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The international project Euro+Med PlantBase

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Since the completion of *Flora Europaea* over 20 years ago, there has been a remarkable development in the systematics of European plants. A large number of new taxa have been described and a number of regional Floras have been produced, which adopt in many cases a national rather than a European perspective. As a consequence, the consensus established by *Flora Europaea* has been lost. A revision of the first volume of *Flora Europaea* was published in 1993, but a decision was made not to revise the other four volumes in a similar way.

However, the need for an agreed taxonomic framework for conservation, legislation and other purposes has never been greater than it is now. Therefore, a broadly based working group decided to present a project called Euro+Med PlantBase. The aim of the project is to organise, co-ordinate and make available in a collaborative electronic mode, information on the plants of the regions covered by *Flora Europaea* and *MedChecklist* and provide this against an evaluated consensual taxonomic core that is periodically reviewed, thus providing a single source and system for obtaining, through linked databases, information for a wide variety of users.

A key component of the project will be an agreed taxonomic core. The core will consist of the scientific name of each taxon, the author citation, the place of publication, the basionym, selected synonyms, description (standardised for auto-translation), growth form, ecology (habitat type), phenology, distribution (world-wide, within the region and by territories), chromosome number(s) and ploidy level(s), data on endemism and status of occurrence.

Surrounding the core data, there will be a set of 'beads' consisting of minimal summaries of verified data on a range of additional topics such as distribution maps, phytosociology (level of alliance and order), illustrations, biosystematics, phytochemistry, conservation status (national and global following the IUCN categories), legal protection, economic and scientific importance, etc. The 'beads' would be hot-linked to 'satellite' data sets where more detailed information would be available (examples include the chromosome database in Patras, the rare plant information database in Madrid, and the *Atlas Florae Europaeae* database in Helsinki).

Euro+Med PlantBase is organised as a decentralised federal structure throughout the area. It includes national centres, regional co-ordinating centres, taxonomic co-ordinating centres, and co-operating institutions. Editorial panels will be established for individual families, groups of related families and even for taxonomically complicated genera. Their responsibility will be to ensure that the accounts of the groups concerned are prepared in accordance with agreed editorial procedures and to maintain liaison between the authors and specialists in the national and regional centres and check that comments and suggestions from them have been taken into account. My suggestion is to establish such an editorial panel also for the genera *Hieracium* and *Pilosella* involving the participants of our workshops.

Amongst the outputs envisaged from this project are (1) A consensual *Synonymic conspectus of the plants of the Euro-Mediterranean Region* (available on Internet and periodically revised); (2) CD ROMs and other electronic outputs; (3) Hard copy handbooks, Floras, illustrated keys, etc.