



## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE STUDY OF VIRUS AND VIRUS-LIKE DISEASES OF GRAPEVINE

20<sup>TH</sup> Meeting  
General Assembly of ICVG  
Minutes

Friday, September 29, 2023

The General Assembly meeting was called to order by Marc Fuchs, President of ICVG, at 13:45 at Porto Palace Hotel in Thessaloniki, Greece. Fuchs begins the meeting by recognizing the students in attendance, stating that they are the bright future for ICVG, and making a few opening statements.

Discussion Item 1: ICVG Website: All in attendance are invited to review the website and provide ideas on how it can be improved. Regretably, the membership email list available on the website had been used in repeated phishing attempts, so action was taken to remove the contact details from the website. If you want to communicate with a member listed on the site, reach out to Maher Al Rwahnih for their contact information.

Discussion Item 2: Vitiviruses: It is time to reassess the classification and identification of vitiviruses in grape, and how these viruses are related. Members of ICVG will coordinate the effort, which should help the whole community.

Discussion Item 3: Phantom Virus-Like Diseases and Pathogens: Certification and/or quarantine standards in Europe or North America list a number of diseases or viruses that are regulated, but do not exist. An example is “little leaf”. This so-called “little leaf” disease is included in the US, Canadian and European regulation, requiring testing in grapevines to be exchanged. Unfortunately, there is no mention of “little leaf” in the scientific literature, and this disease is not known to virologists. “Little leaf” disease does not exist. How did it end up in regulations remains a mystery. “Little leaf” disease and several other ‘phantom diseases’, i.e., a virus-like disease for which neither infected plants nor sequence information are available to develop diagnostics assays, should not be included in regulatory standards, as they favor the illegal transfer of propagation material across the globe. There is a urgent need to collect information about what phantom viruses should not be included in regulation so that they can be removed from regulatory standards.

“Phantom diseases” occur in many crops, not only in grapevines. An international group effort is under way to address phantom diseases across multiple crops. These efforts are laudable, however, a focused review on “phantom diseases” in grapevines would be beneficial. Therefore, a specific and comprehensive list of “phantom diseases” in grapevines is proposed. Discussing this proposition resulted in general support with regards to viruses, because, for phytoplasma, there is no “phantom disease”.

Discussion Item 4: Steering Committee Membership: Upon retiring, Deborah Golino stepped down from the steering committee and as Secretary. Maher Al Rwahnih served as interim secretary, maintaining and updating the website and facilitating communications. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> ICVG conference in Thessaloniki,

Greece, the steering committee had installed Maher as a new member of the steering committee with permanent role as secretary of ICVG.

Other steering committee members who have retired or are planning to retire soon expressed interest in stepping down, including Filiz Ertunc, Nuedin Habili, Nikos Katis, Michael Maixner, and Gustavo Nolasco. They are thanked for their service and dedication, and granted honorary membership on the steering committee. The new steering committee members who fill these vacancies are: Arnaud Blouin, Kar Mun Chooi, Varvara Maliogka, Martina Šeruga Musić, and Éva Várallyay. These new members are thanked for their willingness to serve.

Discussion Item 5: 21<sup>st</sup> ICVG Conference: Meetings typically occur on a 3-year cycle, which we will return to. The next meeting will be held in 2026 in New Zealand. Robin MacDiarmid, convener of the New Zealand meeting, invites all to attend and shares that the local wine and nursery industries are keen to participate and support.

Martina Šeruga Musić has offered to host the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting (2029) in Croatia.

Marc recognizes the hosts for the 20<sup>th</sup> conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, and thanks them. Those in attendance express their gratitude with an extended applause.

The meeting was adjourned at 14:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Maher Al Rwahnih