

Insights and testimonies of Martin Ekvad

(President of the CPVO since 2011)

CPVO – GEVES: a long-lasting positive working relationship



« I would like to warmly wish a happy 50th anniversary to GEVES and I would like to use this occasion to highlight the very positive working relationship the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), which I represent, has nurtured with GEVES over the past 25 years.

Let's look back at the 1990's, at the time the CPVO was created, and let's remember that France has always been a leading country when it comes to plant variety protection and it is a strong supporter of the Community Plant Variety Rights system and of the UPOV system. It is no coincidence that the very first diplomatic conference which led to the UPOV Convention in 1961 was held in Paris. The fact that the CPVO is located in Angers for about 25 years also confirms the drive and interest of the French authorities in our sector of activity.

And it looks like GEVES and CPVO's destinies were synched. GEVES moved from Versailles to Beaucouzé, and the city of Angers and the Maine-&-Loire area became a centre of excellence for plant variety protection and variety testing, recognised as such internationally.

Due to this mutual interest and the geographical proximity, I can say that the CPVO has always enjoyed a very close, friendly and positive working relationship with GEVES. At many occasions, GEVES has shown a well-appreciated availability to receive CPVO delegations by offering a visit of the DUS trials and illustrating concretely how technical examinations are organised in practice.

Relying on GEVES technical expertise

The CPVO relies on GEVES' expertise. GEVES colleagues actively contribute to the CPVO expert meetings in all crop sectors (vegetable, ornamental, fruit, agricultural) as well as to our annual meeting with national examination offices where the experts from GEVES always show a proactive and collaborative attitude. They contribute with new ideas and initiatives on how to improve the system, which stimulates discussions and is very much appreciated.

GEVES is one of the most important Examination Offices in the CPVO network in terms of numbers of examinations carried out on behalf of the CPVO and DUS reports purchased by the CPVO under the 'take-over' procedures, to be used as a basis to grant EU plant variety rights

In 2020, GEVES carried out 242 technical examinations on behalf of the CPVO for applications received by the CPVO in 2020. This represented 13% of all technical examinations within the European Union system in 2020. If we look at the past 25 years, this figure rises to circa 4400 technical examinations organised at GEVES on behalf of the CPVO.

In addition, there has been more than 7 800 DUS reports taken-over by the CPVO from GEVES since 1995. In respect of take-overs, GEVES became the second most important CPVO EO with 28 % of all takeover procedures in 2020.

Looking at the overall figures for the year 2020, GEVES produced 19% of all DUS reports which were used as a basis for a decision of to grant Community Plant Variety Rights. This places GEVES in the top three most important examination offices in terms of number of DUS tests performed for the CPVO, together with the Bundessortenamt in Germany and Naktuinbouw in The Netherlands.

GEVES has more than a dozen stations used for DUS testing of candidate varieties such as Brion and La Pouëze in the Maine-et-Loire. In the agriculture sector, GEVES is our top DUS testing office for maize which is the most applied for agricultural crop in Europe. Obviously, the testing know-how of species like apple, lettuce, hydrangea, carrot, and onion is very well recognised all over Europe, and GEVES is regularly entrusted by the CPVO Administrative Council to test candidate varieties belonging to 'new species'.

Finally, I'd like to mention that GEVES is an active contributor to the Variety Finder database with the National Listing and Plant Breeder's data and GEVES is very active in the enhanced cooperation in denomination testing. In 2020, it ranked second among the users of the service with almost 1100 analysis delivered, which represented 15 % of the total of opinions provided to participating countries over the year. And let's remember that GEVES created the denomination similarity testing software and then allowed the CPVO in 2005 to use it and further develop it.

Promotion of the system and other activities (international, R&D)

The CPVO also works with GEVES outside France where the French know-how on Bio Molecular Techniques matters is well recognised and BioGEVES is playing a leading role in UPOV's BMT working party and CPVO's IMODDUS working group. It is also renowned for its expertise in pathology, phenotyping and database design. When it comes to CPVO's co-funded R & D projects, GEVES is a partner in the vast majority of them, and very frequently a coordinator, fostering a real dynamic spirit in the network of examination offices. Currently it is also playing a leading role in the consortium INVITE, funded by Horizon2020.

The CPVO and GEVES often participate in joint activities aimed at promoting the PVP system in France, such as SIVAL or the Salon du Végétal, but also internationally such as IPM Essen in Germany, the biggest fair for ornamentals in the world.

GEVES has always been very supportive to CPVO's international outreach activities and they partner with us in a series of activities aimed at promoting the plant variety protection system and in training technical experts from other parts of the world, such as through the various IPKey projects in China, South-Asia and Latin America, or in the African French-speaking countries members of OAPI.

And here I would like to pay tribute to the memory of our friend Joël Guiard who has given impetus to GEVES in the field of international outreach, at EU and global level. He was known worldwide as an outstanding expert with the rare talent to explain complex matters in a digestible manner. He contributed to put GEVES on the worldmap. Joël was also a source for inspiration at the CPVO and he was one of the driving forces behind the setting up of the network of Examination Offices, always very supportive to the EU PVP system. France keeps up his legacy with a strong voice in the EU PVP system and in all relevant UPOV Working Group. GEVES ambitions for 2030 can testify that this level of international ambition and vigour is still very strong.

From a personal viewpoint as I am now ending the second term of my mandate as CPVO president, I have every respect for the experts working at GEVES, for their professionalism, passion and devotion, but at the same time never forgetting the social aspects.

I have enjoyed working with them all and I have appreciated the leadership of Arnaud Deltour and Alain Tridon who have served as Directors of GEVES during most part of my mandate as president, as well as René Mathis, Director of BioGEVES, and the wizard of genetics.

Looking towards the future, I was very happy to be consulted during the reflection phase of the GEVES vision for 2030 project, and this CPVO's involvement is a good indicator of our mutual expertise, trust and respect for each other. I wish a very happy 50th anniversary to GEVES and I have no doubt that the next 50 years will be equally successful!

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Link to YouTube interview with Martin Ekvad:

