

## The cooperation between Génoplante, MCyT and GABI : an example for the creation of a European network of Plant Genomics Research within the ERA Net Plant Genomics.

Pablo Vera, Dominique Job & Jens Freitag; Plant-GEM Lyon 2004

### Reasons for Pan-European Co-operation:

- To use available research budgets efficiently
- To increase critical financial, technological and intellectual mass
- To persist the immense task of functional genomics
- To increase competitiveness in Europe
- To overcome the split structure of research
- To avoid fruitless duplications
- To use existing resources and technologies efficiently
- To sustain existing technologies and resources
- To develop new technologies and resources efficiently
- To build up or to combine existing powerful databases
- To build up European training centers

But also to create a political anchor for plant genomics research in Europe

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### Environment to start the trilateral cooperation:

- Successful bilateral FR-DE cooperation (2002); positive cognition in our communities and in the EU (**the desire to enlarge the co-operation**)
- Commenced discussions with Spain, the Netherlands (Biosystems Genomics) and the U.K. (BBSRC) to join the co-operation scheme
- Leadership of Spain in the EU 2002 (**CREST**) focused on plant genomics as a main research topic to build up an ERA
- Meeting in Madrid in 2002 organized by EPSO and MCyT  
Goal: Introduce ongoing research activities and future perspectives in the field of Plant Genomics in Europe
- **Anchor** thenewly created Spanish plant genomics network

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### The trilateral co-operation (ES-FR-DE)

- Preliminary meeting to discuss general **guidelines, topics** of trilateral interest and a potential **time frame** with representatives from the responsible ministries, the program coordinators as well as legal experts.
- Simultaneously launched call for EoI's in Spain, France and Germany in April 2003 (**novelty English**)
- Partnering workshop organized in Madrid by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology in May 2003 (**53 EoI's**)
- Simultaneously launched call for projects in Spain, France and Germany in May 2003 after the partnering workshop; deadline for proposals was 30 June 2003 (**35 joint proposals were submitted - most of them trilateral**)

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### cont. The trilateral co-operation (ES-FR-DE)

- The overall topics for this tri-lateral call for projects were functional and comparative genomics approaches for the investigation and use of the **NATURAL DIVERSITY**.
- **FOCAL POINTS** for joint ideas concentrated on: food quality, sustainable agriculture, physiological performance of plants, reproductive growth, metabolic networks and biotic and abiotic stresses and plant adaptation
- The submitted joint projects must focus on basic and potential applied research topics with **NO LIMITATIONS** on species under investigation.
- **BRIDGING PROJECTS** combining research on model and crop species are very welcome.
- **ONLY** the use of genomic tools, genome wide explorations and the emergence of **NEW** genomic resources for plant genomics focused on biological questions that can be solved by the investigation and/or use of natural diversity / comparative genomics will be taken into account.

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### cont. The trilateral co-operation (ES-FR-DE)

- International **pre-reviewing** by independent experts came up with a ranking list (category A,B and C)
  - Joint **trilateral reviewing** board meeting December 2003 in Paris (4 referees and 1 guest from the funding agency for each country); final suggestions combining the scientific reviewing results and the ranking by national interests; detailed budget discussion
- Task:** The trilateral group of experts had the task to submit proposals about which of the 35 submitted research proposals should be funded by the three participating research ministries. During the Paris meeting, the external scientific results of the external referees opinions and the results of the trilateral experts commission (panel of trilateral experts) were synthesized. A **ranking list** of the project proposals suggested for funding was set up and was sent to all the three ministries in parallel. In addition, the panel of trilateral experts has the function to **submit proposals for a scientific and financial reorientation** of the submitted project proposals. The coordinators of the single trilateral projects will then be informed about these experts' results.

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**cont. The trilateral co-operation (ES-FR-DE)**

- A total financial volume of 300,000 to 500,000 Euro per project in each country for a period of three years resulting in about five to six joint projects were proposed (total budget 9 Mio Euro = three each)
- Planned start of the joint projects was April 2004
- The responsible ministries of Spain, Germany and France guarantee some 7.3M Euros (ES 2.4M €, DE 2.8M €, FR 2.0M €) within a three year funding period
- A total of 9 proposals were prioritized and formally communicated to applicants, with written scientific reports, in January 2004
- Actual start of the projects in Spain in May; France in September and Germany in October (**highest synchronization so far**)

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**General experiences from the trilateral co-operation**

- Co-operation is a prerequisite and is far from being a novelty in research
- Scientists are used to and are ready to improve co-operation
- It is possible to start co-operation between national programs as well (G-G; ES-G-G)
- But it requires a lot of optimism, informal contacts, persistence, ignorance but mainly a well organized scientific environment and political visions (thanks to Daniel, Frank and Rosa & Jose)

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**Special experiences from the trilateral co-operation**

- Grant's are shrinking during the transmission process (9 Mill. € => 7.3 Mill. €)
- Keep to whole process transparent to all partners (scientists, sponsors, politicians and managers)
- Try to make it as simple as possible
- Workhorses needed to take it up again and again which are able to work in a team
- To start science is easy but to define roles and a legal basis is much more complicated

It's a lot of fun to learn and the scientists are a thankful community.

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**ERA NET PG**

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**What are the aims and task of the ERA Net PG?**

- Joining of existing national or regional plant genomic programs
- Opening of national programs for countries lacking such national or regional activities
- Creating a European "science market"
- Sustaining plant genomics as a key technology in our century in Europe

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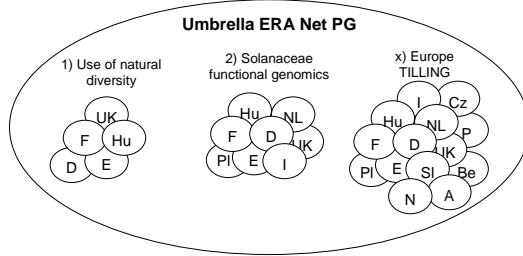
**How to continue the international co-operation?**

A) Enlargement of the ongoing cooperation of national programs to multilateral

B) Different core group cooperation of national programs

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C) Topic oriented joint activities involving **groups of scientists** from different countries



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