

# Strengthening Seed Conservation: A Technical Visit to IPK Germany

In 2025, a scientific officer from the Research and Advisory Services Directorate carried out a technical visit to the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) in Gatersleben, Germany. The visit took place under the ERASMUS+ programme and focused on strengthening Malta's knowledge and capacity in seed conservation and genebank management

## Learning from a Leading European Genebank

IPK hosts one of Europe's most advanced genebanks, conserving over 150,000 plant samples from around the world. During the visit, the Maltese delegate job-shadowed IPK scientists to gain hands-on experience in daily genebank operations and best practices.

Activities covered the full journey of seeds in a genebank — from regeneration in fields and greenhouses, to harvesting, cleaning, storage and quality testing. Special attention was given to cereals, vegetables, legumes, medicinal plants and crop wild relatives.

## Modern Tools and Digital Systems

The visit also introduced modern technologies used at IPK. These included cryopreservation techniques for long-term seed storage, digital imaging systems to analyse seed quality, and automated tools that rapidly measure plant traits. Scientists demonstrated how all this information is recorded using advanced databases that ensure full traceability of plant material.

Quality management was another key topic, with discussions on standard operating procedures and international guidelines that help maintain high conservation standards.

## Supporting Malta's National Genebank

This technical exchange provided valuable knowledge that will directly support the development of Malta's National Genebank. It also strengthened cooperation between Malta and IPK, opening the door to future collaboration and knowledge sharing.

By learning from established European partners, Malta is taking important steps to safeguard plant genetic diversity for agriculture and future generations.



# RASD's ERASMUS+ Gene Bank Exchange



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