

Seminar on the topic "Digitalization and valorization of plant genetic resources" under a bilateral cooperation project between Bulgaria and Slovakia, funded by the "Scientific Research" fund

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During the period June 15-21, 2025, a second working meeting and seminar for the DIGIVALPGR project, contract No. KP-06-Slovakia-9/13.08.2024 of FNI, was held, with the participation of Bulgarian and Slovak scientists, including young scientists, doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and specialists from three scientific organizations – Plant Production Research Centre Piešťany, part of the National Agricultural and Food

Centre in Slovakia, Institute of Plant Genetic Resources in Sadovo (Agricultural Academy) and Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", Department of "Computer Systems".



The Slovak scientists were welcomed at IPGR by the Institute's management, represented by the Director Assoc. Prof. Dr. Katya Uzundzhalieva and Deputy Director Prof. Dr. Veselina Masheva. A Memorandum of Scientific Cooperation was signed between the Slovak and Bulgarian genebanks.

The seminar's work program included the presentation of reports – interim reports with results achieved under the project, by the leaders of the two scientific teams - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolaya Velcheva from IPGR for Bulgaria and Dr. Ľubomír Mendel for Slovakia. Prof. Dr. Asya Stoyanova-Doycheva and Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Pencho Malinov from Plovdiv University presented the project's information activities – the module for expeditions and the mobile application for documentation. The demonstration garden with Bulgarian and Slovak bean and pea samples was visited. The protocol for long-term storage of plant genetic resources in the National Genebank was presented by Prof. Dr. Gergana Desheva. The guests also visited the Museum of Agricultural Science in Sadovo.

The scientific program included visits to:



Centre of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology – PlantaSYST in Plovdiv



Aquaponics Centre



The Museum of the Horse and the Museum of the Faculty of Agriculture at Thracian University in Stara Zagora



DiVes Estate Winery on the historical hill Simeonov Hill near Aheloy and the lavender fields with five Bulgarian varieties

Bulgarian and Slovak scientists were introduced to the products offered by "Medi Plus R" company, a long-term partner of IPGR – the biostimulant Amalgerol Essence and nitrogen-fixing bacteria, suitable for both organic and conventional agriculture.



A joint expedition was conducted to collect local varieties and visit a farmer in the Yambol region, preserving *on farm* traditional varieties of various cereals, legumes, vegetables, medicinal species, and spices. Valuable information was obtained regarding the cultivation of the crops, their specific characteristics and requirements, ways of using the produce, etc.

The project team expresses heartfelt gratitude to all colleagues and partners who kindly hosted us, dedicated their time to introduce us to their work, and allowed us to exchange experience and good practices. Chief expert Simona Cheperigova and assistant Valko Neshev (part-time doctoral student) from IPGR, and Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Sebiha Madanska from Plovdiv University, a member of the Bulgarian project team, took an active part in the organization of activities and visits.



The cultural program of the seminar included visits to landmarks such as the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis, the Architectural-Historical Reserve Old Plovdiv, a historical tour of the ancient city of Nessebar, and a traditional Bulgarian evening at "Megdana" restaurant in Plovdiv with a folklore program and national dishes.

The joint research work of the partner teams on DIGIVALPGR "Digitalization and Valorization of Local Plant Genetic Resources in Bulgaria and Slovakia within the framework of maintaining compliance and interoperability in the European space from Bulgaria and Slovakia" continues. Current information on all activities and results is published on the project's dedicated Facebook page: Digivalpgr Project <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566160605886>