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Science can help build an inclusive, collaborative and fairer Europe & world

Upon ratification of the Paris Agreement by the European Union (EU) in Strasbourg on the 4th of October, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [hailed the multi-lateral leadership of the EU](#) on addressing the challenges posed by climate change, without which an agreement may not have been possible. “International cooperation is at the heart of the European Union’s identity” he said.

There are many examples of how European cooperation has proved essential to scientific progress. CERN, an organization of 22 European member states, was the birthplace of the internet, and the home of perhaps the most publicised scientific breakthrough of recent years, the discovery of the Higgs boson. In biology the discovery of CRISPR-Cas, at the heart of a genome editing revolution, was partially funded by a European project.

The added value of European plant science was underlined in the recent study [“The Economic, Social, and Environmental Value of Plant Breeding in the European Union”](#) commissioned by the Plants for the Future European Technology Platform in which EPSO represents academia. Genetic crop improvements in EU arable farming since the turn of the millennium have added more than EUR 14 billion to the EU’s GDP and have assured the additional availability of carbohydrates, proteins and vegetable oils to feed between 100 and 200 million humans.

These achievements and many more would not have been possible without collaborations on a European and global scale. Science is central to solving worldwide societal challenges, and as a common global language can break down borders and unite cultures. The participation of 56 countries in the [2015 Fascination of Plants Day](#) is testament to that.

During the Brexit debate in the United Kingdom scientists provided a [key voice](#) in the argument for the UK to remain in the EU, underlining the value of openness to research and society as a whole.

Similarly, Switzerland should be encouraged to ratify the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (FMOPA) to Croatia, allowing the country to continue its association to Horizon 2020.

Science can also play an important role in the integration of Eastern New Member States through initiatives such as the “Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation” programme of Horizon 2020, COST Actions and structural funds.

While some recent events generate uncertainty, they also provide science with an opportunity to provide international leadership.

EPSO released an [open letter](#) in July underlining the necessity of avoiding the fragmentation of European Science. The letter concluded that “together scientists can help build an inclusive, collaborating and fairer Europe and world”. Through the strength of its members EPSO will continue to work towards advancing truly European and global collaborations in the plant sciences and we invite your vision and examples to bring science societies together.

Contact: [Karin Metzloff](#)

President of the European Parliament replies to 58 European and Global research organisations calling for society to respect independent science advice and to condemn physical attacks on scientists

On 7th June, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in Parma received a package containing explosive material addressed to a scientist providing independent scientific advice to EFSA.

A large group of publicly funded researchers reacted strongly to this incident and, in an initiative led by EPSO, decided to send an [Open Letter](#) to Martin Schultz, the President of the European Parliament (EP), asking the members of EP to encourage society to respect independent science advice and to unanimously and unconditionally condemn the recent attacks on EFSA, reiterating its support for independent scientific research and investigation, and to propose measures to prevent attacks targeting scientists and/or research facilities. An updated letter, published on the 7th of September, is signed by 58 science organisations, societies, and academies.

On the 31st of August Martin Schultz [replied to EPSO](#) with a letter saying that “Such attacks can only be condemned strongly ..Our scientists need full protection ..[The European Parliament fully recognizes the crucial](#)



[cial role of scientific research for our society](#) and the need for independent evidence meeting the highest scientific standards”. The matter has been transmitted to the EP’s Committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), and we now await their feedback.

Contact: [Karin Metzloff](#) , [Bruce Osborne](#), [Joachim Schiemann](#)

Internship Expert Opportunity for EPSO Members

The EPSO [‘Internship Agreement’](#) allows each EPSO Institutional Member to send an Internship Expert to EPSO for a stay of at least 6 months to work together with the EPSO Executive Director on science policy at European level. This provides a unique opportunity to learn and enlarge their network for their future work at your institution.

The internship expert will gain experience working with the EU and for them to assist with writing position papers and advising policy makers, such as the European Commission on issues related to plant science.

This is a very exciting opportunity and we very much look forward to welcome an internship expert from the various EPSO institutional members!

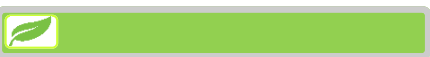
Each internship expert will join Karin in the science policy work, help draft a proposal to H2020, advance EPSO

fact collection and an EPSO image bank. Each sending organisation and the respective internship expert can suggest one theme the internship expert will have as one of their priorities.



We already have excellent experience with the first three internship experts: Marina Korn, from the Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops Großbeeren/Erfurt e.V. in Germany, Heike Slusarczyk from the Bioeconomy Science Center at Research Center Jülich and Dennis Eriksson, Education Coordinator at PlantLink and now at SLU Alnarp, Department of Plant Breeding in Sweden.

Contact: [Karin Metzloff](#)



Tree biology and biotechnology Working Group Meeting
21 November, Brussels



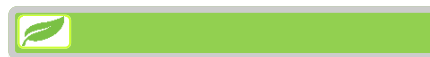
Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information



Agricultural Technologies Working Group Meeting
22 November, Milan



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information



Plants and Microbiomes Working Group Meeting
23 February 2017, Vienna



Contact [Karin Metzloff](#) for more information