work packages leaders and between the partners of the project. For a complex project like CHIC, this is essential. On this basis, the consortium moved on to more substantial tasks.

By now, most project's work packages (Technologies, Communication & Stakeholder Engagement and Impact assessment) are in full swing. The first genome edited chicory plantlets are growing in several laboratories, the stakeholder advisory group was established and have engaged in two meetings, and the impact on the European Court of Justice ruling on the project and on the whole field has been extensively discussed within the consortium and with external experts.

Communication channels, such as social media accounts, are active and partners presented the CHIC project at various events for school-age children. A short, informative animation movie explaining the

project was created. Our first two progress meetings were organised in Wageningen and Madrid respectively. We are - I hope just like you - very curious about the results from the upcoming project period.

EPSO coordinates the Stakeholder Advisory Group in this project and supports stakeholder engagement and dissemination activities.

The CHIC project is funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 Framework Programme.

Contacts: [Macarena Sanz](#), ID Consortium, FR, & [Dirk Bosch](#), WUR, NL (Coordinator)



EPSO Agricultural Technologies Working Group
12 Nov 2019
Berlin, DE

Contact: [Karin Metzlauff](#)



EPSO General Meeting
2 - 3 July
Turin, IT

Contact: [Karin Metzlauff](#)



PBE Conference
26 June - 2 July 2020
Turin, IT

Contact: [Andrea Schubert](#) &
[Karin Metzlauff](#)



About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic international non-profit organisation that represents over 200 leading academic research institutes, universities and departments from 31 countries. Together they represent over 26 000 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 (science advice to policy), 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 European and national 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 working group meetings, conference, workshops, internships and as information broker via EPSO briefings, newsletter 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 Alan Schulman (President – FI), Ulrich Schurr (Vice-President – DE), Cathie Martin (Vice-president – UK), Carole Caranta (FR), Ernst van den Ende (NL), Antonio Leyva (ES), Przemysław Wojtaszek (PL), Josef Gloessl (AT) and Angelo Santino (IT).

EPSO's strategy is implemented by its members and staff. **EPSO staff** profiles are available [here](#). [Contact us](#) to join our activities:

- ♦ Science policy (EPSO, ISE, Plant ETP), Science Support (working groups, projects), members, observers, association relations: **Karin Metzlauff**
- ♦ Website, social media, briefings, newsletter, communications: **Carmel Edwards**
- ♦ Office management, accounts and EU projects administration, meetings, database and personal membership: **Sofia Ciravegna**

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. One of EPSO's priorities is science advice to policy.

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