UEAA STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: 21 September 2026
Time: 11:45 – 14:00
Venue: Hall "Academician", Academy of Sciences of Albania, Shëtitorja Murat Toptani 32, 1000 Tiranë, Albania
Event Format: Hybrid (In-person and online via Zoom)
Chair: Prof. Ioan Jelev (President of UEAA 2024–2026, Romania)
Co-Chair: Prof. Nazim S. Gruda (Academy of Sciences of Albania; Vice-President of UEAA)

Participants & Attendance

Present In-Person:

- **Ioan Jelev** — President of UEAA (2024–2026), Romania
- **Florin Stănică** — President of the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences "Gheorghe Ionescu-Șișești", Romania
- **Michel Duclos** — Académie d'Agriculture de France, France
- **Simone Orlandini** — Vice-President of Accademia dei Georgofili, Italy
- **Stefan Gandev** — President, Agricultural Academy, Bulgaria
- **Kerstin Niblaeus** — Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, Sweden; Past President of UEAA (2012–2014)
- **Helena Jonsson** — Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, Sweden
- **Fejzulla Krasniqi** — Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo
- **Enver Hamiti** — Secretary of the Section for Natural Sciences, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo
- **Nazim S. Gruda** — Academy of Sciences of Albania

Present Online via Zoom:

- **Michel Thibier** — Académie d'Agriculture de France, France; Past President of UEAA (2016–2018)
- **Baiba Rivža** — President, Latvian Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Latvia; Past President of UEAA (2008–2010)
- **Juan Reca Cardona** — Andalusian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Spain
- **Christos Olimpios** — Greek Agricultural Academy, Greece
- **Elena Horska** — Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia

Meeting Proceedings

1. Approval of the Agenda

- **Discussion:** The President, Ioan Jelev, welcomed all participants—with special recognition of those joining online—and presented the meeting agenda.
- **Decision:** The agenda was formally and unanimously approved by the Steering Committee.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- **Discussion:** The draft minutes from the June Steering Committee meeting had been disseminated to members one month prior. The President confirmed that comments received from Michel Thibier were fully integrated into the draft. The floor was opened for final comments from both in-person and online participants. Hearing none, the Committee approved the minutes.
- **Decision:** The minutes of the June Steering Committee meeting were officially approved.

3. Consultations Regarding Confirmations and/or Proposals for New Observers and Full Members

- **Charter Restrictions & Senior Members:**
  The President briefed the Committee on a preliminary online consultation held a few days prior between Michel Thibier, Simone Orlandini, Nazim S. Gruda, and himself. The focus was a structural challenge within the UEAA Charter: Clause **C1** mandates that one-third of the members must be renewed every two years (with the possibility of re-election), while Clause **C3** explicitly limits consecutive tenure to a maximum of six consecutive years. This six-year limit creates a practical barrier. While the UEAA strongly encourages new national academics (e.g., from Andalusia, Greece, and Portugal) to join as observers to build engagement, the network heavily relies on the experience, dedication, and high-level structural contributions of senior members.
- **Proposed Solution:**
  To maintain long-term organizational stability and expertise, the leadership recommended proposing to the General Assembly the deletion or amendment of the six-year term limit (Clause C3), which dates back to the original charter from 2000. While the final decision rests with the General Assembly, the Steering Committee's endorsement is required first.
- **Additional Structural Context (Nazim S. Gruda):**
  Vice President Nazim S. Gruda clarified that of the twelve total seats, three are strictly designated for leadership (President, Vice-President, Past President), leaving nine seats vacant. He reminded the committee that the "Observer" status—introduced by the Georgian Presidency in 2020—allows representatives from recently joined academies to participate actively without voting rights, serving as an excellent developmental step. He strongly advocated for keeping highly valuable senior contributors like, e.g., Kerstin and others, on the committee and supported bringing the proposal to delay or strike the six-year limit to the General Assembly to ensure full compliance with a modernized charter framework.
- **Introduction and Statements from Guests & New Members:**
  The Committee formally welcomed the international delegates, who shared updates from their respective institutions:
    - **Prof. Christos Olimpios** *(President of the Greek Agricultural Academy)*: Expressed great honor in attending the 13th UEAA General Assembly. He noted that while the Greek Academy was highly active during the initial founding years of the Union, it had unfortunately fallen inactive recently. Having been elected President of the Greek Academy just two months ago, he warmly welcomed the invitation from Prof. Gruda to reactivate their membership, emphasizing that national academies must maintain strong transnational connections to co-develop European agricultural strategy.
    - **Prof. Juan Reca Cardona** *(Andalusian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Spain)*: Provided additional insights regarding the active commitment and scientific focus of

the Andalusian Academy. He expressed enthusiasm for deeper structural integration within the UEAA, reinforcing their willingness to collaborate closely on joint initiatives and regional agricultural challenges.

    - **Delegation of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo**: Vice-President Fejzulla Krasniqi and Secretary Enver Hamiti expressed their gratitude for the invitation to participate as esteemed guests, reaffirming their dedication to regional scientific exchange and future joint milestones.

- **Decision / Next Steps:** The Steering Committee agreed to advance a formal proposal to the General Assembly to remove or modify the six-year consecutive term limit clause (C3). This ensures organizational continuity, modernizes governance, and harmonizes the active involvement of both seasoned senior members and newly incoming observers.

4. Brief Information on the General Assembly and Symposium Meetings in Albania

- **Rapporteur:** Prof. Nazim S. Gruda
- **Discussion:** The Co-Chair, Prof. Nazim S. Gruda, opened the floor and noted that the Scientific Symposium in Tirana had already been successfully completed. He announced that the next scheduled event would be the 13th UEAA General Assembly (Session 3), which would follow its own specific agenda. He expressed his hope for increased online participation during the upcoming Assembly sessions.
- **Status:** The update on the successful completion of the symposium and the upcoming General Assembly sessions was noted by the Steering Committee.

5. Information on UEAA Activities During the Period June–September 2026

- **Rapporteur:** Prof. Ioan Jelev
- **Discussion Summary:** The President presented a comprehensive report on the core activities, scientific publications, and web updates carried out by the UEAA leadership and member academies between June and September 2026:
    - **Steering Committee Meeting in Bucharest:** A core meeting of the UEAA Steering Committee took place online on 11 June 2026.
    - **EU Regulation on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs):** Following the European Parliament's decision on 17 June 2026, the UEAA drafted an official statement welcoming the adoption of the EU regulation. It was published on the website on 18 June 2026 and disseminated to all Steering Committee members.
    - **UEAA Best Abstract Scientific Competition 2025–2026:** Initiated by the Georgian Presidency from Gurram Aleksidze and taken over by Michel Duclos, an abstract e-book compiling all submissions for the competition was prepared by the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences (ASAS) of Romania and posted on the UEAA website. Prof. Dr. Michel Duclos mentioned that, in the ongoing competition, the academies react at the end.
    - **Symposium Proceedings Volume:** The published volume titled *"New Research Techniques and the Agricultural Progress"* (Proceedings of the International Scientific Symposium associated with the first UEAA General Assembly, Bucharest, 10–11 October 2024), edited by Cipriana and Ioan, was presented. The President, Prof. Jelev,

distributed physical copies to in-person attendees and committed to mailing copies to online participants who contributed papers.

- **UEAA Newsletters:** Four scientific newsletters were highlighted:
    1. *Current Issue in Poultry Sciences and Application to the French Poultry Sector* – prepared by Michel Duclos.
    2. *Recent Developments in Cropping Systems and the Use of Cover Crops* – prepared by Simone Orlandini, Marco Napoli, and Antonio Pescatore.
    3. *Current Issue of Agriculture in Slovakia* – prepared with the assistance of Past President Elena Horska.
    4. *Measures to Increase the Resilience of Agricultural Farms with Decline in Fertility* – prepared by Prof. Roxana Vidigan (former Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, USAMV Cluj-Napoca) on behalf of ASAS "Gheorghe Ionescu-Șișești", Romania. The President confirmed receipt of the final presentation via email on the day of the meeting.
    5. *Simone suggested to include the name of Academy by the newsletter name to increase the visibility*.
- **Website and Heritage Updates:** The historical section of the UEAA website was updated to transition from a list of past presidential countries to include the full names, tenures, and institutional backgrounds of past presidents and vice-presidents. A new photo gallery feature was added. The leadership noted that clicking on these photos should ideally link to brief CVs of these distinguished personalities in the future. Nazim suggested to do this for all members of the Steering Committee.
- **Preparation for the 13th General Assembly:** Under the close coordination of Vice-President Nazim S. Gruda and the Steering Committee, the comprehensive program, agendas, and annexes for the meetings in Tirana were finalized. The associated scientific symposium, titled *"Sustainable European Agriculture and Balanced Management of Natural Resources"*, was deemed a significant success.
- **Reporting & Nominations:** Support documentation and draft reports covering UEAA activities from October 2024 to September 2026 were finalized. Furthermore, a brief overview of the scientific work of Academician Nazim S. Gruda was compiled in support of his formal nomination for the upcoming term as UEAA President.

- **Status:** The activity report was formally accepted, and the Committee commended the diverse scientific output and structural progress achieved during the intersession period.

6. Organizational Matters, Strategy Discussion & Any Other Business (AOB)

- **Presentation of the Action Plan & Strategy:**
    - **Prof. Nazim S. Gruda** presented a brief overview of the proposed **UEAA Action Plan for 2026–2028** (prepared in collaboration with Simone Orlandini) alongside a new **long-term Strategy for the next 4–5 years**. This roadmap is designed to guide the upcoming presidency, focus on expanding membership, and maintain the political and scientific momentum of the Union.
- **Discussion & Feedback:**

- **Kerstin Niblaeus** highly praised the newly presented action plan and long-term strategy. She emphasized that for the successful implementation of such an ambitious 4–5 years strategy, **prioritization** and **time management** are two critical factors. She noted that the committee must clearly define which tasks to focus on first and realistically assess the timeframe required to achieve impactful results, especially when dealing with European institutions.
- Following the report, Kerstin also warmly thanked Prof. Ioan Jelev and the Romanian Academy for an outstanding, highly supportive presidency over the past two years, noting that Jelev and Gruda worked seamlessly as a "dynamic duo."
- **Michel Thibier** echoed these sentiments online, expressing his full agreement and praising the strong strategic foundation laid for the incoming presidency.
- **President Ioan Jelev** highlighted that representatives from **19 academies** were present (either physically or online) during the symposium. He reminded the Committee of Michel Thibier's long-standing goal to continuously attract new members. Jelev stressed the need to support newly joined or previously inactive academies (welcoming the delegates from Spain, Greece, and Kosovo again) and suggested further technical website enhancements to boost the Union's visibility and outreach.
- **Strategic EU Engagement:** Kerstin Niblaeus reviewed the UEAA's long-term EU-related strategy, emphasizing that persistence is key in Brussels. She highlighted three core areas of success:
    1. **New Genomic Techniques (NGTs):** A multi-year, highly successful effort that established UEAA's visibility.
    2. **Agricultural Policy:** Past high-level inputs to the EU Agricultural Commissioner and timely statements regarding the upcoming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) framework.
    3. **Forestry Legislation:** Strategic statements submitted at critical legislative junctures.
       She concluded that the UEAA should continue this proactive monitoring, acting promptly and in a timely manner, while praising Nazim Gruda for maintaining strict discipline in the regular publication of the UEAA newsletters.

- **Scheduling of the next Steering Committee meeting:**
  The Committee agreed to schedule the next Steering Committee meeting immediately after the main UEAA General Assembly session.

Minutes: UEAA Steering Committee Meeting
Location: Hall of Academicians, Tirana | Time: 16:30–17:00

- **Closing Session:** The first meeting of the newly elected UEAA Steering Committee was held, attended exclusively by the SC members present in Tirana (see above).
- **Assembly Wrap-up:** The final conclusions and decisions of the General Assembly were presented to the attending members. During the meeting, the Steering Committee focused on addressing immediate operational rollouts and finalizing the leadership transition.

- **Next Meeting:** Scheduled to take place in December 2026.