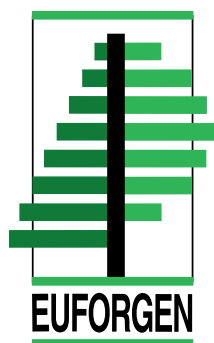




Mediterranean Oaks Network

Summary of the second meeting

Gozo, Malta, 2-4 May 2002



European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)

Summary of the Meeting

Opening

Prof. Luís Gil, Chair of the Network, welcomed the participants from nine countries and thanked the Maltese National Coordinator, the local organizers and the government of Malta for the excellent organization and for their participation. He then introduced the expected outcomes of this meeting.

Mr Anthony J. Meli, Principal Scientific Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, welcomed the participants and underlined the importance of genetic resources. He said it was very important for a country with such high human pressure to devote attention to conserving forest areas. He wished the participants a successful meeting and a good stay in Malta.

Eman Calleja, National Coordinator for Malta, briefly presented the programme of the meeting.

Jozef Turok, on behalf of the EUFORGEN Secretariat, gave a brief overview of upcoming meetings and activities in progress in the Programme at large. He also updated the participants on the progress in the recruitment of the new EUFORGEN Coordinator and introduced Michele Bozzano, temporary scientific assistant for EUFORGEN.

The participants introduced themselves. It was noted that Maxhun Dida (Albania), Roselyne Lumaret (France) and Bartolomeo Schirone (Italy) sent apologies for being unable to attend the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

Seminar

As recommended during the first Network meeting, a seminar on basic concepts and methodologies used in the conservation of forest genetic resources was organized for Network members. Prof. Gösta Eriksson gave two presentations entitled "Evolutionary genetics" and "Sampling in absence of genetic knowledge".

Professor Eriksson agreed to distribute copies of his presentations to Network members (through the Secretariat). He highlighted the importance of maintaining evolutionary adaptability as the overall goal of forest gene conservation. Studying and understanding geneflow in Mediterranean oaks was emphasized during the discussion as a main challenge for forest gene conservation.

Darrin Stevens (Malta Environment Protection Department) drew the attention of the participants to the extremely small tree population sizes in Malta, giving as an example a native *Quercus ilex* population. The discussion then focused on local problems of forest gene conservation in Malta. Network members suggested possible solutions from both the technical and policy sides and presented existing similar problems, issues and examples from their countries. It was agreed that it would be useful to prepare a summary of this discussion. It was pointed out that this type of feedback from the Network is very important and it could be actively encouraged as a regular element in the mode of operation in the EUFORGEN Networks in the future. This item will be further discussed by the Steering Committee (June 2002).

Country reports: status and practices of gene conservation

All Network members presented either an introductory country report (Italy, Slovenia) or a country update. Research and public awareness activities were highlighted in most presentations. Prof. Hans Muhs on behalf of project partners presented outcomes of a relevant international research project on oaks, focusing on the re-colonization history and genetic diversity of *Quercus* species (*Q. petraea*, *Q. robur*) in Europe.

All participants will provide the Secretariat with an electronic version of their report, in the agreed format, by **31 May 2002**. Given the usefulness of this information, it was agreed that the country reports and updates should be published both in printed version and on the EUFORGEN web page (see section Information management below).

Research

The lack of knowledge about genetic resources of Mediterranean oaks was emphasized as a main constraint for their conservation and enhancement (see Report of the last meeting and country updates in this volume). The participants discussed research needs, and felt that these could be formulated into the following themes:

- geneflow in recently fragmented populations (with unfragmented populations as a control)
- genetic variability in marginal and central populations and its relationship to adaptive variation/impact of management regimes, from agroforestry to natural forests, on associated species
- impact of management regimes on mating patterns.

It was, however, also agreed that these research themes need to be integrated in a broader, multidisciplinary research effort. Ecology, socioeconomic and other aspects need to be properly addressed and linked with genetic research. The new research framework (FP) of the European Union, considered as a major opportunity for funding support, requires formulation of large projects with broader partnerships and longer duration (compared with the previous FP).

Given the urgent research needs and taking into consideration the possible opportunities, it was agreed to develop a research proposal on “Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Mediterranean oak ecosystems and their importance for rural population and landscape”. The proposal will emphasize the importance of research on Mediterranean oak ecosystems (both ecological and economic aspects) for rural development in the region. Oak as a dominant and severely threatened part of the Mediterranean ecosystem should become the central element of a broader research effort.

The Network agreed to take responsibility for initiating the development of a proposal, by inviting research groups from other disciplines and by developing the genetic component. The selection of species will depend on the formulation of the research themes. Several pilot species could be selected to address the different questions and priorities. It was suggested that two existing proposals (submitted but not funded by the 5th FP) could be used as input to this proposal: the multidisciplinary cork oak proposal (M. Carolina Varela) and the genetic research proposal (B. Schirone). Links will be sought between the proposal and ongoing relevant efforts including the International Provenance Trial for cork oak (M. Carolina Varela).

The Network members from Italy (B. Schirone, R. Bellarosa) accepted responsibility for initiating the development of the project proposal, supported by other Network members and potential partners. They will circulate the first tentative concept note to a group of key partners and Network members by **30 September 2002**. The EUFORGEN Secretariat will provide B. Schirone with information about ongoing discussions and requirements related to the 6th FP before **31 May 2002**.

Discussion on sharing of gene conservation responsibilities

J. Turok introduced the proposal made by the group of Network chairpersons as a new vision for future activities of EUFORGEN. This proposal will be discussed during the forthcoming Steering Committee meeting. While the accomplishments of the EUFORGEN

Networks include setting up groups of specialists, exchange and production of information, standardized language and methodologies, and facilitation of technical guidelines, the vision for the future is based on providing more direct support for implementation of gene conservation action. Networks of gene conservation units for target species within their distribution areas would be carefully designed and implemented through “master plans”, or voluntary agreements among countries. A “master plan” for a given species would set priorities for conservation efforts. It would also provide the basis for recommending, coordinating and monitoring the practical gene conservation measures taken in the forests.

The basic step in each conservation effort is to create reliable information (and inventory) of the distribution of resources. The Network recognized the importance of promoting this task for Mediterranean oaks during its first meeting (see Report). Therefore, M. Bozzano presented the results of an investigation completed by the Secretariat on distribution maps. He mentioned different sources of data, such as the *Flora Europaea* as well as Network members themselves. He explained the different software packages used. A map showing the natural distribution area of *Quercus suber* was presented, based on the work done within the International Provenance Trial. It was agreed that the Network members from the countries concerned would provide amendments in order to finalize the map. The final, integrated map is shown below. The Network members concerned will provide their feedback to the Secretariat by **30 June 2002**.

M.C. Varela offered to explore possibilities for developing maps of other species. The Network members will send existing maps to M.C. Varela by **30 September 2002**. The Secretariat will provide information regarding the use of software and technical support.



Natural distribution range of *Quercus suber*.

Information management and public awareness

M. Bozzano introduced the new information platform. Since the status of national activities on forest genetic resources in Europe is changing, and there is increased attention by non-Network members, information will be maintained in a new, user-friendly platform,

available on-line. In the new EUFORGEN web site it will be possible to browse information (particularly country reports and country updates) through a multicriteria search and it will be easy to obtain the information needed. The web site will be on-line by the end of May. The importance of having standardized format for reports and updates was stressed. The participants agreed to proceed with the preparation of a photo CD, which would include characteristic images of Mediterranean oaks and their genetic resources. This task was agreed upon during the first meeting but little response has been received. Each country will be responsible for providing images on different aspects (full tree, landscape, traditional uses, morphological characters, etc.). Original images (preferably slides) will be sent to Nihal Özel, who offered to be in charge of collecting the images and transferring them to the photo CD. The Network members will send slides to N. Özel by **31 May 2002**. The collection will be available to all members, who might use it for public awareness purposes, publications, web pages, etc.

The idea of a public awareness video was discussed again. In order to accomplish this task some initial investment would be required. Efforts will be needed on the part of each country to collect footage on local species. E. Calleja offered to prepare a proposal to be presented as a feasibility study. The proposal will be circulated to Network members by **30 June 2002**.

M. Bozzano presented the EUFORGEN bibliographic database on gray literature. The Network members were encouraged to continue providing references for this database. The database has been frequently used on-line from the web page. An access form has been developed and will be circulated to Network members by **15 May 2002**. It was clarified that each member should restrict contributions to those available in her/his own country.

The table of species was presented during the meeting and participants provided comments. The new table, along with this Summary of the meeting, will be circulated to all Network members as well as countries outside the Network by **15 May 2002** (Secretariat).

Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Mediterranean Oaks Network will be held (tentatively) in **autumn 2003**. Vlatko Andonovski reiterated his offer to organize the meeting in Macedonia FYR, which was appreciated by the participants. The Secretariat will follow up and provide information to all countries in due course.

Other business

M.C. Varela presented a document "Proposed programme of forest conservation activity on cork oak woodlands in the Mediterranean region", developed by WWF and received through the FAO *Silva Mediterranea* Network. The participants discussed the contents and format of this proposal and agreed to provide a written comment. The Secretariat will contact the *Silva Mediterranea* on behalf of the Network.

Adoption of the report

The report was adopted and distributed to the participants.

Conclusions

The local organizers were thanked for their kind efforts in preparing and organizing this meeting. It has provided the participants with an insight into the unique situation of forest gene conservation in the Mediterranean region. Luís Gil thanked the participants for their work and declared the meeting closed.

Programme

Wednesday 1 May-arrival of participants

Thursday 2 May

Opening of the meeting

Welcome (Host country and Chair of the Network)

Introduction (IPGRI)

Adoption of the agenda and nomination of rapporteurs

Seminar

Overview of basic concepts and methodologies used in the conservation of forest genetic resources

Progress reports from all countries

Status and practices of gene conservation

Friday 3 May

Research

Overview of ongoing research projects

Discussion on research needs and priorities

New project proposals

Discussion on sharing of gene conservation responsibilities

Presentation of the results of the EUFORGEN Inter-Network meeting

Selection of model ('flagship') species

Distribution maps and inventories

Development of technical standards

Documentation, information and public awareness

EUFORGEN Database/Information platform

Database of genetic resources of Mediterranean oaks

Implementation of photo CD and video

Communication

Bibliography

Saturday 4 May

Field trip (half-day)

Adoption of the report

Date and place of next meeting

Conclusions

Sunday 5 May-Departure of participants

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