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INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 5th Euro+Med Newsletter. We are now half way through the first EC funded phase of the project, and the Secretariat would like to thank all those who have put so much work into the project to date. Work has progressed well over the last few months, and we are now starting to see some tangible results. For example, a draft design document for the Euro+Med Internet Taxonomic Editor has been produced in Berlin, and draft output formats for the Beads databases and the Synonymic Catalogue of Plants of Europe have been circulated and discussed within the project Executive and Partners.

Another major activity during recent months has been the invitation of taxonomic specialists throughout the Euro+Med area to participate in Family Editorial Panels reviewing the Euro+Med data. The response to the invitations sent out has been extremely enthusiastic, and the project Executive Committee would like to thank all those who have responded and given their support to this important Euro-Mediterranean initiative.

We hope that this newsletter will help to keep you

up to date with the recent progress of the project. If you have any enquiries, or would like to add something to a future newsletter, please contact Liz Caddick at l.r.caddick@reading.ac.uk.

EURO+MED WEBSITE UPDATE

The new Euro+Med web pages are now up and running at: <http://www.euromed.org.uk>. Recently several password protected pages have been set up on the Euro+Med website, to allow project partners (Executive Committee, Steering Committee, Computer Working Group and Partners) to access project documents, such as meeting minutes, which are not available on the public web pages. Passwords have already been circulated to all partners, and should be easy to remember. Please contact Liz or Tarik on euromed.plantbase@reading.ac.uk if you forget your password.

We are also in the process of setting up password protected web pages to enable Checklist Reviewers (Family Editorial Panels and National/Territorial Centres) to access checklist reports for review via the website. These pages will also contain links to instructions for reviewing Euro+Med data. Once the first few checklist reports start to become available, passwords for these pages will be circulated to all concerned.

EURO+MED DATABASE

The Euro+Med database merging software, which has been designed at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, by Richard Pankhurst, and extensively tested by Judith Heald and Richard, is now up and running. Once appended data sets have all been merged, the Secretariat will start to send out Euro+Med data to our Family Editorial Panels for review.

EURO+MED MEETINGS

Euro+Med Steering Group, MNHN Paris, March 8, 2002

The recent Steering Group meeting was well attended, and a number of important issues were discussed. The draft format for the hard copy and web versions of the Synonymic Catalogue of Plants of Europe was presented and discussed in detail, with numerous useful contributions made by the Steering Group.

Following on from the joint meeting with Fauna Europaea and ERMS the previous day, the Steering Group agreed that it was essential that these three projects work together to form a closely co-ordinated consortium in the future, and also make efforts to involve other Euro-Mediterranean biodiversity informatics projects to fill existing taxonomic gaps. It was also agreed that the project needs to broaden its scope considerably, particularly in the inclusion of additional data (e.g. ecology), and development of areas where there are overlaps between databases (e.g. plants and pollinators).

Euro+Med Executive and Partners Meeting, MNHN Paris, March 9, 2002

The Euro+Med Executive and Partners met briefly in Paris to discuss important issues relating to Checklist review, production of taxonomic revisions, development of Bead data sets etcetera. Partners in Patras and Helsinki presented draft data fields and display formats for the karyology and mapping beads respectively. Progress with the development of Euro+Med conservation data was reported on, in particular the outcome of a recent successful meeting between Euro+Med and IUCN/SSC to discuss co-ordination of European Red List data between IUCN, Euro+Med and VIM.

First joint Euro+Med, Fauna Europaea and ERMS meeting, MNHN Paris, March 8, 2002

The first joint discussion meeting between these three taxonomic database organisations provided a forum to learn about each others projects and to discuss inter-connectivity between the three projects. The three projects are clearly inter-related, and these links are being developed through EC-funded projects such as Species 2000 Europa (Euro Cat)

and ENBI. However, these initiatives are only the beginning, and there are many gaps in the datasets that need to be addressed.

Dissemination and Exploitation of the databases was discussed, and an introduction was given by the director of the European Topic Centre on Nature Protection and Biodiversity (ETC), which, in its role of providing information to support biodiversity and environmental policies to the EC, will be one of the main end users of the taxonomic databases being produced. It was agreed that all three projects need to work closely with the ETC in order to develop their datasets in line with the requirements of the European Environment Agency (EEA).

One of the four main goals of the 6th Environmental Action Programme is to stop biodiversity loss by 2010, and it was agreed that this provided an important objective and common goal for the projects to work towards. The submission of a future funding application to the EC framework 6 programme, under the ENBI platform, is now under discussion.

OTHER MEETINGS

Towards a Catalogue of Life, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 15-16 March

Several Euro+Med partners attended the recent GBIF Scientific and Technical Advisory Group meeting to discuss the production of an electronic catalogue of names of known organisms. The goals of the workshop were:

- To address taxonomic, technological and institutional issues required to construct the electronic catalogue.
- To encourage organisations to work together toward this common goal.
- To propose a framework for implementing the catalogue.

The workshop delegates represented a broad range of taxonomic database organisations throughout the world, all of whom are now working towards the common goal of providing an electronic catalogue of all known species of organisms, available via the Internet within the next 10 years.

NAFRINET, Rabat, 12-16 May

Vernon Heywood, representing Euro+Med PlantBase and Benito Valdés, representing OPTIMA will be participating in the forthcoming workshop in Rabat to set up a North African network for taxonomy (NAFRINET). The meeting has been organised by BioNET International, Euro+Med PlantBase and the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire, Hassan II, Rabat. We will report on the outcome of this meeting in a future newsletter.

FUTURE PROJECT FUNDING

EC 6th Framework Programme

The Euro+Med Executive is closely following progress with the development of the EC Framework 6 funding programme, which will provide European projects with funding opportunities under two main instruments: Integrated Projects and Networks of Excellence. Details of the 6th Framework Programme were recently presented to Euro+Med (and other) staff at Reading University by R. Noguera from the UK Research Office. Both Framework 6 instruments are aimed at addressing broad, multidisciplinary issues, on a much larger scale than that currently funded under Framework 5. In view of this, Euro+Med is taking part in the recently established ENBI network, and also holding discussions with other related projects (such as Fauna Europaea, ERMS and Species 2000 Europa) to develop a co-ordinated effort to submit an Expression of Interest to the EC by June this year.

On April 26, Euro+Med representatives participated in an ENBI Steering Committee meeting, addressed by Martin Sharman from the EU, to produce an inventory of suggestions of Expressions of Interest (EoI) in the fields of biodiversity information and biodiversity informatics. A number of EoIs were proposed and are now being discussed by Euro+Med and other ENBI partners.

EC Improving Human Potential Access to Research Infrastructures Programme

Those involved in Euro+Med should be aware that grants are currently available to fund short visits by researchers in European member and associated states to use the facilities at the Botanic Garden and

Museum of Natural Sciences, Madrid, and to the Natural History Museum, London. This funding may be useful to people working on taxonomic revisions for the project, who wish to use libraries and look at type specimens. The deadline for the second round of applications is the end of this month, and there will be additional calls in 2003. For more information, see the following websites:
<http://www.mncn.csic.es/pages/biod.html> (Madrid)
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/science/rco/sysresource/index.html> (BM).

Species 2000 Europa

This project has been successful in obtaining funding from the EC and is due to begin later in 2002. Funding is included within the project to facilitate the linkage of Euro+Med PlantBase with the Fauna Europaea and ERMS databases into a central 'EuroHub' which in turn will be linked to the main hub of the Species 2000 database. This collaboration will undoubtedly make Euro+Med data accessible to a much wider range of users.

EC Newly Associated States

We are sorry to report that the recently submitted funding proposal to incorporate new partners from EC NAS into the project was not successful. The report sent from the EC suggests that they were not happy with extending the project workpackages during the final year of the project.

PROGRESS WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF FAMILY EDITORIAL PANELS

Over the past few months, the Secretariat has invited numerous taxonomic experts within the Euro-Mediterranean area to become involved in reviewing the Euro+Med data. A large network of specialist reviewers will be vital to the project objective of producing an agreed consensus taxonomy for the Euro-Mediterranean region. The project aims to establish a network of editorial panels covering each plant family included in the database (Family Editorial Panels or FEPs), who will review the first draft of the Euro+Med data (i.e. Flora Europaea data merged with databases of Med-Checklist, Flora of Macaronesia, and the numerous datasets entered by Euro+Med Data Input Centres, from recently published Standard Floras for the region). In the second phase of the review, data reviewed by FEPs

will be circulated to an established network of over 100 National and Territorial Centres throughout the Euro+Med region, for review by local taxonomists and floristicians. These data will then be checked once again by the FEPs before being incorporated into the database.

We are pleased to announce that the response to invitations to become involved in Euro+Med FEPs has been enthusiastic, and development of a good network of taxonomic experts is well underway. Invitations have not been sent out for all plant families yet, so many of you may still receive these over the next few months. The Secretariat would very much appreciate your prompt replies to these invitations, even if you are unable to become involved.

EC PROJECT REPORTS

We have now reached the half way point in the EC-funded first phase of the Euro+Med project. The required 18-month report to the EC was submitted at the beginning of May. We will keep you informed of the outcome of the report when we hear back from Brussels.

The second Annual Report for the project will be due after August 2002. So all project partners should be warned that the Secretariat will start asking for your contributions to this over the next few months.

PUBLICATIONS

The following short articles on the Euro+Med PlantBase project have recently been published:

Yena A.V. (2000). Euro+Med PlantBase - the botanical project between the second and third millenniums. *Pontida 2*. [In Russian]. Available at: www.crimea.edu/internet/Education/pontida

Valdés, B. (2001). Euro+Med PlantBase. *Conservation Vegetal (Universidad Autónoma)*.

L. Caddick (2002). A new Internet database for European and Mediterranean floristics (Euro+Med). *PIP Newsletter 23*: 24-27.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meeting of Euro+Med Executive and Partners
Botanical Garden, University of Bern, Switzerland
Provisional dates: June 7-8, 2002.

VI Plant Life of SW Asia Symposium

Yüzüncü Yil University, Van, Turkey

June 10-14 2002.

Euro+Med will be represented by V. Heywood and R. Pankhurst at this meeting.

Meeting of Euro+Med Computer Working Group

University of Reading, UK

June 17-18 2002.

ICSEB VI

University of Patras, Greece, September 9-16.

During ICSEB VI (The International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology) a meeting of the Euro+Med Steering Group, Executive and Partners will be held, and a round table discussion on the Euro+Med project will be organized; dates to be arranged.

2nd Conference on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of SE European Countries

Chalkidiki Greece

Sept 29-Oct 3 2002.

Vernon Heywood will be giving one of the keynote papers.