



## Minutes

### Meeting of the Expert Group on Official Controls (E00911) Establishment of European Union Reference Laboratories for Plant Health 29 May 2017, 09H00 - 18H00

**Chair:** European Commission (COM), DG SANTE (Unit G1 Plant Health, Unit G3 Official controls and eradication of diseases in animals, Unit D4 Food safety programme, emergency funding)

**Members:** Experts of the Member States

	Topic	Documents
	<p><b>Objectives of the meeting</b></p> <p>Discussion on a draft concept paper related to a Delegated Act based on the new Regulation 2017/625 (Official Controls), for the establishment of European Reference Laboratories in Plant Health.</p>	
	<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants of the first meeting of the Expert Group and presented the agenda. The Commission noted that the Council and the Parliament were not present.</p>	Agenda
	<p><b>A first session was dedicated to presentations by the Commission</b></p>	
1.	<p><b>Presentation by the Commission of the legal framework for establishment of European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) under the Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on Official Controls.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- References were made to articles of the Regulation linked to official controls in general: e.g. about the scope (art. 1.2), the risk-based approach (art. 9), the obligations for the authorities (art. 5) and for operators (art. 15), and sampling (art.34-36).</li> <li>- References were then made to articles linked, e.g., to the designation (art. 37) and the financing of the official laboratories (e.g. art. 163 and 167).</li> <li>- References were finally made to specific provisions on European Union Reference Laboratories related to their responsibilities and designation (art. (92-94)).</li> </ul>	Presentation
2.	<p><b>Presentation by the Commission of the financial aspects: the flowchart of the procedure for financing EURLs was detailed as well as the expected planning for Plant Health EURLs.</b></p>	Presentation
3.	<p><b>Two presentations were made by the Commission, on a draft concept paper, not representing the Commission view, for the establishment of EURLs for Plant Health and on a Delegated Act which will be adopted by the Commission for the establishment of EURLs. The Commission is seeking the assistance of the Experts. An implementing act will then serve to designate the individuals EURLs. The tasks and their specificities for plant health were reviewed one by one. Three open options were presented for the set-up of the EURLs according to specificities of Plant Health:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Option 1 : the "harmful organism approach" based on the four lists of pests of the Directive (2000/29 EC) (Insects, mites and nematodes; Bacteria and phytoplasmas; Fungi; Viruses and viroids),</li> <li>- Option 2 : the "commodity approach" based on the list of different commodities of interest e.g. Agricultural crops, Fruits and vegetables, Forest tree and Ornamentals,</li> <li>- Option 3 : the "combined approach", combined pest and commodity in a double entry-table.</li> </ul> <p>The Commission clarified that participating NRLs must be EN ISO/IEC 17025 accredited, although derogations until on 29th April 2022 are possible.</p>	Presentation

<p><b>The second session was dedicated to seeking the assistance of the Experts.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structure of EURL(s)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Commission clarified that a consortium structure can be envisaged, under the condition that a coordinator is designated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Scope of EURL(s)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Commission clarified that the quarantine pest regulated by Directive 2000/29 EC are concerned, not the Regulated Non-Quarantine Pests. The Delegated Act on priority pests will be adopted by the Commission after the EURLs set-up and decisions to establish EURLs are to be taken before.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The scientific justification and the operational advantages of the three options presented as examples by the Commission were discussed.</li> <li>- From the written comments received before the meeting and from this discussion, it appeared that the views of the Experts were split between the options 1 and 3. Three Experts expressed their support to the first option and 12 other Experts to the third option. The number of EURLs range from 5 to 25.</li> <li>- Concerning the grouping of pests to be covered by the EURLs and listed in option 1 and 3 on basis of the Directive 2000/29, a majority of the Experts suggested to separate the nematodes from the insects, because those pests present different epidemiological traits, the reference material is preserved under different storage methods, and the preparation of samples can be different.</li> <li>- Several experts underlined that the nematodes also form a single category in the panel of diagnosis protocols of EPPO, and proposed to stick to this categorization.</li> <li>- Some experts also suggested to separate phytoplasmas from the bacteria, mainly because they are maintained on host plants exclusively, which require specific infrastructures and expertise, different from those of bacterial preservation methods.</li> <li>- Six pest groups to be covered by different EURLs were identified by the Experts: insects, bacteria, virus and viroid, fungi, nematodes, and phytoplasmas.</li> <li>- Furthermore, some Experts underlined that the insect group is the widest one, and requires different and specific types of expertise. Therefore, they suggested the splitting of the insect group at least into two subgroups, for example according to the early steps of their identification (under stereomicroscope or by slice observation under a microscope). Splitting by taxonomic orders (Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Diptera...) was also proposed.</li> <li>- Additional suggestions, related to the commodities as presented in options 2 and 3, were proposed by experts such as 1) to add other commodities, for example forestry; 2) to split the commodities differently, for example woody vs non-woody (herbaceous) matrices, agricultural crops vs forestry. SE underlined the importance of boreal and semi-boreal forestry.</li> <li>- The Commission asked the Experts to explain the matrix effect on diagnosis tests. Experts clarified that the effects are variable: there are no differences within each type of pest, but issues occur for extraction from complex matrices (e.g. from wood or host plants with inhibitive compounds).</li> <li>- The Commission clarified that pest vectors are not the regulated organism (at least not in all cases), and should be analysed in a close collaboration between experts of the transmitted harmful organism and experts of the vectors (e.g. entomologists).</li> <li>- The impact of the evolution of technologies towards molecular methods on the future regulation is emphasized.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Tasks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experts underlined that field sampling must be done according to the different commodities and that it is an important step before diagnosis, which might have impacts on it. The Commission clarified that EURLs core task is diagnostics and not sampling.</li> <li>- The Commission explained that EURLs tasks start at the laboratory sample. Upstream collection is out of its mandate.</li> <li>- The Commission clarified that subcontracting is accepted for non-core tasks only, such as shipments, websites.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>All the documents related to the Expert Group meeting are made available on the different mailboxes and on CIRCA for MS.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>The Commission thanked the Experts for their assistance, and noted that the preferred options were options 1 and 3. The Commission noted the suggestions to separate nematodes and phytoplasmas, and to split the insect group into subgroups. The Commission will proceed to internal consultations, consult stakeholders for feedback and reconvene an Expert Group on a draft Delegated Act in the autumn.</p>	