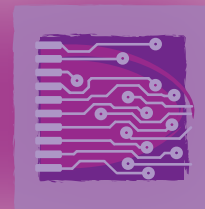




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## ENSCONET: European Native Seed Conservation Network

**It is estimated that up to 60 000 plants, more than one-fifth of the world's plant species, are currently threatened or face extinction in the wild. As part of the "Global Strategy for Plant Conservation" to halt the ongoing loss of plant diversity, ENSCONET will establish a network of European Seed Banks to ensure better coordination of European seed conservation efforts. The EU-funded network will provide a vital framework for establishing common methodologies for seed collecting, curation and data management, and offer an important central resource for conservationists and the wider plant research community.**

### ● SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE FUTURE

Plants are a vital part of the world's biological diversity and an essential resource. Besides crop plants, which provide our basic food and fibres, many thousands of wild plants have great economic and cultural importance, providing food, medicine, fuel, clothing and shelter for vast numbers of people throughout the world. Plants also play a key role in maintaining basic ecosystem functions and are essential for the survival of the world's animal life. For all these reasons, it is essential that we protect our biological heritage.

Seed collections play a key role in ex situ plant conservation and are an important source of research material and data for plant conservationists. There are several major collections in Europe, but such research infrastructures are usually part of independent institutions, often working at a local or national scale. ENSCONET brings together 19 of these institutions from 12 EU Member States, covering 6 of Europe's 10 biogeographical regions.

### ● ENHANCING SEED CONSERVATION

One of the initial tasks of ENSCONET is to carry out a baseline inventory of species in European seed banks cross-matched to their conservation status in the world. From this, a 'gap' analysis can be carried out to identify priorities for future seed collecting programmes. By effectively coordinating efforts and dividing tasks, the network aims to reach the global target by having at least 60% of European threatened seed-bearing plant species in accessible ex situ collections by 2010.

In addition, the establishment of agreed protocols for seed collecting, processing, storage and testing should serve to enhance the quality and security of seed conservation for native species within the bioregions of Europe, maximising the genetic diversity and longevity of the seed collected.

Sharing expertise and facilities improves the quality of seed conservation by providing opportunities for identifying 'best practices', increasing awareness of the technology and facilities available in Europe and encouraging technology transfer, in particular through staff exchange programmes.

Another aspect of the project is the integration of all the data held by the various project partners into a common data resource, which will deliver easier access to information on European wild species seed collections for researchers and all those involved in plant conservation.

Communication is a key element of the network's mission, not just between the project partners but also towards the relevant research communities, conservation organisations and the general public. Publicising the work of European Seed Banks and educating the public on the importance of plant conservation is seen as a vital role of the project.

By its completion, ENSCONET expects to have shared and spread good practices, developed common databases and undertaken foresight studies to help boost the quality of plant conservation, restoration and sustainable use in Europe. This helps Europe meet its global obligation to protect native plant diversity.

## ● EUROPEAN NATIVE SEED CONSERVATION NETWORK IN SUMMARY

**Project acronym:** ENSCONET

**Funding scheme (FP6):** Coordination Action (CA)

**EU financial contribution:** €2 535 640

**EU project officer:** Jean-Emmanuel Faure

**Duration:** 60 months

**Start date:** 1 November 2004

**Completion date:** 31 October 2009

**Project webpage:** <http://www.ensconet.eu>

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Chania, Crete (EL); Fundación Pública Municipal Jardín Botánico de Córdoba (ES); Trinity College Dublin (IE); Jardín Botánico Viera y Clavijo, Gran Canaria (ES); Agricultural Research Institute, Lefkosia (CY); Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (ES); National Botanic Garden of Belgium, Meise (BE); Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (FR); Dipartimento di Ecologia del Territorio, Università di Pavia (IT); Dipartimento di Scienze Botaniche - Orto Botanico, Università di Pisa (IT); Jardí Botànic de Sóller, Mallorca (ES); Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali, Trento (IT); Universitat de València Estudi General, València (ES); Institute of Botany and Botanical Garden, University of Vienna (AT); Botanical Garden – Centre for Biological Diversity Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw (PL)