



Welcome to the 9th edition of the CPVO newsletter.

The year 2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the CPVO. Our efforts to mark this special occasion have given us the opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments, none of which would have been possible without the constant cooperation and support of the breeders, farmers and plant growers, the members of the Administrative Council, the examination offices and the European Commission and, last but not least, the professional performance of the staff of the Office. In 20 years, the Office has processed more than 53 500 applications, with approximately 23 700 titles currently in force.

We hope that the next 20 years will be just as productive. The anniversary was celebrated on 1 October in Angers, where personalities involved in the CPVO's work throughout the years had the possibility to meet and catch up during a seminar followed by a dinner.

As always, the CPVO is bustling with activity, news and events and I'd like to invite you to enjoy our newsletter and to follow us and engage with us on [Twitter @CPVOTweets](#).

Happy reading!

Martin Ekvad
CPVO president

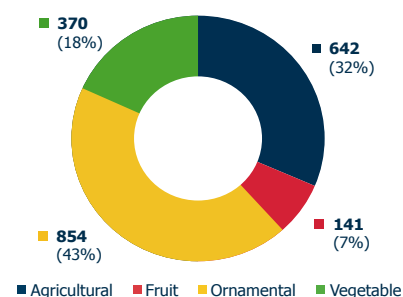
> GENERAL NEWS

Applications for CPVR remain strong in 2015

In the first 8 months of 2015, the Office received a total of 2007 applications, which represents a slight decrease of 5.3 % compared to the same period of the record year 2014. This reduction in applications follows record numbers reached in 2014; it is assumed that — especially at the end of the year 2014 — many applications were filed to

profit from the old fee regime. The decrease does not thus come as a surprise. For the crop sectors, the figures are as follows: 642 agricultural applications (– 7; – 1.1 %); 141 fruit applications (+ 26; + 22.6 %); 854 ornamental applications (– 97; – 10.2 %); and 337 vegetable applications (– 34; – 8.4 %).

Shares in application numbers per crop sector from 1/1/2015 to 31/8/2015



New Chair and Vice-Chair of the CPVO AC from 12 March 2015

On 11 March, the Administrative Council of the CPVO (AC) elected its new Chair and Vice-Chair for the next 3 years (12 March 2015-11 March 2018). Andrew Mitchell of the United Kingdom

succeeded Ms Bronislava Bátorová, who had been the Chair for the last 3 years. Ms Bistra Pavloska of Bulgaria was elected Vice-Chair.

Adoption of an R & D strategy for 2015-2020 and creation of the IMODDUS ad hoc working group.

With the aim of optimising quality while reducing costs of DUS tests within the CPVO network of examination offices (EOs), strengthening EU plant variety rights (PVRs) and facilitating enforcement, the Administrative Council adopted in March the CPVO proposal for a strategy in relation to its (co-)financing of research and development (R & D) projects for the

period 2015-2020. This strategy gives priority to projects dealing with the establishment of shared online databases of reference collections, the use of biomolecular markers and the improvement and harmonisation of methodologies. The Administrative Council also adopted the terms of reference of the ad hoc working group for the integration of molecular data into DUS testing (IMODDUS).

Decrease in the online application fee from 1 January 2016

The CPVO's online application system has been a major success and there has been a progressive increase in the use of it since its introduction: close to 80 % of applications are received online today. In order to further promote this system and also to reflect the efficiency gains associated with its use, the CPVO proposed to the Administrative Council in March that the fee for online applications be reduced from EUR 650 to EUR 450 from 1 January 2016 — the fee for paper-based applications remains at EUR 650. The CPVO hopes that this proposal will soon receive legal validation from the European Commission, and of course encourages its clients who have not already done so to begin submitting applications online. More information can be found on the [CPVO website](#).



CPVO delegation visits Plantum and Dutch breeding companies (9 and 10 June)

In June, a CPVO delegation comprising, the President, the Vice-President and the Head of the Technical Unit of the CPVO went to the Netherlands for a bilateral meeting with Plantum. Several topics of mutual interest were discussed including: the extension of the protection period; minimum distances of varieties; ownership of DUS and DNA samples; and issues related to variety denominations and

patents on plants. The CPVO delegation also took the opportunity to visit several breeding companies. It was received by Vletter & Den Haan, where it got interesting information on the breeding of *lilium* varieties, and Florist, where it got insights into the breeding, production and marketing of *gerbera* varieties.

CPVO hosts a seminar on the relationship between patents and plant variety rights (24 June)

The European Patent Office's (EPO's) tomato and broccoli cases have thrown the relationship between patents and plant variety rights into the spotlight. This is a highly divisive topic and one that is ripe for debate. Some participants voiced opposition to the EPO findings whilst others supported them. Breeders raised various arguments for and against whilst farmers were in general against — this hot potato shows no signs of cooling.

The Administrative Council decided to organise a seminar to inform its members about the potential effects these decisions may have on intellectual

property systems, such as patents and PVRs. This was the first such seminar organised by the CPVO. Due to the importance and interest in this topic, it is something the CPVO would like to organise on a wider scale.

The CPVO was fortunate to be joined by prominent experts in fields of EU PVRs and patents, whose presence ensured a well-informed and well-rounded debate. It was a great pleasure to see so much interest in this seminar and topic. For further information on the seminar (including all the presentations), please see the [CPVO website](#)

CPVO President addresses the Milan world EXPO

Every 5 years, academics, industry representatives and activists join forces to create a truly special world EXPO. This year's theme — 'Feeding the planet, energy for life' — gives international exposure to the problems faced by breeders and producers, who must produce greater yields from less arable land. It also makes the resolution of such problems an international priority.

EXPO Milano was an excellent opportunity to gather the world's brightest minds to develop a food strategy fit for the 21st century and

beyond. At this very moment, 795 million people worldwide are suffering from chronic hunger. With the global population continuing to grow rapidly, the world will have to produce 60 % more food by 2050 to feed a population of over 9.6 billion.

PVRs have a major role to play in eradicating world hunger by giving breeders an incentive to develop new and better varieties. Indeed, PVRs have already yielded results in this regard. The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) estimates

Management out and about meeting the CPVO entrusted examination offices

In addition to regular exchanges between the CPVO's technical experts and those from the EOs, the President and management regularly visit CPVO entrusted EOs at their premises or meet with them on the fringes of other meeting. This allows the CPVO to keep abreast of the latest EO developments, whilst also enhancing cooperation between the CPVO and EOs.

So far this year, the President and colleagues have met their Danish, German, French, Hungarian, Austrian and Polish colleagues. The President is most grateful for the warm welcome received and the highly informative meetings, which made every meeting a success.

Of the many interesting developments within the EOs, the privatisation strategy of the Danish EO merits particular mention as the EO (TystofteFoundation) officially separated from Denmark's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries on 1 July. This is an interesting example of a public-private partnership in an EO. The CPVO commends the Danish office for its brave decision, wishes it every success and looks forward to continued collaboration.

that improved varieties have accounted for more than 50 % of overall yield increases for important crops in Europe.

This seminar was an occasion to explain the role of the CPVO and PVRs. Martin Ekvad did so by highlighting the importance of providing farmers with high-quality seeds, which will flourish in increasingly difficult terrains. This cannot be done without an environment where innovation is encouraged and rewarded. In short, it cannot be done without PVRs.

Focus on...

1995-2015: 20 years of EU Intellectual property rights for plant breeders

The year 2015 has been the opportunity for the CPVO to celebrate 20 years of existence. The Community plant variety rights (CPVRs) system has been a success story from the start. As the climax of this anniversary year, the CPVO hosted a seminar on 1 October in Angers with all of those who have contributed to the success of the CPVR system through their continued cooperation and support, namely the Member States, represented by the members of the CPVO Administrative Council, the European Union institutions, the EOs, the CPVO staff members, the UPOV and, last but not least, the breeders and the breeders' organisations.

Martin Ekvad, President of the CPVO, and Carlos Godinho, Vice-President of the CPVO, were honoured to welcome the following as guest speakers: Francis Gurry (Secretary General of the UPOV and Director General of the WIPO), Vytenis Andriukaitis (EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety), Czesław Siekierski (Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament), Andrew Mitchell (Chair of the CPVO Administrative Council), Bart Kiewiet (former President of the CPVO), Andrea Mansuino (President of the International Community of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Ornamental and Fruit Varieties - CIOFORA), Garlich von Essen (Secretary General of the European Seed Association - ESA), Niels Louwaars (Director of Plantum) and Thor Kofoed (Chairman of the COPA-COGECA Working Party on Seeds). The participation of representatives of local, regional and national authorities — including Christophe Béchu (Mayor of Angers) — also contributed to making this event exceptional. Speeches underlining the great value of the CPVR system for its stakeholders alternated with congratulations on the quality of the services offered by the CPVO for the past 20 years.

The CPVO looks forward to many more years of fruitful cooperation with its partners and stakeholders, working together to further develop a global regulatory environment for PVRs and to embrace the challenges of the next decade and beyond.

You may find material on the 20 years anniversary event on the [CPVO website](#).



> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

ARIPO creates regional system of plant variety protection

In recent years, the CPVO has participated in a number of African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO) expert meetings, which led to the adoption in July of a protocol on the protection of new plant varieties in ARIPO Member States. The CPVO congratulates ARIPO on this success. It was an honour for the CPVO President to attend the diplomatic conference in Arusha, Tanzania, opened by the Vice-President of Tanzania,

at which this protocol was adopted. The substance of the protocol complies with the UPOV Convention of 1991, it will enter into force as soon as four ARIPO member countries have ratified it. At this conference, it was good to witness the importance African politicians attach to improving agriculture and agricultural yields, including the need to develop better-performing varieties. The CPVO looks forward to continued collaboration with ARIPO.

Closer cooperation with the AIPH

The CPVO President was invited to the International Association of Horticultural Products (AIPH) spring meeting on 18 March, where he gave an update on CPVO activities. Many members of the AIPH use varieties protected under the EU system and the AIPH mentioned that it supports plant variety protection and would like to explore closer cooperation with the CPVO. In a meeting with AIPH representative Mia Buma in Aalsmeer on 9 June, it was agreed that an annual consultation would take place between AIPH and CPVO.

CPVO participation at the CIOPORA annual general meeting in Hamburg, Germany (27-30 April)

The President and the Vice-President represented the CPVO in the CIOPORA annual general meeting in April at which the President gave

a presentation on examination costs and fees. This meeting is always a good opportunity to maintain close relations with clients and to get

direct feedback from stakeholders on the EU plant breeders' rights system.

Workshop on IPRs organised by APSA in Bangkok, Thailand (18 May)

The Vice-President was invited by the Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA) to participate as

a speaker in a workshop on APSA's position on intellectual property rights. He gave a presentation

entitled 'Seed industry and IPR perspective from a regional plant variety protection office'.

> LEGAL AFFAIRS

Decisions reached by the Board of Appeal (BoA) and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)

(The full text of decision or judgement is available in the case-law database on the [CPVO website](#).)

'M02205' appeal case (A010/2013)

The appellant requested the invalidity of the variety for lack of distinctness, arguing that distinctness of the variety is to be judged on the so-called distinctness information (DI) document only. The DI document provides non-obligatory additional distinctness information to the variety description that is based on the testing results of the technical examination. The appeal was dismissed and the claim for damages was rejected.

'Seimora' appeal case (A002/2014)

The appellant requested the nullity of the 'Seimora' CPVR because of lack of entitlement of the titleholder on the assumption that the breeder of the Japanese variety 'Orange Symphony' was the same as that of 'Seimora'. The titleholder claimed that the Japanese breeder assigned the right to seek protection outside Japan to him. The BoA concluded that the assignment was valid and that the titleholder acted legally.

'Seimora' appeal case (A002/2010)

The appellant lodged an appeal against an Office decision on grounds of non-entitlement. The Office decision had rejected the appellant's claim of lack of novelty of 'Seimora' without dealing with the claim of non-entitlement. Therefore, the appeal was held inadmissible as it was lodged against an Office decision on grounds of non-entitlement where the contested decision itself made no mention of this issue.

'Seimora' appeal case (A003/2010)

The appellant requested the cancellation of the 'Seimora' variety. The BoA referred to the complications and delays arising out of the submission of wrong material and conceded that the procedure could have been simpler and shorter if original 'Seimora' material had been used from the beginning. The BoA did not find convincing arguments to dispute the identity of the sample of 'Seimora'. The appellant's arguments on mistaken application of UPOV and CPVO test guidelines are not accepted. The overall procedure followed has been considered as fitting within the rules. The appeal was dismissed as unfounded.

'Sumost-02' appeal case (A007/2009)

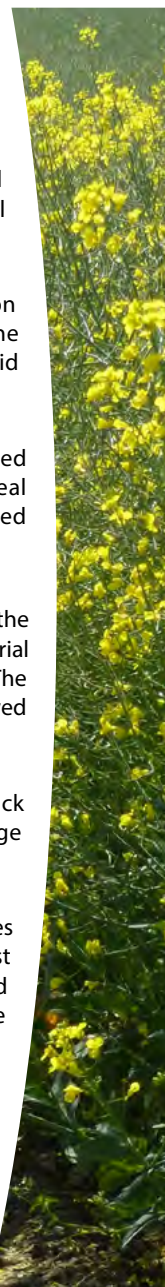
The Office had correctly rejected the application for 'Sumost 02' because of lack of distinctness compared to 'Seimora'. The lack of distinctness applied regardless of the validity or not of the 'Seimora' CPVR. In any case, 'Seimora' was of common knowledge at the relevant time. The filing of a CPVR application renders the variety a matter of common knowledge.

Lemon Symphony' judgment of the Court of Justice of 21 May 2015 (C-546/12P)

The CJEU dismissed as unfounded the appeal brought by Ralf Schröder against the judgment of the General Court in joined cases T-133/08, T-134/08, T-177/08 and T-242/09. As regards nullity proceedings, the Office shall declare a right null in the public interest where the conditions of distinction and novelty are not met. A declaration of nullity can also be made in the interest of a third party. However, a third party seeking annulment of a plant variety right must adduce evidence and facts of sufficient substance to raise serious doubts as to the legality of the grant of a CPVR after the substantive and technical examination.

Judgment of the Court of Justice of 25 June 2015 (C-242/14)

In reply to a request for a preliminary ruling from the Landgericht Mannheim (Germany), the CJEU ruled that the farm-saved seed derogation is conditional upon, inter alia, the payment of an equitable remuneration by the farmer to the holder of the plant variety right for the use of planted propagating material obtained from the said variety. The farmer who does not pay said remuneration cannot rely on the farm-saved seed derogation. Therefore an action may be brought against such a farmer by the holder of the plant variety right. The obligation to pay the equitable remuneration arises when the farmer actually makes use of the product of the harvest of the protected variety for propagating purposes.



Pilot project for a case-law database on enforcement of all IPRs

The Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM) Observatory on Infringement of Intellectual Property Rights launched in September 2014 a pilot project for a case-law database on enforcement of all IPRs that would include 800 cases (national jurisdictions, OHIM, CPVO, Court of Justice of the European Union). That phase was completed in May 2015 with the CPVO's contribution. A dozen Member States are participating. The decisions concerned are 'key' IP enforcement-

related judgments ('key' to be understood as meaning a decision that sets a precedent or overturns the established case-law) in civil as well as criminal proceedings issued between 2006 and 2014 concerning all IPRs. After completion of the project, the database will be updated yearly. Observatory members were to be updated on the progress of this project and others of the Legal and Enforcement Working Groups of the OHIM Observatory at the next meetings in September 2015.

> TECHNICAL NEWS

Presentation at training course for Spanish DUS examiners near Madrid, Spain (20 April)

The CPVO expert for vegetables participated by giving presentations on technical activities and on the improvement of procedures in relation to DUS testing being

conducted on behalf of the CPVO. A total of 47 participants from the Spanish EOs and its subcontracted DUS testing centres attended.

ISF workshop on 'Disease resistance and terminology: identifying industry needs' (1 June)

The CPVO expert for vegetables participated in a forum organised by the International Seed Federation (ISF) in the Netherlands that aimed

to give representatives of different business units in a breeding company the opportunity to provide their perspectives on what is

Adoption of a list of 24 members of the Board of Appeal for 2016-2021

On 6 March, the Office published a call for expressions of interest for the posts of members of the Board of Appeal of the CPVO (Official Journal of the European Union C 78A of 6 March 2015). Following the outcome of the selection procedure, the President of the CPVO will propose a list of a maximum of 25 candidates with legal and technical background for adoption by the Administrative Council at its October meeting, with effect from 23 February 2016 for 5 years.



required in the area of disease resistance and terminology, and to take stock of what is already covered by existing initiatives.

CPVO annual meeting with ornamental experts at Naktuinbouw, the Netherlands (2 and 3 June)

In June, the Office held its annual meeting with its ornamental experts. This year the meeting was hosted by Naktuinbouw in the Netherlands. During the meeting, a wide range of technical subjects such as the assessment

of certain characteristics in the DUS trial and discrepancies between descriptions of candidate varieties in the application documents and their actual appearance in the growing trials were discussed. Furthermore,

the adoption of new or revised technical protocols by the Administrative Council of the CPVO for the conduct of DUS tests of *Populus*, *Buddleia*, *Dianthus* and *Pelargonum grandiflorum* was prepared.

UPOV TWV hosted by the CPVO, Angers, France (14-19 June)

Having attended the UPOV Technical Working Party for Vegetables (TWV) for the past 19 years, the CPVO hosted the 49th session of the group at the Terra Botanica conference center in Angers. A total of 65 participants from Member States and

observers to the UPOV from around the world were present (several of these being first-time participants), making this the best-attended TWV session ever. Delegates discussed 13 different vegetable test guidelines as well as numerous technical

working documents throughout the week. In addition to various social activities organised by the CPVO, participants had the opportunity to visit the vegetable DUS trial grounds at GEVES Brion and the vegetable seed breeding company Clause SA.

UPOV TWA, Obihiro, Japan (5-10 July)

The Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops (TWA) took place on the island of Hokkaido in the north of Japan, an important production site for species such as potatoes, maize and sugarbeet. Due to the location, a large

number of Asian countries participated in the meeting. One of the most interesting topics for discussion was the uniformity assessment on the basis of more than one growing cycle or on the basis of sub-samples, situations that occur regularly

in the DUS test of agricultural species. Very relevant UPOV test guidelines were discussed for, for example, wheat, oats, field beans, cotton and soya beans. The next TWA session will take place in July 2016 in Mexico.

UPOV TWF, Mpumalanga, South Africa (24-28 August)

A number of technical documents were discussed at the Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF) including the 'Matters concerning variety descriptions' and 'Duration of DUS tests in the fruit sector' prepared by experts from the EU. A number of test

guidelines for which the CPVO has received applications were discussed, among them apricot, avocado rootstock, black walnut, walnut, blueberry, chestnut and pear. The TWF group visited the Agricultural Research Council Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops (ARC-ITSC) in Mbombela. During the visit, presentations were

given on an overview of the work of ARC-ITSC, avocado production and breeding developments, and marula plants. The presentations were followed by a visit to the field focusing on the following crops: passion, litchi, avocado and macadamia.





RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT projects

The Administrative Council of the CPVO adopted a revised R & D strategy in March. This strategy considers the following developments to be priorities:

- the establishment of shared online databases of reference collections available to CPVO entrusted EOs;
- the use of biomolecular techniques for the management of reference collections, identification of reference materials, enforcement and support for DUS assessment;
- the improvement and harmonisation of methodologies and procedures included in the CPVO technical protocols (TPs).

'Modification of the cultivation scheme and the plant material requirements for Helleborus'

This project was initiated by the CPVO and includes another project partner, Naktuinbouw. The project was launched in March 2013 and the final report was drafted at the end of 2014. The DUS testing of Helleborus varieties in the framework of an application for CPVRs is centralised at Naktuinbouw, where plants were partly cultivated outdoors in open ground. This cultivation scheme seemed not to be optimal as, in the past, the weak drainage of the soil caused some damage, and some cold winters or bad weather conditions could damage the candidate varieties and the reference collection. Moreover, the commercial standard way of production seems to be more suitable for pot culture rather than ground cultivation. The aim of this project has been to investigate the suitability of an alternative to the current cultivation scheme,

The CPVO considers these developments to be very important for the continuous improvement of the EU system of plant breeders' rights. In order to contribute to the implementation of the second objective, the Administrative Council has decided to establish an ad hoc working group on the integration of molecular data into DUS testing (IMODDUS). This group is open to experts from entrusted EOs with knowledge and practical experience of the use of biochemical and molecular techniques in DUS testing, and to specialists from the breeding industry with

experience of the use of such techniques for studies in plant varieties. In addition, researchers from universities or other research institutes should enrich the group with their knowledge. Imodduus will analyse R & D proposals emanating from the CPVO crop experts groups as regards their potential integration of the use of biomolecular techniques into DUS testing for the improvement of efficiency while fulfilling the UPOV Convention and the strength of a Community PVR. It is foreseen that the first meeting will take place in 2016.

namely to move to cultivation in pots with delivery in April, based on experiments with 12 reference varieties.

The results of the pilot project have shown that:

- plants from the pot cultivation were more uniform;
- the change of treatment had only a limited effect on the expression of the characteristics.

Based on these facts, the Dutch examination office has proposed changing the examination conditions and the cultivation scheme into a pot culture starting in the open in April and transferred to a cold greenhouse at the end of November. This new scheme has been implemented for all candidate varieties starting the first year of DUS examination as from April 2015.

'A European potato database as centralised collection of varieties of common knowledge'

On 27 and 28 May, the CPVO hosted the fourth meeting of potato experts to discuss the R & D project 'A European potato database as centralised collection of varieties of common knowledge' for the setting up of a common potato database. The meeting was hosted by the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES) in Vienna. Twenty-six participants attended, all from entrusted EOs

and the two breeders associations, the ESA and Plantum. Since the potato database is a pilot project for collaboration between a large number of project partners, intense discussions were held. These concerned agreements to be established between the project partners (EOs and ESA) on one hand and the laboratories conducting the molecular work on the other hand as well as very

'Rose project: sampling, analyses and storage of DNA samples'

The CPVO made an internal analysis of the outcome of the project and the comments received by the project partners and breeders organisations (CIOPORA and Plantum). During the lifetime of this project, none of the DNA samples collected has been used, either by the entrusted EOs or by the breeders. Different reasons can explain the situation.

The CPVO Administrative Council agreed in March 2014 to extend the project for a further year, in order to avoid a gap in the DNA sample taking, since a new project for roses is under preparation. The new project intends to test the use of new molecular markers, which are considered to be of interest for the management of glass house rose reference collections.

'Harmonisation of vegetable disease resistances 2 (Harmores 2)'

The CPVO expert for vegetables participated in the third and final meeting of the partners in this 3-year project in Madrid, Spain (21 and 22 April). The project has investigated improvements in methodology for the following disease resistance characteristics to be found in CPVO vegetable protocols: Pepper Tobamovirus in pepper, Pepper Potyvirus in

pepper, *Bremia lactucae* in lettuce, *Ascochyta pisi* in pea, *Fusarium oxysporum* in pea.

The aim of the meeting was to wrap up outstanding points and make recommendations in anticipation of the drafting of the final report 4 by the end of summer 2015. Possible proposals for a future 'Harmores 3' R & D project were also analysed.

CPVO agenda

> 30 September-1 October 2015

Administrative Council meeting, Angers, France

> 1 October 2015

Seminar on 20 years of CPVRs, Angers, France

> 13 and 14 October 2015

Fruit experts' meeting, Angers, France

> 30 November-1 December 2015

Vegetable experts' meeting, Angers, France

> 2 and 3 December 2015

19th annual meeting with the Examination Offices, Angers, France

> 9 and 10 March 2016

Administrative Council meeting, Angers, France

practical questions on the collection of data, such as the submission of samples and dispatching of the results obtained and the conduct of the database. A further meeting was organised in Angers on 23 September in conjunction with the annual meeting of agricultural experts. The final report of that R & D project will be available by the end of 2015.

Participation in forthcoming events

> 22-23 October 2015

Heads of EU agencies' meeting, Dublin, Ireland

> 26-29 October 2015

UPOV week of meetings, Geneva, Switzerland

> 26-29 January 2016

IPM, Essen, Germany

> 16-18 February 2016

Salon du Végétal, Angers, France

> 18 February 2016

Heads of EU agencies' meeting, Brussels, Belgium

> 14-18 March 2016

UPOV week of meetings, Geneva, Switzerland

> QUALITY AUDIT NEWS

Examination Office audit programme: introduction of an audit fee

Since 2010, the CPVO Quality Audit Service (QAS) has been carrying out regular on-site assessments to confirm that the examination work performed by the EOs conforms to the agreed principles. With the start of the next round of audits in 2016-2018, the assessment programme will be co-financed through an audit fee. EOs will contribute to half of the costs related to the audit programme by paying a triennial cost contribution. The fee may also be split into three annual payments. The CPVO Administrative Council has paved the way for this cost sharing by adopting a fee system in October 2014. Individual EOs will contribute according to the number of reports they provide in a reference period. To some extent, the duration of the most recent audit visit is also taken into account. For extraordinary audit visits, a flat fee system applies. A first estimate of the costs had been provided to each entrusted EO as part of the most recent cost calculation exercise.

Before the start of the third audit cycle in 2016, the team of technical experts participating in audit visits has already been strengthened with the addition of 18 new members. Together with those technical experts that have decided to continue from their previous appointment, a motivated and competent network of 31 technical experts from 15 Member States is available for the audit programme during the next triennium.

> IT NEWS

Variety Finder database: new developments foreseen

Maintained by the CPVO, the Variety Finder database includes a similarity search tool to test the suitability of denominations for similarity and a general searching tool. It contains information on the registers of more than 60 countries and is accessible on the [CPVO website](#). Recently, the CPVO made available new statistics in the Variety Finder database with a world map showing contributing countries.

Since the beginning of 2015, the CPVO has noted an increase of more than 20 % in the number of users of the tool compared to the same period in 2014. Since last year, OHIM Community Trade Marks (CTMs) have been included and updated on a daily basis in the database — increasing the time needed for searches. The CPVO has invested in finding technical solutions and the average search time has decreased from 15 seconds to about 6 seconds. The CPVO will continue work to make the system more efficient. In parallel to this, it is actively involved in a working group in cooperation with the UPOV and other Member States to improve the current similarity search tool.

As a follow-up to the general survey of November 2014 sent to users of the Variety Finder database, the CPVO has decided to launch a project with the aim of improving its search facilities so that functionalities better match users' needs. Specifications should be drafted in 2015 for a range of developments to take place in 2016. All remarks regarding the database are most welcome!

> IN PRACTICE

E-invoicing system gradually put in place by the CPVO

The CPVO is in the process of implementing an e-invoicing system. This was a wish expressed by CPVO clients in a survey launched in 2014.

This system will allow clients to download PDF-format invoices on an exchange platform. A first test was made on 1 September. Following the satisfaction expressed by the three clients involved in the test, it will soon be extended and made available to all interested clients.

An official announcement will be made as soon as the test is judged to be a success. The e-invoices will then be available on request.

> WELCOME TO...



The CPVO is delighted to announce that Stefan Haffke from Germany's Bundessortenamt has been appointed as a seconded national expert from 1 October 2015 for 1 year.

Prior to joining the CPVO, Mr Haffke worked in the P1 Section of the National and International Variety and Seed Affairs Coordination Centre for the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture, at the Bundessortenamt. During his secondment, Mr Haffke's work will focus mainly on the Technical Unit's agricultural species sector; he will also deal with many horizontal technical support issues. His expertise is expected to further enhance the excellent cooperation with the Bundessortenamt.



CPVO • OCVV

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> PUBLICATIONS

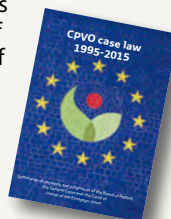
Annual report 2014

The English and French versions of the CPVO annual report for 2014 are available on the [CPVO website](#). To get a printed version free of charge, please visit [EU Bookshop](#). The annex to the report, which is only published electronically, is also available on the [CPVO website](#).



CPVO case-law 1995-2015

For its 20th anniversary, the CPVO has published the summaries of 20 years of decisions and judgments of its Board of Appeal, of the General Court and of the Court of Justice of the European Union. To get a printed version of this publication free of charge, please visit [EU Bookshop](#).



TO BE NOTED

Traineeship recruitment procedure

As part of the 2015 traineeship procedure, the CPVO hosted six trainees from 1 March to 31 August. It will host a further three trainees from 1 September until 28 February 2016. Offering this opportunity aims at providing university graduates with a unique and first-hand experience of the role and work of the CPVO in an international, multilingual and multicultural environment. In return, the trainees benefit the CPVO by putting into practice the most up-to-date skills and knowledge acquired during their studies.

In September 2015, three further traineeships were advertised on the [CPVO website](#) for the next 6-month period starting on 1 March 2016. For further information on traineeships, please contact traineeships@cpvo.europa.eu

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