

Minutes of the ENA General Assembly Meeting held onlineⁱ on Thursday **2 July 2020** at 10h00 CET, 09h00 WET, 11h00 EET.

Attendees:

Albano Silva (APPPFN - Portugal), Miet Poppe (AVBS - Belgium), Lucien Verschoren (AVBS - Belgium), Tatyana Boyadzhieva (BAOPN - Bulgaria), Henning Roed (DP - Denmark), Tomi Tahvonon (Taimistoviljelijät ry - Finland), Catherine Müller (Val'hor - France), Markus Guhl (BdB - Germany), Val Farrell (IHNSA - Ireland), Niamh Brennan (IHNSA - Ireland), Maurizio Lapponi (ANVE - Italy), Edoardo Sciutti (ANVE - Italy), Luigi Pagliani (ANVE - Italy), Julianna Csikor (MDSS - HU), Fons van Wezel (ANTHOS - Netherlands), Jan Veltmans (LTO - Netherlands), Mateusz Milczyński (ZSzP - Poland), Grzegorz Falkowski (ZSzP - Poland), Paula Vilanova (APPPFN - Portugal), Jovan Topalović (SLHS - Serbia), Eduardo Martí (Fepex - Spain), Patrick Svensson (LRF-T - Sweden), Maja Persson (LRF-T - Sweden), Caroline Föllmi (Jardin Suisse - Switzerland), Tim Edwards (NFU/HTA - United Kingdom), Umut Sakarya (SUSBIR - Turkey), Miray Engin (SUSBIR - Turkey), Alexandar Galabov (BAOPN - Bulgaria), Harm Horlings (ANTHOS - Netherlands, Sustainability **WG Chair**), Leon Smet (Anthos - Netherlands, Promotion **WG Chair**), Henk Raaijmakers (LTO - Netherlands, ENA **Vice-President**), Jan-Dieter Bruns (BdB – Germany, ENA **President**), and Josep M. Pagès (ENA **Secretary General** -SG in the text-).

1. President's Welcome.

President Bruns opened the online meeting apologising for not being physically in Bavaria as planned and welcoming all delegates.

2. Apologies for absence.

Dragana Skočajić from Serbia, Jaume Riera and Luis Martín from Spain; Dora Aebi from Switzerland, Tim Van Hulle and Willy de Nolf (ENA Treasurer) from Belgium, Romain Manceau, Jean-Marc Vasse, and Emmanuelle Bougault from France, and Stanislav Dontsov from Ukraine had sent their apologies.

3. Agreement of the Agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

4. Approval of the minutes of the previous GA meeting held on 30 January 2020 in Essen, Germany.

The minutes of the last General Assembly meeting were agreed on and approved as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes.

SG informed that H2020 projects BeXyl and Growers@YourService (previously Go4Green) were both rejected, and informed that this year EU Green Week in Brussels was postponed from June to 20-22 October, in which is planned to participate following the lead of ELCA.

Vice-president Raaijmakers explained that the discussion on membership options in countries with more than one prospect member should be postponed to a face-to-face meeting. It was agreed to

prepare a proposal with ENA board and a few delegates from different countries, and discuss the document in the next GA meeting.

6. ENA finances. To receive 2019 annual statement of accounts.

SG summarised 2019 financial statements, previously sent to all members along with a copy of the external financial audit. The general costs (€30,420.33) and income (€28,000.00) resulted in a loss (€2,420.33), because the extra expenditure on the preparation of the new proposal of the Green Cities project submitted to CHAFEA; although this extra-cost was going to be recovered in 2020 paid by the project participants. The European project accounts were also shown, with all expenses covered by CHAFEA (€553,045.41) and the seven contributing partners (€137,370.35) resulting in a zero balance of the project account.

The GA approved the account statements of 2019.

Although the income and expenses summary was in English, the official documents shared were in Dutch (the official language where ENA is based), and it was agreed on submitting the official Balance to the GA in English in the future.

7. Sustainability Working Group:

Harm Horlings, WG Chair, explained that since last GA meeting, there had been a significant development in the EU Green Deal. He had been in touch with RISE (Response-Inducing Sustainability Evaluation) developers in Switzerland because the Danish organisation is cooperating with them on a sustainability label. ENA is formulating the objective of specific items. He had been in contact with German organisations in Hannover and Berlin that have made some sustainability criteria and could help us formulate a more practical approach. He also collected information from France about the regulation on plastic containers, and a document from Finland on nursery prediction for a sustainable environmental construction, with principles relating to water, soil and vegetation conditions and measures to promote energy-saving and human health and welfare.

It was agreed on sharing the information from Finland with all members, and Mr Horlings will keep in touch with the German organisations looking for options.

Finally, Mr Horlings announced that he is going to leave the WG, because of his replacement as the delegate from his organisation, and asked for volunteers to chair this WG. He was requested to keep chairing the WG until summer meeting 2021, and the Vice-president volunteered to ask for the support of Mr Horlings' organisation.

8. European nurseries statistics update.

SG thanked the delegates who had sent updated information and summarised that in ENA countries, there are in rounded figures, 27,000 nurseries, producing plants on 120,000 hectares with 210,000 employees and an annual production value of 9 billion euros.

Action: to share the datasheet with all members.

9. State of the industry.

SG thanked the countries that had sent a written report and asked the pending ones to send their report to ENA in order to share it with all ENA members.

President Bruns emphasised the interest of knowing the market trends, and the participants explained the market situation in their countries. In the end, the President summarised that the situation is much better now than it was in April when we had the Secretaries' meeting and expressed his confidence in increasing plant sales throughout next season.

Action:

- members to send their written reports to ENA
- ENA to share with all members the written reports and the transcription of participants interventions.

10. EU Legislation Working Group:

The Vice-president reminded all that there were two days left to react to the new *Xylella fastidiosa* legislation proposed by the EC.

a. Coronavirus crisis

The Vice-president summarised the actions taken at the EU level, jointly with other international organisations: sharing information, asking to get compensation, pushing to keep the borders open for both the goods and workers, and asking for support for promotion campaigns. Because it was clear that EC was not going to give direct compensation, all members received our recommendation to ask their national governments for support from the € 750 billion fund the EU was establishing. On the other hand, a new call for promotion campaigns for agricultural sectors suffering the crisis had been launched two days before this meeting.

Vice-president Henk Raaijmakers emphasised the useful contacts made with the EC and the network created with other international organisations as AREFLH, Union Fleurs and COPA-COGECA and highlighted that the ENA position is now more visible in the EU, a fact that should help us in the future.

b. United Kingdom extra plant health requirements.

SG explained that UK's new Plant Health regulations came into force in April, adding strict requirements to the import of some plants into the United Kingdom. The EU did not agree with them because the UK had committed to follow the EU rules until the end of 2020, and the EC legislated that the UK should withdraw these requirements.

The UK delegate announced that the UK will not remain part of the EU plant health area from 1 January, 2021. He defended the UK national measures to protect their plant health, mainly from the *Xylella* threat which seems to be the higher risk now. The UK Minister would like to completely ban the imports of most risky *Xylella* hosts, and they had not officially repealed their legislation so far. Tim Edwards clearly explained that from 1 January, 2021, the UK will apply their own rules. Phytosanitary Certificates will be necessary even if the EU and the UK have a deal, and

all plants will have to be inspected when entering in the UK from July 2021. In the future, UK legislation will move apart from the EU plant health line, to allow them to take any severe action necessary to prevent the introduction of pests, explained Tim Edwards.

Vice-president Raaijmakers and Tim Edwards agreed that not having tariffs on 'plants for planting' imported in the UK is beneficial for both parties, although there will be tariffs on cut flowers as there are in the EU. The Vice-president asked the UK delegate to keep ENA informed about the legislation evolution and possible changes, as it is vital for the countries that export to the UK.

The UK delegate argued that the UK Government is strongly against any approach to EU plant health point of view, and for this reason, there is no point in fighting against their position but to work with it. He added the proposal that, after 1 January 2021, the UK might have its own list of high-risk plants (i.e. *Olea*, *Quercus*) and make the import of those plants into the UK very difficult, while loosening the restrictions on the rest of the plants.

SG offered to ENA members the assistance for immediate action, informing the European Commission, and requesting a prompt reaction if a containment were blocked because of the lack of the extra documents the UK authorities are requiring until the end of 2020. UK delegate explained that their government wanted to stop the import of these species and was disappointed that the EU didn't allow it; therefore, the UK authorities might choose to inspect those plants at the ports instead of at the arrival nursery, and increase the intensity of these inspections causing significant delays to the whole consignments. As a consequence, importers might decide not to import those plants into the UK. He finally advocated for a voluntary ban of the UK growers to the import of these plant species instead of fighting against the UK governmental position, and suggested that ENA tries to enforce a voluntary ban on the export of those species to the UK, to send a very strong message to the UK authorities, which then would be free to accept all consignments in the normal way.

SG asked the UK delegate to share with ENA members the UK proposal for next year. Tim Edwards did not have a public document, and he volunteered to keep ENA informed.

The Spanish delegate explained that they understand the UK position but that it was not fair to change the rules before the end of 2020, as agreed between the UK and the EU, and remarked that they will accept the new UK regulations for 2021 and will be ready to comply with them. Tim Edwards advised to work with the Plant Health authorities instead of fighting against them because otherwise they will keep increasing the regulations they make, and it's a battle that we cannot win. He defended that the best way is to agree on a voluntary ban on the short list of plants the UK doesn't want imported and save the imports of all the other plants. The Italian delegate said that the UK is importing 50% of the plants they sell, but, although the list of problematic plants is now short, it might become very large in the future, and he asked how the

UK markets are going to react if they don't have some very popular plants. The problematic plants list is short; it's based on scientific evidence that nurserymen cannot influence, and it's best to lose some battles rather than lose the whole war, concluded Tim Edwards.

It was agreed on the strategy posed by Tim Edwards, not to be against and fight everything, but try to cooperate and make a small list of high-risk plants, and through that strategy, to keep the borders as open as possible between the EU and the UK.

It was not agreed on making a statement as ENA, at this stage, to voluntarily accept a ban of most risky plants like *Lavandula* and *Rosmarinus*.

c. EU High-Risk plants

SG informed the participants that he had been contacted by six different ENA organisations, and even nurseries, regarding the importance of allowing the imports of *Acer* from New Zealand into the EU. SG contacted the European Commission, and they were working at the usual speed with derogation requests from non-EU countries: the 3rd country NPPO must apply for the derogation, EFSA -the European Food Safety Agency- makes a scientific risk assessment, and finally, the EC makes the decision. These decisions are within the scope of the Standing Committee on Plant Health, which meets once a month.

The Vice-president pointed out that individual nurseries should not contact ENA directly but their country organisation, which would convey the information or request to ENA.

d. CAP – EU Common Agriculture Policy

Markus Guhl explained that, since 2016, container nursery areas were not eligible for the CAP system in most countries, and thanked the members who answered the poll (the results to be shared later as the system was not responding to share it online). Mr Guhl informed about the contacts with MEPs Mr Peter Jahr and Mr Martin Hlaváček to make an amendment to change the rule for the new CAP period, and both were willing to support it. ENA also sent a letter to other MEPs asking for their support. It was agreed on circulating a template letter to ENA members to contact their MEPs, before middle August, asking for the container nurseries to be included in the CAP system. The second step would be having a country besides Germany leading this request, as Germany has just begun the presidency of the Council of the EU and they want to act neutral. Dutch, Belgian, and Bulgarian participants volunteered to push their MEPs.

e. EU Green Deal.

The Vice-president shared that the EU Green Deal is quite demanding for food production, with the pesticides reduction for example, but the EC is opening new opportunities, like the intention to plant 3 billion trees within the next few years, and the enormous amount of money they have promised. He suggested to use the contacts, and make new ones, to work our way through the Green Deal, find some opportunities to work together and get as much money out of the Green

Deal for our sector, offering our support and knowledge we have from the green cities and everything related to planting trees, shrubs and greenery.

11. Promotion Working Group.

SG apologised that Leon Smet (WG Chair) had to leave the meeting due to an emergency. SG summarised that in the current Green Cities promotion project, the physical events were mostly moved to online, and that the second year 80% grant was received in full. He added that on 1 June, 2020, ENA submitted a “more green cities for Europe” promotion proposal for the 2021-2023 period, with 13 participating countries, to invest €4.2 million, planning to receive €3.4 million (80%) from the EC if approved.

SG added that the European Commission had launched, on 30 June, two additional calls for promotion programme proposals. These calls target the sectors most hit by the coronavirus crisis. Live plants is one of the 5 sectors eligible for the promotion support of €10 million (€5 million for multi programmes and €5 million for simple programmes). The promotion programmes will have to be implemented, in the EU or any third country, during 2021. The proposal must be submitted before 27 August, and SG asked if any ENA member wanted to apply for a new proposal. SG said that to prepare a joint proposal, it was necessary to start now because of the time constraint, and that if some organisations wanted to work together on it without ENA, they might use ENA as a network to connect between them, and that if any country wanted to submit their own proposal, ENA might offer the experience with promotion projects.

12. Update of the ENA quality standards.

The Vice-president explained that some discussions and controversy had arisen following the digitisation proposal at the last GA meeting. He proposed to update the ENA quality standards, to improve descriptions that include the growing and working conditions of all European countries, and to finally produce a common ENA code that might be used by all countries, but not replacing the currently used codes because technology would make possible the communication between systems.

Fons van Wezel explained that an online meeting with a few countries was held, and proposed to use the current ENA standards as a start to create a common European coding system to allow digital communication between nurseries. The German delegates reminded the participants that they already had their own system, and announced that they were going to have a meeting in September 2020 to discuss the international code. There were different opinions regarding who should use the common code, nurseries or also traders and customers. It was pointed out that ENA Quality Standards are common basic standards, while many countries have higher quality standards. Because it was difficult to reach an agreement on how to proceed further, and because the discussion was moving back and forth from standards to digitisation, the President volunteered to have a personal meeting with Mr van Wezel to discuss the issue, and proposed to reach a decision in the next GA meeting.

13. 2021-2025 international plant names list.

SG reminded all participants that the process to update the list had begun, and ENA members were sending new names and proposals for changes of names. The WG was being assembled, and Dr Hoffman was already working, analysing and compiling the names that the WG will decide on in September-December 2020, as planned.

14. Next meetings

President Bruns regretted that we had to meet online instead of in Bavaria. The new plan approved by email voting after the last Secretaries meeting (summer 2021 in Bavaria, Germany; summer 2022 in Floriade, the Netherlands and summer 2023 in Turkey) was ratified by the General Assembly, and the President asked to book the dates of next General Assembly: 28 January 2021 at 9h30 at IPM in Essen, Germany.

15. Elections.

SG explained that the current board was elected for a period of two years and that it was planned to have elections in this summer meeting, according to the articles of the association. He proposed to the General Assembly to have the past President Mr. Tim Edwards, to act as chairman of the voting office. Tim Edwards, announced that the current board formed by President Jan-Dieter Bruns, Vice-President Henk Raaijmakers and Treasurer Willy De Nolf could be re-elected for another term, and that they had offered to sit for another term although with the intention to convene elections at the next summer meeting. He asked the GA if there were other nominations and, since there were not, put the proposal to a vote. The board was renewed unanimously, and they renewed Josep M. Pagès as Secretary General.

16. AOB (any other business).

The Belgian delegate explained that the European Commission launched a major review of the EU's trade policy, and suggested all to give the input before 15 September.

Action: to share the information with all members and send feedback.

The Portuguese delegate informed that new projects and funds for agriculture are submitted to a 'global value of the operation' and asked for ENA help. APPPFN will send the information to SG, and ENA will give the support to the Portuguese request.

The President thanked all for their participation in this online GA, wishing all delegates a good summer and autumn, and adjourned the meeting at 13h40 (CET).

ⁱ <https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/b571e0ba6e457179e2504cda200af86560a854b7f15608f49f214e71191f4333>