



ENDURE

European Network for Durable Exploitation of crop protection strategies

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Report on the mobility of ENDURE experts to take part in evaluation committees for PhD dissertations

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RE Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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Glossary

ENDURE European Network for Durable Exploitation of crop protection strategies

Definitions

ENDURE experts: scientists belonging to ENDURE partner institutions having internationally recognised expertise in any of the crop protection fields covered by the project activities.

Evaluation committees for PhD dissertations: the team of experts formally asked to evaluate the quality of the final dissertation of PhD students. Usually, PhD evaluation committees are nominated by the competent body of the University awarding the PhD degree. The number and qualification of external experts varies upon the internal rules of each University.

Summary

The ENDURE task TS1.2b "Joint PhD discussion committees" was established in order to facilitate the participation of ENDURE experts in PhD discussion committees taking place at other partners' home institution.

We tried to gather information about PhD projects and programmes dealing with crop protection issues running in Europe in order to build a database of PhD discussion committees which ENDURE experts could potentially participate in. Having realized that information on PhD projects and programmes in Europe is very fragmented and difficult to access and that PhD rules vary tremendously upon country and sometimes upon single institutions within a country, in years 3 and 4 of the project it has been decided to focus only on PhD work carried out by ENDURE partners. Accordingly, a survey of PhD students working in ENDURE Institutions who should have defended their thesis in 2009 and 2010 was done. Besides SSSUP, CNR participated in this task being responsible for the ENDURE mobility plan which – among other things – supports mobility of PhD students. A couple of experts participated in this task in 2009 and early 2010, their travel and subsistence costs being paid by ENDURE. The task was expected to be fully active in 2010, using the information contained in the database, but ExCom decided to cancel it from the 4th JPA due to budget reasons. Should sufficient interest and funding arise, this task could be re-activated as part of the ENDURE-ERG activities. However, ENDURE partners do not seem enough motivated to be seriously committed into this kind of activity.

Aim of the task

The original aim of the task TS1.2b "Joint PhD discussion committees" was to promote the participation of ENDURE experts in PhD discussion committees taking place at other partners' home institution: this deliverable reports the steps followed in order to reach this aim, the problems faced and the concluding and missed results.

Rationale

Promoting the mobility of ENDURE experts to facilitate their participation in PhD discussion committees at other partners' home institution was considered as part of the strategy for establishing or strengthening research relationships among ENDURE partner institutions. Originally, the idea was to explore the possibility for ENDURE experts to take part in evaluation committees of PhD dissertations established by non-ENDURE Institutes. As such, the early work for this task was to make a survey all PhD projects, courses and programmes dealing with crop protection-related themes running in Europe, and to contact the people responsible of these courses in order to understand the feasibility of including ENDURE experts in their evaluation boards. Having realized how different are the objectives of PhD projects and programmes across Europe and their governing rules, we concluded that such a participation would not have been easy to implement. Consequently, we decided to focus only on ENDURE institutions. Participation of ENDURE researchers in PhD evaluation commissions at other institutions is something which is happening at times but which has never been made visible (see the ENDURE-3rd-JPA official document). We therefore decided to make a census of all PhD students involved in the ENDURE project who should have defended their thesis in 2009 and 2010, in order to ask them (or their supervisors) whether or not they would be willing to invite an ENDURE expert to participate in the formal evaluation commissions for their dissertation defence. The preparation work done in 2009 was meant to be fully put in place in 2010 with the financial support of ENDURE (dedicated mobility funds) but the ENDURE ExCom decided to cancel this task – among others – due to budget constraints. Consequently, the goal of this task was fulfilled in just two cases (reported hereafter).

Geographical area

During the survey we have searched for PhD courses/projects/programmes taking place in all European countries.

Partners involved

In order to gather data about PhD students working at ENDURE institutions, we made an e-mail enquiry which was sent to all people involved in ENDURE who were indicated, in the official documents, as responsible contact persons for their institutions. CNR, being responsible for the ENDURE mobility task (IA3), was asked to provide information about requests for mobility related to PhD students.

Results

The following table reports the details of the only two cases in which the task was concretised. After January 2010, the task was terminated by the ENDURE ExCom.

PhD Student	Student's home institution	ENDURE expert	Expert's home institution	Date of PhD dissertation defence
Federica Bigongiali	SSSUP	Dr Preben K. Hansen	AU	5 June 2009
Luigi Boccaccio	SSSUP	Dr Katja Jacot	AGROS	18 January 2010

Title of PhD dissertations:

Federica Bigongiali: Competition between wheat cultivar and weeds in organic agriculture.

Luigi Boccaccio: Effects of non-crop vegetation on insect biodiversity in olive groves. A multi-scale landscape ecology approach.

Conclusions

Cancellation of this task from the 4th JPA due to ExCom decision based on budget constraints has resulted in invalidation of part of the work done for the SA1.2 task. The database of ENDURE-related PhD students could be useful for other activities, but since the participation of ENDURE experts in PhD discussion committees was one of the main reason for making such enquiries and building the database, we have to conclude that this activity has not fully reached its aims, for reasons independent of the willingness of the two partners more directly involved in it (SSSUP and CNR).