

4.6 = FLORINTESA, A PROGRAM AGREEMENT FOR THE ITALIAN BOTANICAL GARDENS AND THE NATIONAL FLORISTIC HERITAGE

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OUR CLAIM: *"The Botanical Gardens are, par excellence, responsible for carrying out the important mission of the conservation of our flora, through specific actions on live plants and their seeds, along with education and outreach aimed at spreading a new environmental culture, more careful and respectful of the essential needs of life, more sensible to the aesthetic and scientific value of the national flora"*

To overcome the isolation and strengthen their role in our society, the University Botanical Gardens have become promoters of national and European consortiums: examples are the working group "Botanical and Historic Gardens" of the Italian Botanical Society (1) and, on the global level, the Botanic Garden Conservation International (2).

Aims and tasks of the Botanical Gardens in the second millennium have been the topic of a thorough debate, with specific references to the provisions of the United Nations Programme for a sustainable development. In particular, the Action Plan for Botanic Gardens in the European Union (3) identifies the following major assets: scientific research, conservation of plant diversity, public advisory services on it, environmental education related to it. To pursue these objectives, initiatives are constantly needed to enhance the visibility of the institutions involved and help them to perform their functions. In this context was born FLORINTESA.

FLORINTESA is a program agreement, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) with identification code ACPR12_00201, involving as partners ENEA, Plinianum Forum and the Italian Botanical Society, which contributes to bridge the still existing gap between the scientific research, the technical action of conservation and preservation of plant diversity and the public awareness on such themes.

The main objectives of the FLORINTESA can be summarized as follows:

- Establishing an institutional network service for information and dissemination on the flora of Italy, with reference to the role of Botanical Gardens as centers of research and knowledge on the national flora, as well as on the assessment and conservation of its rarest species,;
- Disseminating and publicizing the activities of the University Botanical Gardens for the flora of Italy;
- Increasing the visibility of the Italian Botanical Society and of its working group on "Botanical and Historic Gardens";
- Disseminating the achievements and helpful assistance offered by the Botanical Gardens in the implementation of the National Strategy for Biodiversity (4) and the Natura 2000 Network (5), through initiatives such as the Italian Germplasm Banks Network (6), the International Foundation pro Herbario Mediterraneo (7), the pan-Mediterranean Genmeda network (8), the Horti Mediterranei Educational Network (9).

The flora of Italy will be the leitmotif of the actions envisaged in FLORINTESA, highlighting the unique role of the University Botanical Gardens and their respective institutions as "engines of knowledge" on the national flora heritage, as "engines of awareness" on the important issue of conservation of flora and habitats, as "engines of passion" for the grateful acknowledgement of the role of plants as primary producers not only of resources in the natural ecosystems, but also of inspiring beauty in the human cultures.

The kick-off meeting, open to all members of the Italian Botanical Society, will take place in Rome, at the Auditorium of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, on October 24, 2014.

1) <http://www.ortobotanicoitalia.it>

2) <http://www.bgci.org>

3) <http://www.botanicgardens.eu/index.html>

4) <http://www.minambiente.it/pagina/strategia-nazionale-la-biodiversita>

5) <http://www.minambiente.it/pagina/rete-natura-2000>

6) <http://www.reteribes.it>

7) <http://unipa.it/herbmed/foundation.html>

8) <http://www.genmeda.org/it/home.php>

9) <http://www.hortimediterranei.it/index.php>

