



**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE
EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON PLANT HEALTH AWARENESS RAISING
BRUSSELS, 28 SEPTEMBER 2018**

1. Welcome and introduction of the participants of Member States and stakeholder representatives

The meeting was attended by representatives of 21 Member States, EPPO, 6 stakeholder associations (ESC, Europatat, ENA, ESA, Freshfel, VBN) and the Commission.

2. Installation of the Commission's platform for sharing awareness raising documents on plant health issues

In order to increase awareness raising on plant health issues at EU and across Member States, the Commission introduced a new collaborative platform, through the Commission system of CIRCA-BC (<https://circabc.europa.eu>) for sharing communication documents (leaflets, posters, videos, apps, web documents, guidelines, etc.) provided by National Plant Protection Organisations and EU Associations and its members.

The name of the specific section is EUROPHYT COMMUNICATION and it is operated by SANTE-Plant Health. The access will be limited to members, consisting of Member States Plant Health Services and stakeholder associations involved in the Expert Group.

Relevant documents can be notified to SANTE-Plant Health, accompanied by a specific template (see Annex 1). SANTE-G1 will take care of the publication on the platform, after creation of a structure with thematic folders.

The Expert Group welcomed the initiative. It was indicated that this exchange of communication initiatives from different Member States will contribute to a more efficient awareness raising on plant health in the EU, avoiding duplication of efforts and resources. This transparent approach would also demonstrate the main plant health issues where communication efforts are invested. In principle, the Commission will not provide translation of such documents. Where useful, applicants are invited to add explanation or translation in English.

In conclusion, access to the platform can be obtained by email, requesting an username and a password at the following e-mail address SANTE-G1-PLANT-HEALTH@ec.europa.eu. National associations are invited to request their interest to become member of the platform via the EU Associations. The Working Group was also invited to submit any comments and suggestions regarding the template (Annex 1) and the web structure (thematic folders) as appropriate.

3. Information sharing on the EU requirements for introduction of wood packaging material with imported goods of all kinds

The Commission reminded about the concrete phytosanitary risks connected to the introduction of not treated WPM. The new emergency measures for increased import control on WPM at import from China and Belarus (Decision (EU) 2018/1137) were presented. It was also flagged up that risk-based control on WPM in general is specifically mentioned in the new Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

An updated EU information leaflet on WPM is being prepared. It could be used for information towards EU traders/importers but also towards traders/exporters in third countries. For this objective, in relation to the new WPM emergency measures, translation in Chinese and Russian is envisaged. Trade and transport/logistics associations are explicitly invited to also actively contribute to this awareness raising. Relevant EU associations will be contacted for this. It was suggested to provide the leaflet to customs-agencies as well as to the association of builders.

Suggestions were also made to produce a dedicated but short video at EU level. Reference was made to the success of existing specific plant health video's, cfr Xylello-video in Malta and the import/WPM related video in Estonia. Short video's broadly broadcasted seem to be very effective to reach the general public.

The new WPM leaflet will be published on EUROPHYT COMMUNICATION as soon as it is available.

4. Information to be provided to travelers on the new conditions for introduction of plants into the EU

The Commission explained that the new Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 will no longer provide for exemptions for travelers who want to bring some plants (for planting, fruit for consumption or seeds, ...) into the EU: without appropriate phytosanitary certificate, the import of the plant material will no longer be allowed from 14 December 2019 onwards. This will also apply to clients of postal services.

Several participants indicated that a total ban is to be preferred as this can be very easily and clearly communicated. Many Member States requested that the Commission would develop communication material (posters) for raising the awareness of travelers.

The EPPO poster for warning travelers about the risks of imported plants can be found in many European airports. EPPO invited that the EPPO experience would be used. It was flagged up that there will be a need now to communicate clearly about the legal prohibition for introducing live plant material with phytosanitary certificate in the EU. A similar message for animal products has been introduced with posters in airports many years ago. Some participants pleaded for a constructive message (like 'don't risk it'), where others would prefer a very clear message on the prohibition. The Commission indicated that the type of message will need further reflection. Also, a possible common action on plants, animals and food could be considered.

So far, phytosanitary services have often to pay airports for being allowed to put posters on the wall. In the future however, airports, seaports and international transport operators will have the obligation to inform passengers. Some Member States brought up that the Commission co-finances awareness campaigns – e.g. for environmental aspects – but so far very limited for phytosanitary issues. Participants pleaded for an eye-catching approach with a need to get into television, newspapers and magazines, but also social media like twitter should be used.

The Commission indicated that direct contact will be taken with relevant stakeholder associations while reflecting on a communication strategy. Collaboration with the animal health and food safety sectors will be investigated. Concrete actions will be prepared and discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Expert Group.
