



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung



## Memorandum of Understanding

on extending the ongoing

### Scientific and Technological Cooperation in Plant Genome Research as basis of the 'Knowledge Based Bio-Economy'

between the

**MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE  
(France)**

the

**AGENCE NATIONALE DE LA RECHERCHE (FRANCE)**

the

**BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR BILDUNG UND FORSCHUNG (GERMANY)**

and the

**MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIA (SPAIN)**

hereafter referred to as the "SIGNING PARTNERS".

#### Preamble

- a) Experiences and procedures from an earlier cooperation between France and Germany in plant genome research (1999-2006) formed the basis for the integration of Spain as a third partner in a trilateral initiative in plant genomics, plant biotechnology and molecular breeding", early in 2003. The initial result of the cooperation between the research ministries of the three countries was the common funding of nine cooperative research projects for a total sum of roughly 7.5 million Euros under the title 'Functional and comparative genomics approaches for the investigation and use of natural diversity'.
- b) The Franco-German-Spanish cooperation in plant genome research entered a new phase of sustainable groundwork after that. Representatives from business, science and the three research ministries met first in Weimar in March 2005 and later in Cordoba in October 2005 to discuss future subjects and strategic developments. A milestone in the

development of the trilateral cooperation was the generation of a White Paper entitled 'Genomic approaches for the investigation of genetic diversity in crop plants and its use for innovation'. This strategic document defines the future development of the cooperation with regards to the application of research results in industrial practice, the strengthening of the competitiveness of the businesses involved and the reinforcement of the cooperation between public research and industry. It also provides the essential basis for future joint activities between the three Countries.

- c) In parallel, during the Cordoba meeting in October 2005 the representatives of the German and Spanish research ministries and of the French National Agency of Research signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that recognized the trilateral cooperation as a core activity in application-oriented plant genome research in Europe. Further, this MoU defined the basis for a new funding call within the framework of the ERA-Net on Plant Genomics (ERA-PG) in 2006. As a result, under the title 'Trilateral partnership and beyond; the future for European public/private partnerships in plant genomics', fourteen project proposals were recommended for funding with approximately 15.5 million Euros.
- d) In a recent meeting in Madrid in March 2007, the representatives of the three countries agreed to the reinforcement of their transnational initiatives and the preparation of a new MoU, which has to be seen as a consequent further development of the former one.

Herewith, the *SIGNING PARTNERS* declare:

- This present MoU defines the framework for our future cooperation. It is founded on the basis of our mutual interest as derived from our previous documents signed by the three delegations during the meeting held in Cordoba in October 2005. We endorse and encourage the further development of our mutual interest through the establishment of a **Mutual Research Program** to support the "Transnational Plant alliance for novel technologies - toward implementing the Knowledge Based Bio-Economy' (PLANT-KBBE) in Europe". Our mutual interests in deepening our cooperation in research and development are inspired by our shared vision of the need to build a KBBE that will be a major challenge for our economies as well as for our societies within the 21st century. We declare and reaffirm that the basis of our mutual international activities is the White Paper agreed during the Cordoba meeting in 2005, the development of which will in addition provide a concrete and strong action toward the establishment of the European Research Area.
1. Besides the need for a safe and healthy food supply we support the establishment of the KBBE in order to satisfy novel demands and future requirements of our societies. As bio-economy in general we understand the growing part of our economies based on the use of renewable biological resources. This includes bio-energy, industrial bio-products and bio-processes that are derived from those renewable biological resources. The knowledge basis will become a central building block of this bio-

industrialization and needs significant investments in research and development as well as in program accompanying measures. Bio-based industrial products will influence many sectors including, but not limited to, energy, manufacturing, medicine, food production, and chemical & textile industries. Bio-based processes or bio-processes will be the platform of future industry and will include living organisms (e.g. plants or micro-organisms) or parts of living organisms (e.g. enzymes) as production systems. Research will therefore become increasingly integrative.

2. The initial period of validity of this MoU will cover the next six years, i.e. from the date of its signature, 4 September 2007, until 31 December 2013. During this time span, three consecutive calls for proposals will be officially launched early in 2008, 2009 and 2010. The selected projects will be run for up to three years in each call, and will support R&D activities in a sustainable manner toward the establishment of the KBBE.
3. The Program will be open to other Partners in Europe and beyond, provided that any new members accept the principles of the Trilateral Cooperation and give particular emphasis to the support and promotion of the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model for constructing the trans-national cooperation. Furthermore, such an opening should strengthen the European Research Area.
4. The general scope of the calls will be primarily focused on the participation of PPP consortia. For strategic reasons, exploratory research based entirely on public partnership may be also considered providing proposals fit within the fields of plant genomics, plant systems biology, molecular breeding and plant biotechnology, together with more integrative interdisciplinary R&D activities (e.g. the assignments with white biotechnology or engineering science).
5. A Panel of Directors will represent the *SIGNING PARTNERS* and periodically meet to supervise the whole development of the Program. It will be assisted by a Permanent Virtual Secretariat, composed of representatives from the funding bodies / management agencies and managed by a mutually defined partner. They will take care of the implementation of actions and initiatives of the Program (e.g. the calls for research projects, the evaluation procedures, the project monitoring...). An Advisory Board, nominated by the *SIGNING PARTNERS*, will integrate representatives of academia, the industrial sector and the administration from the three Countries ; its role will consist in proposing every year to the panel of directors a set of themes of research for the next round of call for proposals
6. These calls for proposals intend to attract projects that share resources and technologies, rule out redundancies but provide synergies as well as added values, and provide significant contributions to the solution of superior questions of common interest to the three countries. Special interest will be devoted to topics related to safer and healthier food, bio-energy, bio-materials and green-chemistry.



7. The *SIGNING PARTNERS* agree to support joint initiatives accompanying the transnational, collaborative research projects, including for example specialized training courses, exchange of personnel and resources, establishment of common research infrastructures, and convergent management of IPR issues, in agreement with their funding schemes.
8. This MoU is not legally binding on the *SIGNING PARTNERS*. We recognize however that the final success of the abovementioned Program depends on all partners' efforts and their adhesion to its principles.

**Paris, 4 September 2007**

**MINISTERE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE  
(FRANCE) :**

Gilles Bloch



(signature)

**AGENCE NATIONALE DE LA RECHERCHE (FRANCE):**


Jacqueline Lecourtier



(signature)

**BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR BILDUNG UND FORSCHUNG (GERMANY):**


Peter Lange



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Francisco Marcellán



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