

Issued by the Euro+Med PlantBase Secretariat, Centre for Plant Diversity and Systematics,
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Welcome to the First Issue of the Euro+Med PlantBase Newsletter

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE EURO+MED SECRETARIAT

Finally contracts for the Euro+Med PlantBase E.U. grant were signed in Brussels on the 31st August for the project to start on the 1st September 2000. It is now all systems go!

It is a pleasure to introduce Dr Mark Carine who has been appointed to work in Reading as Plant Taxonomist and Project Leader. He recently graduated with a D.Phil. from Oxford for his thesis on the systematics of the Strobilanthisinae (Acanthaceae). Mark is no stranger here, having graduated in Botany in 1991.

I am also delighted to welcome Miss Judith Heald as our Co-ordinator and Database Manager. Judith has been doing very similar work for ILDIS for the last

five years. She is going to edit our newsletter and I hope she will receive your support.

Dr Stephen L. Jury
(Euro+Med PlantBase Co-ordinator)

October 2000 sees the first issue of the **Euro+Med PlantBase Newsletter**. From now on we hope to issue the Newsletter every month.

For those of you who have never heard of Euro+Med this issue gives an introduction to the project and information on how to find out more. For those already involved in the project this issue will keep you up-to-date with recent developments.

This Newsletter also acts an invitation to any botanists in the Euro-Mediterranean region who would like to co-operate in this exciting new initiative in plant systematics. The Secretariat would be pleased to receive any enquiries on this matter.

Everyone participating in the Euro+Med project is invited to contribute to the Newsletter. Short articles concerning your activities will help other people to know what is happening in the project.

We hope you will find this Newsletter informative. If you are not already on our mailing list, and would like to receive further copies of the Newsletter, please let me know (see contact details on p.5). If you received a hard copy but would prefer to receive future issues by email please inform me of your email address.

Judith Heald
(Newsletter Editor)

About Euro+Med PlantBase

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The Euro+Med Project aims to provide an on-line database and information system for the vascular plants of Europe and the Mediterranean region, against an up-to-date and critically evaluated consensus taxonomic core of the species concerned.

After several years of planning the project is now firmly underway. The first stage of the project (referred to as Phase One) now has financial support for three years from the European Union under Framework V with a start date of September 1st 2000.

The ESFEDS (European Science Foundation European Documentation System) database is being used to provide the initial starting point for the taxonomic core of Euro+Med PlantBase. This database, developed at the University of Reading, currently comprises names and associated data from Flora Europaea. Work to expand this with additional names and information from the MedChecklist database, the Flora of Macaronesia dataset and published Floras from the Euro-Mediterranean region will start soon.

A key component of the new Euro+Med PlantBase initiative is the critical evaluation of the expanded database. A mechanism for the regional co-operative revision of the taxonomic status of all families, genera, species, subspecies and, where appropriate, cultivars described from the Euro-Mediterranean region has been developed. The organisation of this work will involve specialists from over fifty countries and territories within the region. This revisionary process will result in an agreed taxonomic core, which will be one of the main outputs of the project.

A great amount of information has been amassed on the plant diversity of the Euro-Mediterranean region, but hitherto no consistent attempt has been made to bring this together and relate it to an agreed taxonomic framework. The agreed taxonomic framework provided by the Euro+Med taxonomic core will be used for this purpose. The taxonomic core will be linked to a set of 'beads' (see below) and satellite databases (see p.3 for further details).

Phase One of the project provides funds for 11 **Partner Institutes** who will carry out the project in 9 different workpackages. The 9 workpackages and the institutes involved are described further on p.3. The project is managed by an **Executive Committee** (see p.5 for details) and the day-to-day management is the responsibility of the **Secretariat** based at the University of Reading. A **Steering Committee** is responsible for the overall scientific, administrative and financial aspects of the project (see p.5 for details).

DATA INCLUDED IN THE EURO+MED TAXONOMIC CORE

The following data will be included in the Euro+Med Taxonomic Core:

- the scientific name of each taxon
- the author citation
- the place of publication
- the basionym
- selected synonyms
- distribution
- status of occurrence
- endemic to region/country/territory
- description (standardised for auto-translation)
- growth form – revised Raunkiaer system
- ecology – basic habitat type
- phenology
- karyology: chromosome number(s); ploidy level

THE EURO+MED 'BEADS'

Surrounding the core data, there will be a set of minimal summaries of verified data, termed '**beads**', on topics such as:

- distribution maps
- phytosociology – to the level of alliance and order
- representative illustrations
- biosystematics
- phytochemistry
- conservation status
- legal protection
- economic or scientific importance
- genetic resources
- growth habit – tree architecture, etc.

About Euro+Med PlantBase continued...

THE EURO+MED SATELLITE DATABASES

Euro+Med PlantBase will be hot-linked through the 'beads' to 'satellite' data sets where more detailed information is available. Many such datasets already exist electronically or are presently being actively developed by individuals, organisations and institutions. Examples include the OPTIMA chromosome database at the University of Patras, the rare plant information database at Madrid, the *Atlas Florae Europaeae* database at the University of Helsinki, the FAO and IPGRI crop and genetic resources databases, the UNEP/WCMC species, protected areas and trade databases.

These groups of information will be organised and co-ordinated by groups of appropriate specialists.

THE EURO+MED WORKPACKAGES

The E.U.-funded Phase One of the project will start to develop all three aspects (Taxonomic Core; 'Beads'; Satellite Databases) of Euro+Med PlantBase. The work comprises 9 workpackages which are described below. The Workpackage Leader (in bold type), together with the other partners involved in each workpackage, are given in parentheses.

Workpackage 1: scientific planning; international co-operation; development of system for information flow around the network; produce editorial guidelines and establish Editorial Committee. [Dr S.L. Jury, Reading, UK; Professor B. Valdés, Sevilla, Spain]

Workpackage 2: software development; upgrade of ESFEDS database and linking the software to an Internet Editor; providing a display version of the database available through the IOPI display system. [Dr W. Berendsohn, Berlin, Germany; Dr R. Pankhurst, Edinburgh, UK]

Workpackage 3: prepare an initial consolidated working plant checklist of the Euro-Mediterranean by upgrading the ESFEDS database and co-ordinating specialist evaluation of the list. [Professor B. Valdés, Sevilla, Spain; Professor F. Raimondo, Palermo, Italy; Dr K. Marhold, Bratislava, Slovakia; Professor M. Anchev, Sofia, Bulgaria]

Workpackage 4: taxonomic revision of selected groups and inclusion of the revisions in the main database. [Professor S. Castroviejo, Madrid, Spain; Professor B. Valdés, Sevilla, Spain; Dr S.L. Jury, Reading, UK; Dr K. Marhold, Bratislava, Slovak Republic; Professor M. Anchev, Sofia, Bulgaria]

Workpackage 5: prepare a European Plant Synonymic Checklist for publication by enhancing the European elements of the working checklist with revised data, expanded synonymy, other forms of data etc. [Professor F. Raimondo, Palermo, Italy]

Workpackage 6: develop user-friendly outputs and linkages to other datasets for consumer needs; establish methodologies, develop links with other databases; co-ordinate the preparation of information summaries (or 'beads') [Professor K. Ammann, Bern, Switzerland; Professor G. Kamari, Patras, Greece; Professor P. Uotila, Helsinki, Finland]

Workpackage 7: Development of conservation bead [Professor K. Ammann, Bern, Switzerland]

Workpackage 8: Development of mapping bead [Professor P. Uotila, Helsinki, Finland]

Workpackage 9: Development of karyological bead [Professor G. Kamari, Patras, Greece]

OUTPUTS OF PHASE ONE OF EURO+MED PLANTBASE

Specifically, Phase One of Euro+Med PlantBase will result in the following outputs:

- A consensus synonymic checklist of all European vascular plant species.
- New taxonomic treatments of several important groups.
- The first ever working list of plants of the entire Euro-Mediterranean region which can be used to determine priorities for future revisionary work.
- Software development for the future management of the project
- Development of several 'beads' including those dealing with distribution, mapping, karyology, conservation and genetic resources.

RECENT EVENTS

Euro+Med Poster Presentations

Stephen Jury and **Mark Carine** presented a poster entitled '*Euro+Med PlantBase: a new initiative in plant systematics*' at the 'Taxonomy Today: Diversity and the Tree of Life' Conference held at the University of Reading on 3-5 July, 2000. **Walter Los** (Fauna Europaea) presented a talk at the same conference entitled '*Fauna Europaea: one of three EU taxonomic programmes*', contrasting the aims and organisation of Euro+Med PlantBase, Fauna Europaea and ERMS.

Mark Carine also presented a poster at the European Commission Conference on Research Infrastructures held in Strasbourg on 18-20 September, 2000. Euro+Med PlantBase were invited to present a poster at this conference as one of the projects funded under the European Commission Framework V programme. The meeting brought together scientists, politicians and policy-makers to discuss the future role of the European Commission in Research Infrastructure Funding. Whilst such funding has been directed towards large projects, such as Particle Accelerators and Polar Icebreakers (!) it was pleasing to note that several of the Conference sessions highlighted the important role of smaller-scale Infrastructures in Scientific Research.

Article Published in OPTIMA Newsletter

Mark Carine, **Vernon Heywood** and **Stephen Jury** recently published an article in the OPTIMA Newsletter (number 25, pp. 21-23, September, 2000) entitled *Euro+Med PlantBase: a new Euro-Mediterranean Initiative in Plant Systematics*. The article provides an outline of the project aims and organisation and was aimed at advertising the start of the European Initiative for the Euro+Med PlantBase.

PANDORA Database Meeting

Richard Pankhurst visited Reading University on August 31 and September 1 to meet with **Judith Heald**, **Mark Carine** and **Stephen Jury**. The aim of Richard's visit was to discuss alterations to the PANDORA Database in readiness for the official start of the project.

In collaboration with Richard, the Secretariat have now produced a document entitled '*Preparation of the Initial Checklist: Operational Guidelines*'. This is subject to approval by the Executive Committee at the forthcoming meeting in Madrid on October 25-27 after which it will be available at the Euro+Med PlantBase website (www.euromed.org.uk). A parallel document concerning guidelines for the preparation of taxonomic revisions is also being prepared.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meeting of the Euro+Med Executive and Workpackage Leaders/Contractors

Madrid 25th -27th October 2000

Computer Workshop

Berlin 30th-31st October 2000

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH EURO+MED

An open listserver has been set up for those who wish to be kept informed of developments within the project. We are hoping that the list will act as a forum for stimulating valuable discussion and that list members will use the list to offer advice as the project progresses.

If you would like to subscribe to the list please send an email to majordomo@reading.ac.uk. In the main body of the email type:

Subscribe euromed
end

The subject box should be left blank.

If you have any problems please contact me at the Euro+Med Secretariat email address.

Judith Heald

Who's Who in Euro+Med

The Euro+Med Executive

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Professor Frank Bisby, Reading, UK
Professor Santiago Castroviejo, Madrid, Spain
Professor Vernon Heywood, Reading, UK
Dr Stephen Jury, Reading, UK
Professor Benito Valdés, Sevilla, Spain

The Euro+Med Steering Committee

Professor Dawud Al-Eisawi, Amman, Jordan
Professor Frank Bisby, Reading, UK
Dr Vincent Boulet, Bailleul, France
Professor Loutfy Boulos, Cairo, Egypt
Professor Santiago Castroviejo, Madrid, Spain
Professor Fritz Ehrendorfer, Vienna, Austria
Dr Dmitry Geltman, St Petersburg, Russian Federation
Professor Werner Greuter, Berlin, Germany
Professor Vernon Heywood, Reading, UK
Dr Stephen Jury, Reading, UK
Professor Georgia Kamari, Patras, Greece
Dr Karol Marhold, Bratislava, Slovakia
Professor Franco Raimondo, Palermo, Italy
Professor Mohamed Rejdali, Rabat, Morocco
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Professor Pertti Uotila, Helsinki, Finland
Professor Benito Valdés, Sevilla, Spain

The Euro+Med Secretariat

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