



Pôle: geapsi

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Letter of recommendation : Dr. Petr Smykal

It is a pleasure to provide a letter supporting Petr Smykal's application for a full professorship at the University of Olomouc. I have known Petr for more than 15 years and during that time we have interacted in the area of legume genetics projects, chiefly in the framework of the EU projects « Grain Legumes Integrated Project » (GLIP) and LEGATO. I have always found Petr to be outgoing, enthusiastic and hardworking, with an enviable capacity to keep up with a fast-moving scientific landscape. He has established collaborations with several leading research teams across the world and made significant contributions to the field of legume research in recent years.

He is a high-profile member of the legume research community, is well integrated, and makes an important contribution to the organisation and animation of international events. He is always an active participant and can be relied upon to pose thought-provoking questions and contribute mature reflections. I am sure that his gifts of communication, and his ability to keep abreast of the field are major factors contributing to the success of his teaching duties and his supervision of students.

Petr's research activity, initiated during his Ph.D. thesis at the Charles University of Prague, started with studies on androgenesis in oilseed rape. He made important contributions in characterizing the some of the main actors including HSP proteins related to heat-shock-induced androgenesis. In 1999 he took up a research position at the ETH in Zurich, Switzerland, and in 2001 was recruited as a researcher at the Institut for Biology III at the University of Freiburg, D.



He has also profited from the tenure of several short-term fellowships to pursue his research, at Cordoba in Spain, in the UK (Dundee), and Finland (Helsinki). Most recently he was awarded a Fullbright scholarship and spent 6 months at the University of Vermont (USA).

Returning to the Czech Republic in 2004, he was recruited by Agritec, where he worked for 7 years on diverse biotechnology projects related to the company's interests. By this time, he had already started to work on pea genetics, his main interest since then. This research theme he has pursued during the tenure of an assistant and subsequently an associate professorship in Botany at the University of Olomouc.

Petr has brought his skills in plant genetics to bear on the trait of seed dormancy in legumes, particularly pea and the model legume *Medicago truncatula*. Dormancy is important from the point of view of seed germinative quality, and also from an evolutionary perspective; dormancy allows the seed to germinate only at an environmentally appropriate window. In terms of population ecology, the distribution of dormancy is related to the climate of the region of origin. Seed dormancy has also been selected during domestication of pea and other crop plants. This relationship has led Petr recently to interest himself in the domestication of various orphan crops. His research has involved a large number of collaborations both nationally and internationally. These collaborations have been fruitful and led to an impressive list of publications with an excellent h-index of 21 for a young researcher, many of which are in leading journals in plant sciences. This productivity is well above average for a European scientist at his stage of career, and reflects an exceptional engagement and energy.

Considering all of the above-mentioned elements, I unreservedly recommend Petr Smykal for appointment as a full Professor of the University of Olomouc.

Prof. Richard Thompson

Research Director, INRAE)