

EURISCO Newsletter

December 2015

The EURISCO Newsletter is a series of electronic bulletins that provide feedback to National Focal Points (NFPs) and serve as a dissemination vehicle for NFPs and other partners to put forward their contributions regarding plant genetic resources issues/themes. The new EURISCO Newsletter is the successor of the previous EURISCO e-bulletin. In order to ensure that the EURISCO Catalogue is sustainable and meets the NFPs' and other users' needs, everyone is invited to contribute to this newsletter. Thematic papers, ideas, comments, suggestions and questions are all welcome.

EURISCO moved to a new host

Since 15 April 2014, the responsibilities for hosting and maintaining EURISCO were transferred from Bioversity International, Rome, Italy, to the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben, Germany. After a period of transfer (April to September 2014), the system is now operating at IPK.

Due to technical and organizational issues, the existing solutions could not be transferred to the new host without changes. Instead, a re-engineering from scratch was performed; this regards both the public EURISCO application (search interface and database structure behind) and the EURISCO intranet (module for uploading national data sets by the National Focal Points). Thus, it was necessary to find a balance between developments which are visible (search interface) and those which completely took place in the background. The first version of the new EURISCO web interface was released in September 2014 and has been improved continuously since then.

Future developments will be driven by the demands expressed by the EURISCO users' community. Any feedback regarding necessary modifications and improvements, but also "wild ideas" regarding possible extensions are most welcome and will receive due consideration.

Coverage of EURISCO

Within the last 12 months, the number of accessions increased by 722,268, reaching a total of 1,837,263 accessions from 43 National Inventories and 375 individual holding institutions by 21 December 2015. These accessions represent 6,234 unique genera and 41,642 species, respectively.¹ Details can be found from the EURISCO web site.

In 2015, 28 updates of National Inventory datasets have been performed, either completely or in parts.

A very large dataset of 669,645 accessions from the Nottingham Arabidopsis Stock Centre (NASC) was included into EURISCO in November 2015. NASC in the UK started with a few hundred accessions in 1991 and now holds well over 800,000 stocks. As an openly accessible Plant Genetic Resource it sends out more than 100,000 tubes of seed per year, separated into thousands of natural accessions, dozens of well characterized mapping populations, a vast collection of mutants, and many other genetic tools (<http://arabidopsis.info/>).

New features

- **Reworked update mechanism**

In contrast to the old system which was based on the full replacement of National Inventory datasets during the update, the new system focuses on incremental updates. Thus, National Focal Points only need to send data that were really changed – additional accessions and existing accessions with modified content. New accessions will then be inserted while existing accessions will be updated.

¹ These figures are overestimates, due to still existing synonyms and spelling variants, cf. van Hintum Th, Knüpffer H. 2010. Current taxonomic composition of European genebank material documented in EURISCO. Plant Genetic Resources Characterization and Utilization 8:182–188. doi:10.1017/S1479262110000158

- **User-specific export**

This feature enables the users to create customized export files for each National Inventory dataset. In addition, the whole EURISCO dataset can be downloaded as a pre-built dump.

- **C&E data**

Recently, EURISCO has been extended for characterization & evaluation (C&E) data. For this purpose, a simple data exchange format was finalized, based on a proposal from the ECPGR Documentation and Information Working Group. The database schema of EURISCO was extended to allow for storing C&E data, and upload tools as well as all necessary data integrity checks were implemented. An extension of the EURISCO user interface for searching and filtering C&E data was developed and is currently being tested with a large test dataset. After successful tests, the new C&E feature will be published at the beginning of 2016.

Training

Starting in 2015, the series of regional EURISCO training workshops was revived. The first workshop, funded by the ECPGR Activity Grant Scheme (First Call, 2014), focussed on South-Eastern Europe, especially on the SEEDNet member countries, and was held 19–21 May 2015 in Tirana, Albania.

The workshop, organized in collaboration with the Agricultural University of Tirana, Department of Plant Sciences and Technology, brought together 20 participants, including 16 National Focal Points and/or National Coordinators.

The report and the presentations given during the workshop can be found under <http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/working-groups/documentation-information/eurisco2015/>.

A proposal for a second training workshop was approved for funding by the Second Call of the ECPGR Activity Grant Scheme (2015). The workshop will be held in 2016 in France. The workshop date will be announced in a timely manner.

Dissemination

Presentations on EURISCO were given at the three workshops: “Tailoring the Documentation of Plant Genetic Resources in Europe to the Needs of the User” (workshop of the ECPGR Documentation and Information Working Group, 20–22 May 2014, Prague, Czech Republic), “SEEDNet – the Way Ahead” (5–6 November 2014, Ljubljana, Slovenia), and “Genetic resources: conservation and trait improvement” (workshop of the GPZ [German Society of Plant Breeding] working group Plant Genetic Resources, 10–11 December 2015, Gatersleben, Germany).

A poster on EURISCO was presented at the TDWG (Biodiversity Information Standards) 2015 Annual Conference “Applications, Standards and Capacity Building for Sustaining Global Biodiversity”, 28 September – 1 October 2015, Nairobi, Kenya, and a poster “Plant Genetic Resources from the Balkan Peninsula in the World’s Genebanks” using EURISCO data along with FAO WIEWS and Genesys, was presented at the 2nd International Symposium for Agriculture and Food, 7–9 October 2015, Ohrid, Macedonia (FYR).

The C&E data exchange format developed for EURISCO was presented at the workshop “Metadata standards for linking characterisation & evaluation data to genebank accessions registered in Genesys”, 23 November, Amsterdam-Schiphol, The Netherlands.

The EURISCO coordination provided substantial legwork to the preparation of project proposals (Horizon2020 and others) aiming at acquiring additional funding for developing certain aspects of EURISCO.

An activity report for 2014 as well as a workplan for 2015 were published at the beginning of 2015 and are available from the EURISCO website. A report for 2015 and a workplan for 2016 will be published soon.

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