

Memorandum of Understanding

On science policy cooperation in the European plant sector and beyond towards creating the 'Knowledge Based Bio-Economy'

between the

European Plant Science Organisation, EPSO

and interested

Learned National Societies or similar National Scientific Organisations¹

hereafter referred to as the "*SIGNING PARTNERS*".

The Future of Plant Science is important for Europe

Strong charismatic voices, such as the one of Nobel laureate, Al Gore make most of us aware that our planet is at risk and that plant research must play a pivotal role in building a sustainable world. As a result, Europe is beginning to realize the importance of plant sciences. But the tasks that plant scientists are facing are challenging and will require strong commitments from all stakeholders: academia, industry, as well as policy-makers.

There are grand challenges ahead that need plant science contributions:

- In the coming decades 3 billion additional people will have to be fed while using less arable land.
- Living standards will continue to rise in many developing countries where consumption of animal products is burgeoning, again requiring a larger input of plant-derived feed.
- Global climate change will require new crops to be developed with improved stress and disease tolerance.
- Plants offer opportunities to contribute to sustainable energy supply in carefully managed agricultural systems that provide both sufficient food and energy. Second generation of bioenergy plants are very promising because it they will enable the harnessing of energy previously locked in ligno-cellulosic polymers.

For these new developments to be successful, it is important that all disciplines of plant science must work together to reach the goals. Botanists and ecologists will help identify novel crops and plant communities for efficient biomass production; plant breeders and agronomists will develop new varieties and sustainable agricultural practices; plant molecular biologists and plant physiologists will discover which processes control biomass production and how the components of the plant cell walls are assembled and can be modified. Systems biology will provide the framework to integrate all this knowledge to build a holistic view to optimise plant productivity. New breeding and gene technology methods will be developed to increase the yield and sustainable biomass that can be provided by plants.

¹ Academic associations and societies i) bridging a small number of countries, i.e. two to four such as the Scandinavian Society of Plant Physiologists or ii) international learned societies representing an international membership who, under the terms of this agreement, represent specifically one country, such as SEB as conduit for the UK, can be considered for such a partnership as well

In the past, plant science has received less attention when compared with the more medical-oriented disciplines. Students often prefer to study animals and human diseases rather than plants. However, this is changing and the fact that in the last 12 months many new researchers have joined plant research departments is a testimony to the growing importance of plant sciences. As plant scientists, we feel very privileged to be able to contribute to the development of a sustainable world.

To reach this goal, it is of critical importance that EPSO, on behalf of the plant science community, continues to raise awareness of the importance of plant research and to establish plant science in Europe in its rightful position. Under this MoU EPSO will collaborate with learned national societies and organizations to develop partnerships for science policy work. EPSO members and partners will convey a strong message to decision makers that EPSO represents a united plant community.

About EPSO

EPSO has a solely academic membership of 185 research institutes, universities and research departments from 27 countries in Europe and beyond, representing over 25 000 plant researchers and staff. In addition, EPSO has 1 500 personal members.

The mission of EPSO is to promote plant science and plant scientists. It represents plant scientists in discussions about future plant science programme priorities across Europe, provides an authoritative source of independent information on plant science, and promotes 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 national and European level on science policy, in the Initiative for Science in Europe and the European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future'. EPSO supports plant scientists via the EPSO conferences including support grants for junior and eastern scientists, workshops, tutorships and as information broker via *EPSO News* and its website.

MoU with national learned societies and similar national scientific organisations

EPSO offers learned national societies and similar scientific organisations to join forces on policy issues. EPSO encourages such entities to sign this MoU, to engage in the development of EPSO policy statements and recommendations, and as partner societies and associations to be signatories to policy documents.

The partnership governed by this MoU will provide mutual benefits to EPSO and national societies / associations as they will increase their visibility and involvement in policy making at European and national levels. At the same time this partnership will substantially increase the weight of policy recommendations towards the aim of speaking with one voice for the European plant science community.

Herewith, the *SIGNING PARTNERS* declare:

1. The MoU defines the framework for our future cooperation. It is founded on the basis of our mutual interest in advancing the plant sector in Europe and beyond. We endorse and encourage the further development of our mutual interest through the publication of **policy statements** towards the creation of the Knowledge Based Bio-Economy' (KBBE) in Europe. Our mutual interests in cooperating on policy issues is inspired by our shared vision of the need to build a KBBE that will be a major challenge for our economies as well as for our societies within the 21st century.
2. Policy statements will **advance at least one of the following objectives**: to promote plant science and plant scientists, to represent plant scientists in discussions about what plant

science should be funded in Europe, to provide an authoritative source of independent information on plant science, and to promote training of plant scientists to meet 21st century challenges in breeding, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, plant ecology and other sectors related to plant science.

3. The initial period of the MoU will be **six years** from the date of signature. During this time, statements on policy issues key to EPSO and to national learned societies and similar organizations will be developed and published.
4. A **policy network**, composed of the policy officers from the learned national societies and scientific organisations and managed by EPSO staff, will be the sole contact for EPSO to coordinate the proposition, development and approval process of policy statements in the respective society:
 - a. Each signing partner designates the policy officer for its society / organization. This officer will be the sole contact for this society / organization to EPSO in proposing, developing and approving all policy statements under this MoU. In their respective society / organization it is the responsibility of the policy officer to disseminate information on policy statements and provide feedback to EPSO.
 - b. The policy officer of each signing partner can propose the development of a policy statement to the EPSO Board. The EPSO Board decides which policy statement will be developed in the interest of all signing partners.
 - c. The EPSO Board informs the policy officers of all signing partners when a position will be developed.
 - d. In a two-week period after notification each signing partner can offer an expert (that can differ from their policy officer) to the task force developing the position. The EPSO Board reviews all offers and decides on the task force members to achieve a balanced input from different sectors, countries etc, based on the experts offered by EPSO and the national societies.
 - e. The task force develops a draft policy statement that will be circulated to the policy officers of the signing partners. Only the policy officers can provide feedback to EPSO within 4 weeks. This procedure might be repeated.
 - f. The final policy statement is sent to the policy officers of all signatories for approval of their society / organization. Only the policy officer can confirm approval to EPSO within 2 weeks. No reply is considered as not approved by that society / organization.
 - g. The policy statement will be published as statement of EPSO and the societies / organizations that approved it.
5. EPSO offers to the national **societies who signed this MoU** that their representatives **agree on one** national society **observer** who will voice their views by participating in the EPSO General Meeting.
6. The MoU is not a legally binding document for the *SIGNING PARTNERS*. We recognize, however that the final success of the cooperation outlined in this MoU depends on the responsible efforts of all *SIGNING PARTNERS* and their willingness to adhere to its principles.

Brussels, 30 March 2009

EPSO President

Wilhelm Gruissem

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(signature)

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(date)

President of the Learned National Society or similar National Scientific Organisation

Name of the society / organization:

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Country represented under this MoU:

Academic associations and societies bridging a small number of countries, these could be two to four countries, such as for the Scandinavian Society of Plant Physiologists. International learned societies representing an international membership who, under the terms of this agreement, will represent specifically one country, such as SEB as conduit for the UK.

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Name of the designated policy officer from the society / organisation:

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President of the society / organization:

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(name)

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(signature)

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(date)