



European Plant Science Organisation

## To all EPSO representatives, supporting scientists and personal members

Brussels, 8 January 2008

Dear Colleagues,

With 2007 we closed another successful year for EPSO. We would like to use this opportunity to share our thoughts about the past, present and future of plant science in Europe—showing that we have much accomplished, but that it will be most important now to make this success sustainable and increase it further.

The **growth of EPSO** has been impressively dynamic over the last seven years. In 2001, EPSO was founded by 22 European institutes and universities to change science policy in Europe in support of plant science. There was serious concern that plant science would be marginalized in European Framework Programs, which subsequently could have resulted in dwindling resources at national levels as well. In retrospect, building EPSO was the right decision because as a visible group of plant scientists we were successful to make a strong case for plant research in Europe. EPSO now represents over 150 research institutes and universities from 25 countries and, after opening EPSO to personal memberships a few months ago, 880 personal members have already signed on. Collectively, the community of plant scientists has put plants back on the European agenda and EPSO is starting to have impact at national levels as well. This is impressive, but there is no time to rest on our laurels. While a number of politicians now support plant research, some others may not have fully realized the importance that plants have for the future of European agriculture, economy and the environment. It is therefore important that over the next few years EPSO should become the united voice for plant research in Europe.

As a major result of your concerted efforts the **7<sup>th</sup> Framework Program** has funding available for plant research topics that were developed in the European Technology Platform (ETP) “Plants for the Future” jointly between academia, industry and farmers. But to assure that plant research will also have high visibility in the next few years, EPSO must continue to work closely with the ETP and other stakeholders to keep plants on the European agenda. As a community we also have to increase our public relations efforts to communicate the importance of plants for the future of Europe.

As a partner of the **European Research Area Network on Plant Genomics (ERA-PG)**, EPSO supports the vision of a common research funding opportunity for European scientists. ERA-PG was the first ERA-NET that issued a multinational research call with a substantial commitment of 30 Mill € and now it is publishing its second call. The Plant-KBBE<sup>1</sup> was launched this autumn as a public-private partnership funding opportunity by Germany, France and Spain. It announced to publish three successive annual calls in plant research. EPSO supports this initiative and encourages its members to take advantage of this new opportunity.

The first **European Technology Platform “Plants for the Future”**, with strong involvement from EPSO, has recently launched its Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). This impressive vision for European plant research for the next twenty years has won much praise from stakeholders and politicians at European and national levels. The launch in Brussels was supported by high-ranking

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge-Based Bioeconomy; Plant-KBBE has a mission similar to the ERA-Nets, but focuses on public-private partnerships in research projects.

European politicians, including Mr. Potocnik (EU Research Commissioner), Mr. Busquin (previous EU Research Commissioner, now member of the European Parliament), Mr. Chichester (previous chair, now member of the European Parliament Committee for Industry, Research and Energy) and Mr. Purvis (long standing member of the European Parliament and active supporter of plant biotechnology), as well as members of national research ministries. This, together with the national consultations organized by you and your colleagues from industry and farmers associations, has increased awareness and interest in national research councils and various ministries about the critical importance of strong and vibrant plant research. EPSO is encouraging you to continue the dialogue with key politicians and decision makers in 2008 to assure that all European countries adopt the ETP "Plants for the Future" SRA for their national programmes.

EPSO is continuing efforts to build a **strong reputation among scientists in Europe and globally**. There is growing evidence that EPSO has become the preferred contact in Europe for international scientists and industries interested in plants. EPSO has been fortunate to win the support of the leading plant scientists in Europe to successfully build a global EPSO network. Your efforts and contributions have also established the EPSO Conference as one of the international top plant science events. We could witness this during our 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference in Hungary 2006 and now during the organization of our 4<sup>th</sup> Conference, which will be held in France in June 2008<sup>2</sup>. EPSO workshops also have the same reputation as visionary and high quality think-tanks in emerging areas of plant science. The 2007 Feed Workshop drew much attention and the next EPSO Workshop on Bioenergy has already raised considerable interest. We will present the conclusions from both workshops at the 2008 EPSO Conference and during a symposium that EPSO is organizing at the European Science Open Forum (ESOF) in 2008, to promote science in the public. As immediate and important input to the broader policy debate, EPSO presented our position paper on bioenergy and biorenewables in fall 2007 at the Venice World Conference on the Future of Science, a high level conference.

Building on this success, **EPSO will develop** further. Your EPSO delegates 2007 mandated EPSO at the general meeting to strengthen our core activities, to continue our focus on science policy, and to provide more support to national policy activities:

- EPSO will continue to inform you about European FP7 activities and with your help provide critical input to the annual Work Programmes.
- EPSO will also offer advice to national research programmes and provide you with all the necessary information to access EU structural funds in your country.

EPSO added carefully selected and focused new activities in 2007:

- EPSO has successfully launched *EPSO News*, the EPSO Newsletter that has already published the 4<sup>th</sup> issues. *EPSO News* focuses on science programs and funding opportunities from European and national sources and news from the plant community.
- The EPSO Online Portal on plant science, which already has 1,365 links to major science resources, tools, events and job opportunities, has received a lot of support from you.
- The EPSO members' database with your addresses and expertise will be accessible for you in spring 2008.
- "EPSOpedia", EPSO's own wikipedia, will be launched in 2008. There you will have the opportunity to present your department, institute or university.
- The EPSO World Wide Human Resource Network to connect European senior scientists as tutors with European junior scientists abroad will help the return to the European plant science community.

**You, the members of EPSO**, are most important. On behalf of its institutional members, EPSO will continue to promote plant research in European science policy with highest priority. The quantum leap in our new activities, however, allows EPSO to extend our membership to people interested in plant science across all professions, career stages and nationalities—and beginning in 2008 also to selected institutions and universities beyond Europe. A special bonus is the free personal membership for all staff working in EPSO institutional member laboratories—but we need your help to encourage your staff to take advantage of this opportunity. We hope that the personal

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<sup>2</sup> We encourage you to take advantage of the personal membership (free for all scientists, postdocs, PhD students and research staff working at an EPSO Institutional Member) to benefit from the reduced EPSO conference registration fee.

membership initiative will be a strong incentive for more research institutions across all areas of plant science and universities to join EPSO as new institutional members. Please also help EPSO by actively inviting university scientists to join forces and become EPSO members as university clusters. This will strengthen the input from university scientists into our policy and science activities. Universities provide our younger generation the foundation of science—and it is our younger generation who will contribute to a sustainable society in the future.

Beginning in 2008 EPSO will also **work with other national plant science organizations and societies** to develop partnerships for science policy work. New EPSO members and partners will greatly enrich our activities and at the same time convey a strong message to decision makers that EPSO represents a united plant community.

One year ago EPSO moved its **headquarters** to the centre of Brussels across the street from the European Commission and the European Parliament, in the neighborhood of National Permanent Representations and many European associations. We could already welcome many of you in our office for stimulating discussions and a cup of tea and look forward to *your* visit in 2008! Numerous meetings and events at our new headquarters have greatly increased interactions with our partners and friends.

Your vision for EPSO is implemented by the commitment of our Board Members Jacek Hennig, Jonathan Jones, Helen Lucas, Kirsi-Marja Oksman-Caldentey, Peer Puigdomenech, Chiara Tonelli and Erkki Truve, the Executive Committee President Wilhelm Gruissem, Vice-President Dirk Inze, Treasurer Ulrich Schurr and Executive Director Karin Metzloff, and our dedicated staff team Science Writer Isabelle Caugant from France, Secretary Ivana Migliore from Italy, and Executive Assistants AnnaKarin Hedin from Sweden and Katrien Molders from Belgium. Katrien is joining us again after spending some months with her baby Indi.

On the following pages please find an overview of EPSO benefits and groups of members and the list of our current members. Your feedback and advice will be very welcome and greatly appreciated.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you for your vision, commitment and support of EPSO. Together with you the EPSO Team is looking forward to shaping the future of plant science in Europe.

The EPSO Executive Committee wishes you, your family and your colleagues  
all the best for 2008!



Wilhelm Gruissem, Dirk Inze, Karin Metzloff and Ulrich Schurr

## **EPSO Membership Benefits – an Overview**

*Note: Institutional member benefits are relevant to personal members and vice versa.*

### **EPSO advises policy and decision makers at national and European level on Science Policy**

EPSO is a key adviser in furthering the plant sector in Europe in partnership with other stakeholders (in the Technology Platform “Plants for the Future”) and national research councils (in the ERA-Net on Plant Genomics and the Plant-KBBE). In addition to advice at European level, EPSO will offer increasingly information to decision makers at national and regional level. To do so, EPSO will continue to collaborate with related stakeholders in Europe and key science organizations from the regional to a global level. The EPSO workshops will be an important tool to develop such information for emerging opportunities.

Such advice contributes to both, a global effort to boost plant science in partnership with similar academic associations outside Europe; and to promote basic science at European level and to advocate strong independent scientific advice in European policy making in the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE).

→ Benefit mainly for EPSO institutional members. Continuing activity

### **The Electronic Directory – your address book of individual and institutional members**

The database includes the area of expertise of EPSO members and all other EPSO contacts world wide.

→ Access is restricted to EPSO members. Activity started April'07, access starts spring 2008.

### **The EPSO Online Portal to plant science – your link to main science funding and information sources**

This portal links to funding agencies at national and European level in Europe, to scientific databases, online tools, meetings, research locations and can host your web-casts of seminars and lectures at member institutes.

→ Access is restricted to EPSO members. Activity started April'07

### **The EPSOpedia – your wikipedia to present your institute / university and its activities**

This wikipedia will present EPSO and its institutional members. You can present your activities to attract students, new staff, communicate to the science community and the public at large.

→ The EPSOpedia has public access. Only EPSO institutional members can write. New activity will start in 2008

### **The EPSO Bi-annual Conference is a top level snap shot and outlook of all areas in plant sciences**

EPSO conference awards honour outstanding posters. EPSO conference grants provide financial support to students and to senior scientists from new Member States to participate to the conference.

→ The Conference has Public access. Only EPSO institutional members form the organizing committee. Only personal members benefit from a reduced registration fee and can apply for support grants. Ongoing activity

### **The EPSO Workshops are organized on selected topics on request of its members**

EPSO organizes top level workshops with a bottom up principle bringing distant disciplines together to break down barriers between disciplines and foster new promising research areas.

→ Benefit for institutional members. Only these can propose topics and apply to participate. Ongoing activity

### **The EPSO Bi-monthly electronic Newsletters, *EPSO News* – your update on science and science policy**

This Newsletter focuses on research funding at national and European level open to cross-national research, News on Research Programs across Europe, EPSO's activities, job openings and meeting announcements.

→ Access is restricted to institutional member representatives and personal members. Activity started April'07

### **The EPSO Job listings – your job opportunities**

Current job offers relevant to the plant sector globally are displayed for 3 months on the EPSO web, linked to the EPSO online portal and included in the Newsletter. This ensures a top job brokerage for the plant sector.

→ The job list has public access and benefits all members. Ongoing activity

### **The EPSO World Wide Human Resources Network – your anchor in European science**

EPSO members volunteer as tutor for early career scientists, e.g being well connected to your home country / Europe while you are abroad. EPSO members revive the tradition of summer student programs around Europe.

→ Only personal members can apply for a tutor under this scheme. New activity starting April'08

### **The Virtual Institute for Plant Science in Europe will focus on junior scientists**

This activity will not start yet, only after existing schemes were surveyed to identify and discuss opportunities for EPSO. It could provide information on Master Programs across Europe, establish training opportunities, and provide frontier research grants in the longer term.

→ Benefit for institutional and personal members. New activity that will start earliest in 2009.

## GROUPS OF MEMBERS and SUPPORT from other parties

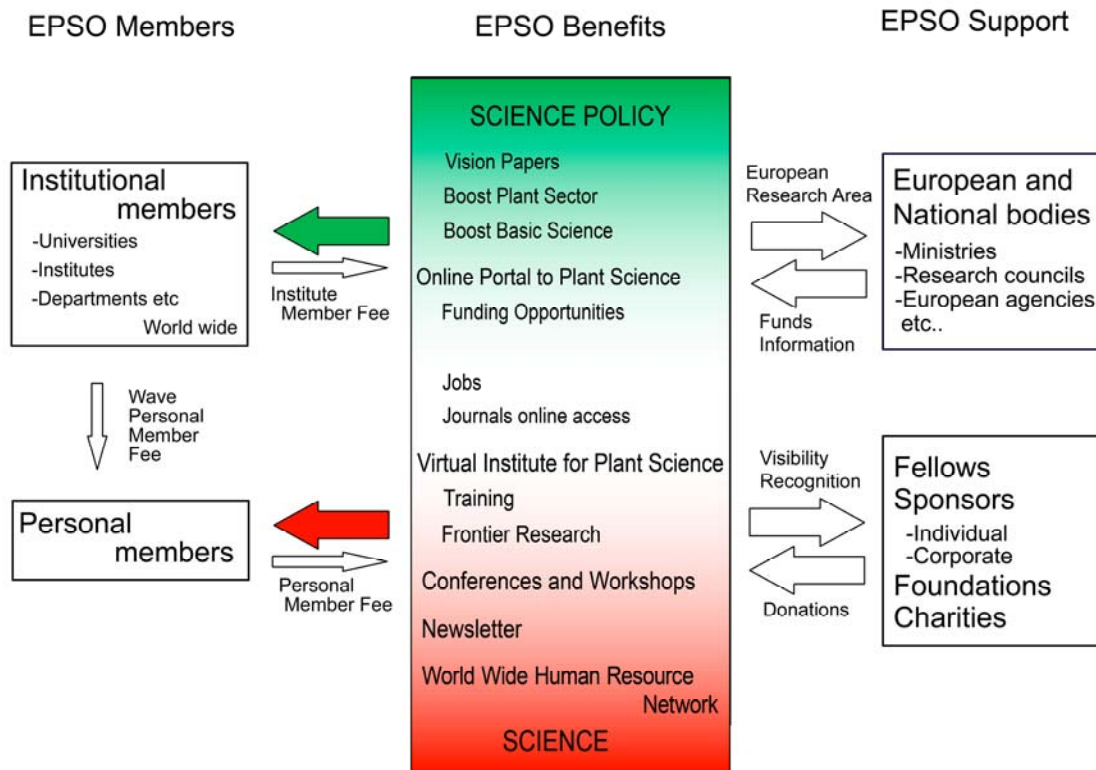
EPSO offers membership to two groups: to institutes, universities, departments or research units thereof; the institutional membership is offered, from 2008 on as well outside of Europe; for individual persons the personal membership started as a new possibility from July 2007 on.

EPSO will invite national and regional agencies to contribute financial support to EPSO's activities which will help realising the European Research Area and attract especially young people to (plant) science.

EPSO will offer to other interested parties visibility and recognition for providing financial resources to EPSO.

Such parties can be foundations, charities, publishing companies, institutional and individual sponsors and EPSO Fellows.

## Creating a future for plant research in Europe



### 1 - Institutional members

Legal entities, such as an institute, university, department or research unit thereof, from academia in the field of plant research are invited to become an institutional member to EPSO.

Two specific cases are allowed for in this group of membership. The first one being "University clusters", giving the opportunity to a group of university departments / groups from different locations from maximum five different universities to join as one member to encourage participation of universities in EPSO. The second being "New Member State clusters", giving the opportunity to several research institutes and universities (maximum five) from always one New Member State or Candidate Country to form one member to EPSO. Switzerland and Norway are not eligible for the latter specific case.

EPSO's main activities for institutional members are the Science Policy, the Online Portal – specifically to Funding Opportunities, the EPSOpedia, the Bi-annual EPSO Conference and the EPSO Workshops.

Subject to such members from outside Europe, the Newsletter will provide information as well on collaborative research opportunities between Europe (national and European funds) and other parts of the world.

All people working at a Member Institute / university can register as a personal member to EPSO without paying the personal membership fee to EPSO.

EPSO's benefits for personal members as shown below will ultimately benefit institutional members.

Institutional members contribute the institutional membership fee to EPSO. This is an annual fee according to the number of people working in the institute or university, related to plant science.

Institutional members are allocated to one of currently three classes: A\* members are research councils or very large research units (beyond 600 people); A members are medium to large research units (from 50 people on, including university clusters) and B members are small research units (below 50 people, including New Member State clusters).

Institutional members outside of Europe contribute 2/3 of the fee.

Reflecting the high input of institutional members to EPSO, they have one representative each to the General Meeting – the Annual Assembly of EPSO members (A\* members have two to three representatives); three to nine supporting scientists – primary contacts for EPSO's activities; and ten seats in the EPSO board – elected by the General Assembly.

## **2 - Personal members**

Individual persons interested in plant science supporting the vision of EPSO and fostering its implementation are invited to become a personal member to EPSO. This invitation is open to all nationalities, professions, career stages and age groups world wide.

EPSO's activities with exclusive access to personal members are the bi-monthly newsletter, a reduced EPSO conference registration fee, eligibility to apply for an EPSO conference support grant, use of the EPSO world wide human resources network. Other activities important to personal members include the Online Portal - specifically plant science activities, the e-directory of EPSO members and e-job listings.

EPSO's activities for institutional members as shown above will ultimately benefit personal members.

Personal members contribute the personal membership fee to EPSO. This is an annual fee according to the career state.

Personal members are allocated to one of currently three classes: Members are people working in their profession; Post-docs are people with a PhD or Dr degree not working independently yet; and students are PhD students approaching a PhD or diploma degree, and undergraduate students approaching a bachelor, Master or Diploma degree; and school students.

The personal membership fee for personal members working in a members institute or university is waved.

Personal members will have one representative to the General Meeting – the annual assembly of EPSO members. They will have one seat in the EPSO board – elected by the General Meeting.

## **3 – Associations and societies**

EPSO will offer to national academic associations and societies to join forces on policy issues. EPSO will offer such entities to sign a memorandum of understanding and get involved in the development of EPSO policy statements and recommendations and at the end of each such discussion partner societies and associations can choose to be a signatory to the policy document.

This will provide mutual benefit to EPSO and national societies / associations as they will increase their visibility and involvement in the policy arena at European and national level. At the same time this will substantially increase the weight of such policy recommendations towards the aim of speaking with one voice for the European plant science community.

Academic associations and societies bridging a small number of countries, i.e. two to four, can be considered for such a partnership as well.

## To 1 – List of the EPSO institutional members

EPSO has 56 institutional members bringing together over 150 research institutes, universities and research departments from 25 countries in Europe with over 20 000 people working in plant science.

<b>Austria</b> 	University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna University of Vienna
<b>Belgium</b> 	Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology, VIB, Gent
<b>Bulgaria</b> 	AgroBioInstitute, Kostinbrod (New member States cluster with: Soil Science Institute N. Pushkarov - Sofia; State Agricultural Institute, Gen. Toshevo ; Institute of Plant Genetic Resources - Sadovo; Institute of Maize - Kneja)
<b>Czech Republic</b> 	Institute of Experimental Botany, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Praha (New Member States cluster with: Mendel University – Brno; Crop Research Institute – Prague; Department of Plant Physiology, Charles University – Prague; Institute of Plant Molecular Biology AS CR – Ceske Budejovice)
<b>Denmark</b> 	Plant Biotech Denmark (University cluster with: Dep. of Plant Biology, Dep. of Agricultural Sciences and Dep. of Molecular Biology, Copenhagen University; Dep. of Genetics and Biotechnology and Dep. of Molecular Biology, University of Aarhus; Dep. of Biochemistry and Nutrition of the BioCentrum and Biosystems Department Riso, Technical University of Denmark (Lyngby); Dep. of Biotechnology, Chemistry and Environmental Engineering, University of Aalborg; Institute for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Southern Denmark)
<b>Estonia</b> 	Tallinn University of Technology (New Member States cluster with: Jõgeva Plant Breeding Institute; Estonian University of Life Sciences – Tartu; University of Tartu)
<b>Finland</b> 	Viiki Research Program in Plant Biology, University of Helsinki Department of Biology, Turku University VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Espoo MTT Agrifood Research Finland, Jokioinen
<b>France</b> 	CNRS (National research organization with institutes in Bordeaux, Cadarache, Clermont-Ferrand, Dijon, Evry, Gif sur Yvette, Grenoble, Ivry, Lille, Lyon , Marseille, Montpellier, Orsay, Paris, Perpignan, Poitiers, Roscoff, Rouen, Sophia-Antipolis, Strasbourg and Toulouse) INRA (National research organisation with institutes in Angers, Antibes, Antilles-Guyane, Avignon, Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Colmar, Corse, Dijon, Jouy-en-Josas, Lille, Montpellier, Nancy, Nantes, Orléans, Paris, Poitou-Charentes, Rennes, Toulouse, Tours, Versailles-Grignon) CIRAD, Paris
<b>Germany</b> 	Max-Planck-Institute for Plant Breeding Research, Cologne, Max-Planck-Society Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology (University Cluster with: Centre for Plant Molecular Biology – Tübingen University and Institute for Biology II – Freiburg University) Max-Planck-Institut for Molecular Plant Physiology, Golm, Max-Planck-Society Fraunhofer Institute for Molecular Biotechnology, Aachen, Fraunhofer Society_ Association of German Plant Breeders (GFP e.V.), Bonn Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben Institute Phytosphere Research; Research Center Jülich (FZJ) Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry, Halle (Saale) Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Jena
<b>Greece</b> 	Agricultural University of Athens (University Cluster with: University of Crete; National Hellenic Research Foundation)
<b>Hungary</b> 	Biological Research Centre, Szeged, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (New Member States cluster with: Agricultural Research Institute HAS – Martonvásár; Agricultural Biotechnology Centre - Institute of Plant Biology - Gödöllő; Wheat Genetics and Breeding Department - Cereal Research Non-profit Company - Szeged; University of Szeged; Dept. of Plant Physiology and Molecular Plant Biology Eotvos University –

	Budapest)
<b>Ireland</b>	BioResearch Ireland, BRI, Dublin
	Plant Science Group, School of Biological and Environmental Science, University College Dublin
<b>Israel</b>	Zamir, Wolf, Ori, Weiss and Adam Laboratories, The Robert H. Smith Institute of Plant Sciences and Genetics in Agriculture, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
	
<b>Italy</b>	University La Sapienza Roma, Dpt Genetics and Molecular Biology (University Cluster with: Univ of Siena, Dpt Plant Biology; Stazione Zoologica, Naples - Bowler Laboratory)
	Interdepartmental Biotechnology Research Centre (CIRB), Bologna
	Università degli Studi, Milano
	Institute of Plant Genetics (CNR-IGV), Bari
<b>Netherlands</b>	Wageningen University / EPS (University cluster of departments from Wageningen University, Radboud University, Utrecht University, Leiden University, University of Amsterdam)
	Plant Research International, Wageningen
	The Netherlands Institute of Ecology, Heteren
<b>Norway</b>	Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences – Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås
	Bioforsk Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research, Ås
<b>Poland</b>	Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences (New Member States cluster with: Department of Plant Genetics Breeding and Biotechnology - Warsaw Agricultural University; Institute of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology - University of Wrocław; Department of Physiology and Biochemistry - Research Institute of Pomology and Floriculture – Skierniewice; Department of Biochemical Genetics - Institute of Plant Genetics, PAS – Poznań)
	
<b>Portugal</b>	Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology, FCUL, Lisbon
	
<b>Serbia</b>	Institute of Molecular Genetic and Genetic Engineering, Belgrade (New Member States cluster with: Faculty of Agriculture and Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade; Molecular genetics and breeding, Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops - Novi Sad)
	
<b>Slovakia</b>	Institute of Plant Genetics and Biotechnology, Nitra, Slovak Academy of Sciences (New Member States cluster with: Faculty of Natural Sciences, Dept. Plant Physiology, Comenius University – Bratislava; Botanical Institute, SAS – Bratislava; Institute of Forest Ecology, SAS, Zvolen; Institute of Landscape Ecology, SAS – Bratislava; Faculty of Plant Genetics and Breeding, The Slovak Agricultural University – Nitra; Research Institute of Plant Production – Piešťany)
	
<b>Slovenia</b>	National Institute of Biology, Ljubljana (New Member States cluster with: Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana - Ljubljana; Slovenian Forestry Institute - Ljubljana; Agricultural Institute of Slovenia - Ljubljana)
	
<b>Spain</b>	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-CSIC, Madrid
	Laboratori de Genètica Molecular Vegetal CSIC-IRTA, Barcelona
	Universitat de Barcelona
	Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Tecnología Agraria y Alimentaria INIA, Madrid
<b>Sweden</b>	Umea Plant Science Centre (University cluster of parts of the two Umea universities)
	
<b>Switzerland</b>	Zurich Basel Plant Science Centre (Cluster of ETH Zurich, University of Zurich and University of Basel)
	University of Lausanne (University cluster with: Institute of Plant Sciences - University of Bern; Department of Molecular Biology – University of Geneva; Institute of Botany and Plant Physiology – University of Neuchâtel; Institute of Plant Biology – University of Fribourg)
<b>UK</b>	John Innes Centre, Norwich, BBSRC
	University of Warwick, Wellesbourne
	Centre for Plant Sciences (CPS), Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Leeds
	Scottish Crop Research Institute, SCRI, Dundee

## **To 2 – EPSO already has 880 Personal Members**

823 are from institutional members (628 professionals, 59 post-docs and 136 students). They all work for academia.

57 personal members (49 professionals, 3 post-docs and 5 students) are working at other places: 38 in Europe and 19 in other parts of the world.

79% of them work for academia 19% for industry and 2% for the political sector:

Most of our personal members are professionals, 62 are post-docs and 141 are students.