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## **ESTO – European Specialist in Traditional Orchards**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

The summary describes achievements and outcomes of the project „European Specialist in Traditional Orchards“ (ESTO). The project has been carried out from January 2012 until February 2015.

Traditional orcharding in Europe has had a changing history over the last decades. In some regions there are still agricultural models guaranteeing the continuity and development of these hotspots of biodiversity, but in other regions, changes in land use, missing marketing actions and the widespread loss of professional knowledge about traditional orchards are threatening their survival. Therefore, the overall objective of the ESTO project is to contribute to keep the traditional orchards as a multifunctional (ecological and economical) sustainable system supporting high biodiversity and determining characteristic landscapes in a 21-century surrounding through the development of new and innovative ways of teaching and learning about traditional orchards.

ESTO as a European project, embedded in the Lifelong Learning Programme, has focused on setting up regional, national and European networks to proliferate the added value of traditional orchards in Europe, as well as on the development of vocational training. Thus ESTO contributes to maintaining of traditional orchards through their use and improves the viability of rural areas by supporting alternative forms of work and income. With this in mind, the European partnership developed the curriculum for qualification of specialists in traditional orchards during the project.

To appropriately recognize factual needs of all target groups, the project started with an ex-ante analysis of target groups in order to identify the needs of potential users of the curriculum. The ex-ante analysis served as a basis for the development of the ESTO - curriculum elaborated in accordance with ECVET standards, covering the most important aspects of traditional orchards in fields of pomology, their management & care and processing & marketing of their products. The curriculum was developed in six European languages.

The next step was a comprehensive collection of material as a solid base for the curriculum. The collection of available literature, contacts, links, courses and a photo-pool related to traditional orchard topics in each country was compiled into a single project result.

The expert texts have been elaborated to selected key units of the curriculum for each thematic field and incorporated into the teaching material as its integral part.

The ESTO-curriculum and the expert texts provided a basis for the pedagogical, didactical and technical upgrade and turned into the ready-to-use teaching material involving innovative and attractive teaching/training approaches. The ESTO-teaching material was also used for the pilot testing of the curriculum in four “pilot orchard schools”. The teaching material is available in German, Hungarian, Polish, Danish and English. All mentioned results are available on the [www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu).

To guarantee the sustainability of the project results, Competence Centres in participating countries have been established. Competence Centres support further exploitation of project results in participating countries and also accompany the implementation of the curriculum into the educational systems. Furthermore, they are contributing to sustaining the national networks and advising and linking traditional orchard stakeholders at regional levels. Project partners approached educational institutions and the negotiations about adjustments and implementation of the curriculum (and other supportive project results like material collection or teaching material) in formal/informal education are ongoing.

During the entire project period, project partners disseminated all ESTO project news at

various international, national and regional public events (e.g. EUROPOM 2012/AT, EUROPOM 2013/DE, Expert Conference on Traditional Orchards 2013 in Holzdorf/DE, CEEweb Conference 2014 in Szeged/HU, International meeting „Good Harvest” 2013 in Bończa/PL etc .) In September 2014, the ESTO Final Conference took place in Lisieux/FR, where project results have been presented to wide audience of international experts and interested public.

The network of project partners will continue and grow and the exchange will maintain. Common follow-up actions and projects also on transnational level have been initiated. These actions focus on strengthening the European dimension of the cooperation in the field of traditional orchards also by including partners from new European countries, have been initiated. These will enhance the networking activities and exchange on traditional orchards in Europe and facilitate the implementation of the ESTO-curriculum and other project results in the teaching/training practice in Europe.

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# 1. Project Objectives

*Objectives of the ESTO-project:*

## OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To contribute to keep the traditional orchards as a multifunctional (ecological and economical) sustainable system supporting high biodiversity and determining characteristic landscapes in a 21-century surrounding through the development of new and innovative ways of teaching and learning about traditional orchards.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (contributing to overall objective)

- To develop a curriculum and teaching material covering selected aspects of knowledge about traditional orchards (pomology, management and care, processing and marketing) for interested adults/farmers, students of vocational schools and universities accessible in all participating countries.
- To advance awareness on traditional orchards in relevant organisations and institutions and secure networking between affiliated actors.

In detail the following objectives were set by the project:

### *Qualification*

The development of the ‘traditional orcharding’ modular curriculum for the qualification of the „Specialist in Traditional Orchards“ with an emphasis on innovative teaching/training methods is one of the main objectives of the project. It is available as a web-based curriculum based on ECVET criteria (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) and translated into the languages of participating countries. The curriculum has been tested in pilot ‘Orchards Schools’ and afterwards offered to interested institutions/organisations e.g. vocational schools, universities and non-formal education institutions.

Additionally supportive materials for the use of the curriculum were developed by the partnership. One of them is a comprehensive material collection – “knowledge base” including a rich photo pool from all participating countries and also short video-clips related to traditional orchards. Selected key topics of the curriculum have been elaborated into expert texts providing theoretical knowledge about different aspects of traditional orcharding. These were further developed into ready-to-use teaching material involving innovative training/teaching approaches.

All these materials have been tested in the project pilot courses “Pilot Orchard Schools and can be used for the designing of the courses in traditional orcharding as well as separately for other educational/training purposes.

### *Improving awareness of traditional orchards*

The partner consortium initiated the implementation of the curriculum (and other mentioned project results) within the EU-wide consortium network and thus the project will contribute to increasing awareness and knowledge of traditional orcharding. The Competence Centres were established to ensure the sustainability of project results also after the actual project has finished. These centres operate as a contact point for any request regarding the project, its results and traditional orcharding. The Competence Centres established in participating countries should facilitate the exchange and transfer of knowledge about traditional orchards between professionals, networks of authorities, institutions and organisations dealing with traditional orchard farming and secure networking on both national and international levels also beyond the end of the project.

### *Networking*

The eco-systems of traditional orchards constitute a characteristic landscape element in many European countries. This habitat, however, is endangered in many places due to insufficient care, abandonment to nature, shrub invasion, re-plantation and also due to the absence of (economical) use. There are movements in several European countries attempting to re-establish use of these eco-systems. Therefore there is a need and demand for linking and networking these existing initiatives. The Competence Centres (in participating countries) established during the project will strive to provide this missing link on both national and international levels providing a long-term benefit beyond the initial scope of the project.

### *Continuity and development*

Providing education and qualifications for adults and students at vocational, university and adult education levels will support the development of a stable system for the use of traditional orchards and their products also for future generations. The economic and ecological functions of the orchards will be secured, by educating about the ecological background, managing and caring of traditional orchards and all the steps of production, processing and marketing of orchards' products. Thus, traditional orchards will be maintained as important biodiversity spots, landscape elements and as a source of healthy regional food. The demand for expert skills will be created in the labour market in rural areas. During the project progression, several initiatives started on regional levels. Some partners of the consortium started to develop common project follow-up actions and thus extended the ESTO network by the involvement of new partners from other European countries (e.g. Czech Republic, Romania).

## 2. Project Approach

*The project approach describes key activities and processes to achieve project objectives performed within the ESTO-project:*

- Installation of 3 trans-national focus working groups (FG) of partners focused on different thematic areas of traditional orchards (a./ pomology, b./ care and management, c./ processing and marketing). All partners have been involved; the leader of each FG was pointed out.
- Realisation of the ex-ante analysis (to target groups' demands) on the basis of a questionnaire in order to define the contents of the curriculum based on the target groups needs.
- Development of an overview and index to structure the curriculum on the basis of the ex-ante analysis and material screening.
- Completion of the material collection - knowledge base: All available materials on the topics of pomology, care & management and processing & marketing, in participating countries have been analysed and collected. This collection of material comprises available literature, contacts, links, courses and also a photo-pool related to traditional orchard topics.
- Curriculum development: Three trans-national working groups of partners and experts focused on three key modules of the curriculum (a./ pomology, b./ care & management, c./ processing & marketing). The "ECVET-sheets", as a frame of the curriculum based on the ECVET methodology have been designed. FGs have developed units with learning outcomes, creating a frame for the curriculum. The whole process has been supervised by an external ECVET-expert and the curriculum was revised several times.
- Elaboration of the expert texts: Expert texts to selected key units of the curriculum for each thematic field were elaborated. These texts, together with relevant materials from the material collection served as a basis for the development of the teaching material. The expert texts were revised several times.
- Development of the teaching material: The curriculum and the expert texts were basis for the pedagogical, didactical and technical upgrade and turned into the ready-to-use teaching material involving innovative and attractive teaching/training approaches. The teaching material was also used for the pilot testing of the curriculum in "Pilot Orchard Schools".
- Graphical designing of the curriculum, expert texts and the teaching material.
- Translation of the curriculum into five partner languages, and teaching material into German, Hungarian, Polish, Danish. An English version of all results is available.

- Testing and optimizing the curriculum in four pilot courses “Pilot Orchard Schools” on three different educational levels (a./vocational , b./university, c./adult education).
- Elaboration of a guideline with “practical remarks” for the curriculum users resulting from the assessments of the pilot courses.
- Project dissemination and availability of curriculum and other project results is ensured via:
  - ESTO-website ([www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu), available in 6 languages updated with project information and linked to partner websites)
  - ESTO-facebook
  - PR materials (leaflets and posters)
  - Media outputs (press articles, reports, radio/TV interviews in national/regional/local media)
  - Project presentation in different events: meetings, conferences, exhibitions, training courses, (realisation of the final dissemination conference within the ESTO final meeting with presentation of project results).
- Approaching and negotiating with educational institutions in order to inform and apply the curriculum (and other developed materials) in the teaching/training practice. The curriculum was offered in educational institutions (vocational schools, universities/universities of applied sciences, adult education centres) in participating countries. The negotiations and detailed planning of the courses is ongoing.
- Establishment of the Competence Centres in participating countries to ensure viability of the curriculum beyond the project lifetime: Competence Centres serve as a contact points for any requests regarding the curriculum and as a network nodes for all interested institutions, organisations and stakeholders.
- Cooperation with the project external evaluator: To ensure the quality of project results, project processes and cooperation were monitored and evaluated by the project external evaluator. The evaluator communicated with the whole consortium and provided useful recommendations.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The following project outcomes and results have been achieved within:

a) Project management and coordination

- The ESTO Kick-off meeting in February 2012 in Ehrenberg/DE: The aim of the meeting was to form the partnership, to discuss the project milestones and further steps in detail and to introduce management and financial aspects of the project. Participants had a possibility to experience the best practice examples of the processing and marketing of traditional orchards' products at family farm/enterprise in Ehrenberg in an "Apple Sherry Theatre".
- The project partner network and working structure was established.
- Designing the project workplan: The workplan was regularly updated according to actual project developments and after each project meeting in order to set next steps in the project implementation and actualise the timeline.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> project meeting in September 2012 in Nieborow/PL: The meeting was focused on the clarifications of ongoing project changes (in project management and partnership) and especially on introduction of the ECVET-approach. The project logical framework was discussed as well as interim results of the ex-ante analysis and material screening were presented. Participants visited the old varieties collection in Skierniewice to have an insight into protection and collection of wild fruit trees in Poland.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> transnational project meeting in April 2013 in Pöllau/AT: The meeting was dedicated to the intensive groups work on the development of the ECVET-sheets (curriculum) accompanied by the ECVET-expert. Further project changes in the partnership have been discussed and the replacement partner UBZ/Styrian Environmental Educational Center was introduced. Final steps in the completion of the material collection and final work on PR materials were agreed. Partners could experience a chain of best practice examples from the Pöllau region covering the traditional orchard management through the processing and marketing of orchards products to touristic and cultural use of traditional orchards in the excursion "From the orchard to the product".
- 4<sup>th</sup> transnational project meeting in January 2014 in Miskolc (HU): The meeting included the finalisation of ECVET-sheets of the curriculum and the expert texts with relevance to the teaching material. A first draft of the teaching material was presented and a common concept of pilot orchard schools was agreed among the partnership. Partners drafted their national dissemination plans. Participants visited the Foundation for handicapped young people, which learn and take care about traditional orchards in their farmstead and thus have very important role in managing abandoned fruit yards in the region.
- Project final conference in September 2014 in Lisieux/FR: The final conference was a great dissemination event, where over 170 participants took part. The Conference consisted of a public and an internal part. During the public part of the conference the situation and perspectives of traditional orchards in different European countries were presented to an international audience. Project partners introduced the project and all results of the ESTO project in detail. Furthermore, French experts introduced orchard

actions and initiatives in France. The discussion and European experiences sharing was one of the most important conference sessions. Participants visited best practice examples – cider farming producer and Agricultural College “Le Robillard“ to get impression from training and educational practice in processing at the college. The internal meeting involved the final project evaluation session, presentation of dissemination and exploitation results in a „gallery walk“, setting and discussing the tasks of the Competence Centres and designing the ESTO follow-up actions.

- The progress and final project report were prepared, what made the project development and outcomes transparent for the benefactor and the public.

#### b) Project dissemination and communication

- PR-materials: Design of the ESTO-logo, development of the folder in six languages and posters informing about the ESTO project, its objectives, about traditional orchards and their situation in Europe
- Development of the ESTO-website in 6 languages ([www.esto-project.eu](http://www.esto-project.eu)) providing actual, project-relevant information (project objectives, contents, target groups, traditional orchards in Europe, actual news and events etc.) and serving as a distribution platform of project results (curriculum, material collection, teaching material etc.), linked to partners' websites
- Establishment of the ESTO-facebook profile offering a possibility for information and exchange for interested public, especially younger audiences
- Media relations and outputs to promote the project results: Publication of articles in journals and newsletters, radio and TV interviews, interviews for newspaper editors, producing of short video-clips in all partner languages contributed to project promotion and awareness rising about values of traditional orchards.
- Project and its results have been presented by partners in different events (fairs, exhibitions, conferences). Several institutions in formal and informal education have been approached and informed about the curriculum and all developed supportive materials.
- Project final conference as a wide dissemination event, where all project results have been presented to invited international audience of experts from participating countries to ensure multiplier effect and mutual exchange
- Linkage with ADAM portal: Project information and results have been updated and uploaded on the Leonardo da Vinci - ADAM portal for projects and products.

#### c) ESTO-Curriculum, Expert text, Teaching Material

- The ex-ante analysis was realised in order to integrate target groups needs into the curriculum on the base of the questionnaire. This analysis also determined the index and overview of the curriculum. The ex-ante analysis was elaborated by the national project teams.
- A comprehensive material collection (consisting of available literature, contacts, links courses, photo-pool, videos) as a supporting tool for utilisation of the curriculum was compiled by national teams of partners.
- Three transnational focus groups of partners/experts divided into the sections pomology, care & management and processing & marketing were installed. They

cooperated intensively on the development of the curriculum, expert texts, pilot teaching materials and supported the preparation of pilot courses on testing institutions.

- The ESTO-curriculum was developed. The curriculum describes training aims, curriculum modules, and available supportive materials and defines the target groups. The ESTO curriculum is based on ECVET standards and covers the most important aspects of knowledge about traditional orchards in fields of pomology, management & care of traditional orchards and processing & marketing of their products. The curriculum is available in six European languages on the ESTO-web-site and is directly offered to relevant educational institutions and further administrated by Competence Centres.
- The expert text was elaborated by FGs on the basis of the selected key topics of the curriculum representing each module (pomology, care&management, processing&marketing). The expert text was also incorporated into expert knowledge included in the teaching material. The expert text is available in English, German, Danish, Polish and Hungarian language.
- The pedagogical and didactical upgrade of the key units of the curriculum and the expert text resulted in comprehensive ready-to-use teaching material comprising innovative and user-friendly methods to transfer knowledge, skills and competences in topics around traditional orcharding to students/trainees. The teaching material is available in English, German, Danish, Polish and Hungarian language also on the [www.esto-project.de](http://www.esto-project.de).

#### e) Exploitation within the consortium network

- The curriculum was tested on the basis of the teaching material and other curriculum supportive materials (e.g. material collection) in Pilot Orchard Schools at four different educational institutions. The pilot courses as well as all developed materials have been evaluated (by teachers/trainers, evaluators and trainees) and assessment reports were provided.
- Competence Centres in participating countries have been established to ensure sustainability of the project and support further exploitation of project results. Competence centres are contributing to sustaining the national networks', advising and linking traditional orchard stakeholders at regional levels. Competence Centres are providing the curriculum and other project results in participating countries and are also accompanying the implementation of the curriculum into educational systems.

#### f) Project monitoring and evaluation

- An external evaluator accompanied the project throughout its duration and has edited evaluation reports with recommendations for the benefit of successful project development.
- The curriculum and other project results (teaching material, material collection, etc.) has been revised, tested and evaluated by external experts and also experts in field of ECVET during the entire project lifetime, ensuring quality and professionalism at the material development stage.

- Practical Remarks for the Appliance of Courses have been elaborated on the basis of the assessment reports from the pilot courses and recommendations of the pedagogical partner UBZ.

## 4. Partnerships

### *Added value of the transnational character of the partnership:*

Partners from six different countries, having quite diverse backgrounds and levels of expertise and experience took part in the ESTO-project. Despite the partnership diversity, commonality is high around topics of ecology, the environment, nature conservation and biodiversity. Moreover, some partners participated in the “Variety means life” project, where some became acquainted. So, in spite of the differences in profiles and expertise, this common ground is recognised strongly among the partners and provides for a good team spirit and strong alignment around the purpose of developing the traditional orchard curriculum.

For partners the diversity also had the added value that they were exposed to other contexts and experts, which was enriching and allowed them to work on materials that were going to be applied in the European context.

The large international network of project partners and their regional networks as well as the interdisciplinary approach is allowing compensating deficits caused by the loss of knowledge, skills and tradition in traditional orchard management.

An international approach in the curriculum based on the ECVET-standards is an important need regarding the open labour market within Europe. Exchange of European-wide concepts of cultivating and using traditional orchards and their management and learning together about different European work habits and approaches contributed to better common understanding in a European context.

Joint project cooperation contributed to building up and strengthening the partnerships for the future. Some partnership members started together designing and developing common project follow-up actions.

### *Experience of working together:*

The cooperation among the project team members, regarding perceptions and understandings, project objectives, key concepts, roles and responsibilities, started with differing and sometimes unclear expectations. The cooperation was also complicated by changes in the partnership (e.g. withdrawals of partners), especially in the starting project phase. The majority of these problems could be clarified and harmonized. Clear and regular communication and personal contact were recognized as the most important measures to avoid risks in the partner cooperation and smooth project implementation.

The group showed a high level of unity on the curriculum development process and emphasized commonalities instead of differences between different countries/participant organisations. This contributed greatly to good team spirit.

The partners developed a strong commitment and a unified understanding of the project, its objectives and approach. Focus groups were an essential and functional component and allowed expert exchange and delivery of quality products in the project process. The interdisciplinary approach was best expressed in the focus groups, which were formed around the three main topics of the curriculum. These working groups were a good mixture of levels of expertise, countries and partner types. They provided a place to exchange with and learn from each other. They also provided a setting for the decision making process,

regarding the key topics that are required in all participating countries. They hence ensured that the development of the curriculum is compatible with the broad European context. As the chemistry in the partnership can be considered as right, the mixture between experts from universities, research institutions, vocational schools, practitioners and NGO's worked out well. Also cultural differences between partners were not considered as complicating. Nevertheless, the diversity of partners made it complicated at times to agree on a common decisions e.g. to select the most suitable topic for the curriculum, as contexts are different as well as the individual interests of persons and/or organizations. Also the ability to speak and write in English varied among the partners. This led to different levels of engagement, which is expressed in the meetings and also in overall project communication and delivery of inputs.

## 5. Plans for the Future

The Competence Centres (GLT/DE, OIK/AT, SIE/PL, CUB/HU, SOL/FR and BLO/DK) established during the project will serve as contact points for any requests concerning ESTO. They will disseminate project relevant information and will also ensure exchange within the network of experts and institutions in each country. Thus the Competence Centres will ensure sustainability of project results via:

- Providing the ESTO curriculum and other project results and supporting their implementation in practice
- Providing general information about traditional orcharding and related topics and further relevant contacts and information about ESTO project, its development and outcomes
- Maintaining expert- and stakeholder networks for supporting the curriculum implementation on national levels and linking stakeholders from different sectors related to traditional orchards the agriculture, environment, social, education, political sectors etc.
- Maintaining project web-site beyond the project
- Searching possibilities for the projects' follow-up actions

The ESTO-website will be maintained by project partners (at least 3 years) also beyond the project and later transformed i.e. as a platform for the curriculum and other supportive project results (e.g. material collection, teaching materials, expert texts). The web-site should be further used as an exchange instrument - a kind of meta-platform for exchange on traditional orchards on an international level for the future project follow-up activities and projects. The ESTO-facebook profile as a discussion and exchange platform for interested public will be maintained by competence centres also beyond the project.

At events connected with the traditional orchard topics, the curriculum will be presented and offered by project partners to interested users also beyond the project duration. For this purpose the “ESTO-demo package” will be adjusted.

The project also intended to start the integration of the curriculum into formal and informal educational systems in partner countries. Partners approached educational institutions and the negotiations about the adjustment of the curriculum and its implementation (and use of the supportive project results like material collection or teaching material) in formal/informal education are ongoing. The collaboration and preparation of courses started with the Education and Research Institute for Horticulture Erfurt/DE, Vocational school Stadtroda/DE, University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt/DE, Wangeliner Garten/DE, Corvinus University/HU, Agricultural High School Le Robillard/FR, ZSCKR – Agricultural Vocational School/PL, Polish Academy of Sciences – Educational Center of Botanical Garden/PL etc.)

The network of project partners will continue and grow and the exchange will maintain. Prospective all partners declare to disseminate information about the curriculum and to contribute to the ESTO network also after the finalization of the project. There is a big interest expressed by project partners in supporting the “traditional orchard” movement in their countries and to continue the co-operation with each other. They are also willing to implement the curriculum into educational/training practice. Some consortium members especially (e.g. OIK, SIE, GLT, TÖH, UBZ) showed interest on common follow-up actions on transnational level and designed the follow-up project proposal in which the European dimension of the cooperation in field of traditional orchards was strengthened by including partners from new European countries e.g. Romania and Czech Republic. Follow-up

initiatives and projects should ensure further elaboration of the teaching materials based on the curriculum, to move forward the process of the accreditation of the curriculum, enhance the networking activities and exchange on traditional orchards in Europe and implementation of the curriculum and other project results in the training practice in Europe.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. This year coincided with the 2010 Biodiversity Target adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and by heads of states and governments at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Set up on these strategies the European Commission declared to reduce/stop the loss of biodiversity in the next decades. Therefore every country in Europe is obligated to develop National Biodiversity Strategies and several Actions Plans in order to ensure the biological state of the art. One point of these strategies is to ensure traditional genetic resources of agricultural crops. The project with its actions contributed to the United Nations Decade of Biodiversity declared in 2011. The main objective is to stop the decline of biodiversity. Therefore manifold efforts in knowledge and experience transfer, education and public relations on international and national level are necessary **\*\***(United Nations, 2011). Thus the ESTO project should help to communicate the social, cultural and ecological value of this ecosystem and contribute to maintaining of traditional orchards for the next generations. Furthermore, in most European countries traditional orchards are HNV-Areas (High-Nature-Value) with a very high level of biodiversity and thus need to be protected.

The ESTO project and its activities and results support also the following two principles of the Common Agriculture Policy CAP 2014-2020. The two (of four) basic principles of the new agricultural policy /CAP Reform 2014-2020/ are: 1) multi-functionality that rewards farmers for the range of services they provide in meeting the expectations of consumers and wider society, including the preservation of the rural heritage, while emphasising the creation of alternative sources of income and 2) multi-sectoral approach that seeks to develop the rural economy by creating new sources of income and employment, by developing rural services and conserving the countryside and the rural heritage (traditional orchards are a part of this heritage).

The ESTO-project supports stated international policies with two specific actions:

- Development of the curriculum and supportive materials that teach/train how to manage these HNV-Areas by cultivating and using them in a proper way
- Teaching/training about how to keep old and endangered fruit varieties for future generations.

**\*\*** United Nations 2015: <http://www.cbd.int/2011-2020/>

