The Bulgarian research project “PlantaSYST” is among the most successful European initiatives contributing to a competitive and smart Europe

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Citizens can now vote for the nominated Bulgarian project for the “Public Choice Award” in the prestigious competition REGIOSTARS Awards 2025

The PlantaSYST project, within which the Centre of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology (CPSBB) was established in Plovdiv, is the only Bulgarian project declared a finalist in the “Competitive and Smart Europe” category of the prestigious international competition REGIOSTARS Awards 2025. The initiative is organized annually by the European Commission and recognizes the most innovative and regionally significant projects in Europe, funded through the EC's Cohesion Policy.

The winners in a total of five categories of the competition will be selected by an independent jury composed of leading academic experts. In addition to the expert jury, the general public now also has the opportunity to vote - **from September 2 to October 15, 2025, online voting is open on the official website of the competition , where citizens can support their favourite for the special „Public Choice Award“.**

“It is important to emphasize that the establishment of the Centre for Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology received support at all territorial levels within the European Union. At the European level, PlantaSYST prevailed in strong competition and won funding under the Teaming call of the „Horizon Europe“ programme. At the national level, the project was supported by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Executive Agency „Education Programme“, and at the local level – by Plovdiv Municipality, which provided land for its construction.



Prof. Tsanko Gechev and Ivan Popov

Therefore, I can confidently state that CPSBB plays an important role in the development of the city of Plovdiv, the South Central region, Bulgaria, as well as within the European Research Area. Located in the heart of Bulgarian agriculture, CPSBB develops strategically important research in the context of climate change, drought, and global uncertainty”, noted Ivan Popov, Executive Director of the Executive Agency „Education Programme“.

“We call on citizens to support this significant research project for our country with their vote, to show all of Europe that Bulgaria stands behind its scientific potential and its undeniable contribution to the sustainable future of the continent. This nomination is a clear sign of Bulgaria's growing scientific capacity and affirms its national image as a country capable of implementing innovative, highly effective, sustainable and competitive projects at a global level. This is a recognition that highlights the successful implementation of the EU's cohesion policy in our country, demonstrates the potential for transforming scientific developments into practical solutions with economic and social impact, and positions Bulgaria as a reliable partner in building a smart and innovative Europe”, emphasizes Prof. Tsanko Gechev, project coordinator and director of CPSBB.

Voting for the Bulgarian PlantaSYST project is available at the following link:

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/projects/regio-stars-awards_en#inline-nav-1

About the PlantaSYST project and CPSBB:

The PlantaSYST project is the first Bulgarian scientific project selected for funding in 2015 under the EC's “Horizon 2020” programme. The establishment of CPSBB is co-financed under the Operational Programme „Science and Education for Smart Growth“. The sustainable development of the Centre for the new programme period until 2029 is supported by funds under the Programme “Science, Innovations and Digitalisation for Smart Transformation” 2021-2027, co-financed by the European Union.

The criteria by which the PlantaSYST project was selected among a record competition of 266 projects from all over Europe include the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Bulgaria, successful retention and attraction of talent, conducting research and development with real economic and environmental impact, synergy with scientific institutes worldwide, conducting educational and doctoral programmes, etc.



CPSBB is a Centre of Excellence equipped with modern infrastructure and providing opportunities for professional development for established researchers, young scientists, doctoral students and students. The Centre retains Bulgarian researchers in their homeland, attracts foreign specialists and increases Bulgaria's international contribution to global science through publications in prestigious journals and partnerships with institutes, universities and companies worldwide.

Over the past 10 years since its establishment, CPSBB has become one of the leading research institutes not only in Bulgaria but also in the region **with over 410 publications with medium and high impact factors, over 15 thousand citations, and the highest h-index among other scientific institutes in Bulgaria specializing in plant sciences.**

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The researchers at the Centre develop innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and human health - creation of new resistant varieties of economically important crops, priming technologies and biostimulants to increase crop tolerance to abiotic stress, development of organic products for longevity, photoprotection and obesity prevention, etc.