

Dear *CEUREG* Forum Participants,

Unfortunately I cannot attend the XXIII. *CEUREG* meeting, so - unknown to most of you - allow me to greet you in this letter.

It is a great pleasure for me that my initiative decades ago is not only being alive after 25 years, but it is working well for us even today.

The 1990s were really exciting not only politically but also professionally. This was a time when, like other surrounding countries, we were more and more involved in a new way in the work of international organizations (FAO / WHO / UNEP, EPPO, OECD). Of course, the most decisive step for us was the process of preparing for accession to the European Union, and then the accession itself and the balancing our opportunities and membership tasks.

I can't say this job was easy. We had to adapt to a new environment, a new style of work, a foreign language. The realization that the different regions have special interests came quickly enough. It also became clear that somehow it had to be voiced, because that should be an integral part of the community interest. A community can work well if its members express their views, take a stand, and decide on their common cause.

It was from this idea that the *CEUREG* Forum was founded with the involvement of the Central and Eastern European countries. The acronym *CEUREG* can be interpreted flexibly: Forum of **C**entral and **E**astern European Pesticide **R**egistration Authorities. In this way we thought the Central European countries a bridge between the EU and the Eastern European countries. Then everything has changed. With the original idea in mind, we focused on the EU's tasks in the region, so we defined *CEUREG* as a forum for **C**entral **E**uropean **R**egistration Authorities. Of course, this is already a game of words, but the point is to act as a forum for professional reconciliation in a region of similar interest.

The establishment of the *CEUREG* Forum was supported by the leaders of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and its Plant Protection Department. They also supported the fact that the Forum would meet regularly in Budapest, which was a great pleasure (I would say proud) for me. In response to the Ministry's proposal, we received positive feedback from almost all countries.

The foundation was not difficult, but the success was not up to us. This required the unselfish support of the Poles (Edward Czaplicki, Stanislaw Stobiecki), the Czechs (Ivan Dostal, Josef Švaříček), the Slovaks (Josef Kotleba). Special thanks go to Josef Švaříček, who is still the motor for operation of the Forum. They are all founders of *CEUREG*, together with professionals of countries took part on the very first Forum. Perhaps all professionals were led by similar considerations to us, and they also believed that we could achieve less alone, together we could be more successful for the benefit of a narrower and wider region.

Allow me to wish this and the future (hopefully many) *CEUREG* Forum useful and fruitful discussions.

With sincere appreciation

Zoltán Ocskó

Budapest, 9 October 2019.

