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1 **Receptor kinase LecRK-I.9 regulates cell wall remodelling and signalling during lateral**
2 **root formation in *Arabidopsis***

3

4 Kevin Bellande^{1†}, David Roujol¹, Josiane Chourré¹, Sophie Le Gall^{2,3}, Yves Martinez⁴, Alain
5 Jauneau⁴, Vincent Burlat¹, Elisabeth Jamet^{1*}, Hervé Canut^{1*}.

6

7 ¹ Laboratoire de Recherche en Sciences Végétales, Université de Toulouse, CNRS, UPS,
8 Toulouse INP, F-31320, Auzeville-Tolosane, France.

9 ²INRAE, UR1268 BIA, F-44300 Nantes, France.

10 ³INRAE, PROBE research infrastructure, BIBS facility, F-44300 Nantes, France.

11 ⁴Plateforme Imagerie FRAIB-TRI, CNRS, Université de Toulouse, UPS, F-31320, Auzeville-
12 Tolosane, France.

13

14 † Present address: Laboratory of Cell and Molecular Biology, Institute of Biology, University
15 of Neuchâtel, Rue Emile Argand 11, CH-2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

16

17 * To whom correspondence and lead contact should be addressed:

18 Elisabeth JAMET: elisabeth.jamet@univ-tlse3.fr

19 Hervé CANUT, email : herve.canut@proton.me

20

21

22 Email addresses:

23 Kevin BELLANDE: kevin.bellande@unine.ch

24 David ROUJOL: david.roujol@univ-tlse3.fr

25 Josiane CHOURRÉ: josiane.chourre@univ-tlse3.fr

26 Sophie LE GALL: sophie.le-gall@inrae.fr

27 Yves MARTINEZ: yves.martinez@cnrs.fr

28 Alain JAUNEAU: jauneaualain@orange.fr

29 Vincent BURLAT: vincent.burlat@univ-tlse3.fr

30 Elisabeth JAMET: elisabeth.jamet@univ-tlse3.fr

31 Hervé CANUT: herve.canut@proton.me

32

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51 **Highlight**

52 The lectin receptor kinase LecRK-I.9 regulates the molecular events leading to lateral root
53 formation in both the initiation and emergence processes in Arabidopsis through cell wall
54 remodelling enzymes and signalling peptides.

55

56 **Abstract**

57 Assembling and remodelling the cell wall is essential for plant development. Cell wall
58 dynamic is controlled by cell wall proteins and a variety of sensor and receptor systems.
59 LecRK-I.9, an *Arabidopsis thaliana* plasma membrane-localised lectin receptor kinase, was
60 previously shown to be involved in cell wall-plasma membrane contacts and to play roles in
61 plant-pathogen interactions, but so far, its role in development was unknown. *LecRK-I.9* is
62 transcribed at a high level in root tissues including the pericycle. Comparative transcript
63 profiling of a loss-of-function mutant vs wild type identifies LecRK-I.9 as a regulator of cell
64 wall metabolism. Consistently, *lecrk-I.9* mutants display an increased pectin
65 methylesterification level correlated with decreased pectin methylesterase and increased
66 polygalacturonase activities. Also, LecRK-I.9 impacts lateral root development through the
67 regulation of genes encoding (i) cell wall remodelling proteins during early events of lateral
68 root initiation, and (ii) cell wall signalling peptides (CLE2, CLE4) repressing lateral root
69 emergence and growth. Besides, low nitrate reduces *LecRK-I.9* expression in pericycle and
70 interferes with its regulatory network: however, the control of *CLE2* and *CLE4* expression is
71 maintained. Altogether, the results show that LecRK-I.9 is a key player in a signalling
72 network regulating both pre-branch site formation and lateral root emergence.

73

74 **Keywords:** *Arabidopsis thaliana*, cell wall, cell wall remodelling protein, lateral root, lectin
75 receptor kinase, signalling peptide.

76 **Introduction**

77 As cells grow and differentiate, CWs are modified in their biochemical composition
78 and structure to ensure cell functions, *i.e.* maintain cell integrity, allow cell-to-cell
79 communication, adjust cell-to-cell adhesion, and support cell division and growth. Hence, CW
80 dynamics largely control tissue morphology and plant development (Wolf *et al.*, 2012).

81 Current models for the CW structure of growing cells consist of a highly hydrated matrix
82 based on a scaffold of cellulose microfibrils that are cross-linked by branched hemicelluloses,
83 such as xyloglucans (XGs), and embedded in pectins, such as homogalacturonan (HG) and
84 rhamnogalacturonans I and II (RG-I and RG-II). Crosslinks between CW polysaccharides are
85 either non-covalent (*e.g.* cellulose chains hydrogen-bonded together to form microfibrils, XGs
86 hydrogen-bond to microfibrils, HG cross-linked by Ca²⁺ bridges) or covalent (*e.g.* pairs of
87 RG-II by borate-diester bonds) (Fry, 2004; Sanhueza *et al.*, 2022). It has also been proposed
88 that the XGs-cellulose interactions mainly occur at the level of biomechanical hot spots
89 (Cosgrove, 2016). The strength of these interactions determines the mechanical properties of
90 the CW, often referred to as CW extensibility, and its capacity to balance the force exerted by
91 the turgor pressure, which is the motive force for growth (Wolf *et al.*, 2012). Interestingly, it
92 was recently shown that the CW contains pectin nanofilaments that possess an intrinsic
93 expansion capacity able to drive morphogenesis without turgor pressure (Haas *et al.*, 2020).
94 Due to the complexity of the CW architecture, CW dynamics relies on many parameters such
95 as the deposition of new CW components (Lampugnani *et al.*, 2018), the remodelling of the
96 existing structures which is achieved through the activity of various CW remodelling proteins
97 (Cosgrove, 2005), the hydration status (Wolf *et al.*, 2012), or the availability of calcium and
98 boron ions (Lampport *et al.*, 2018; Voxeur & Fry, 2014). A strict coordination of these
99 processes is required, including biosynthesis and secretion of the polysaccharides and/or the

100 remodelling enzymes, as well as communication between cells. Then, CW dynamics must be
101 tightly regulated for proper morphogenesis at cellular and tissue levels (Boudon *et al.*, 2015).

102 The number of lateral roots (LRs) is considered a major agronomic trait because it directly
103 influences crop yield (Zhu *et al.*, 2011). In *Arabidopsis thaliana*, LRs grow from competent
104 xylem-pole pericycle (XPP) cells, a single-cell layer that resides deep within the primary root.
105 LR development follows a sequence of five main steps, (1) pre-branch site formation, (2)
106 initiation, (3) morphogenesis, (4) emergence and (5) growth (Banda *et al.*, 2019). LRs grow
107 through the overlying endodermal, cortical and epidermal cell layers thus requiring extensive
108 CW remodelling (Vermeer *et al.*, 2014). Genes encoding CW remodelling proteins are locally
109 induced at the earliest (Wachsman *et al.*, 2020; Ramakrishna *et al.*, 2019) and later steps
110 (Swarup *et al.*, 2008). In particular, genes encoding CW enzymes acting on HG are spatially
111 and temporarily induced at the pre-branch sites: these enzymes are probably responsible for
112 the differential distribution of esterified and de-esterified pectins at the sites of LR primordia
113 (LRP) initiation (Wachsman *et al.*, 2020). It is assumed that such a differential distribution
114 could reduce cell adhesion of overlaying tissues, thus allowing LR emergence and, in
115 contrast, stiffening the opposite tissues to avoid any disruption. The CW structures also need
116 to be adapted during the swelling of the founder cells and the shrinking of the adjacent
117 endodermal cells that are required to form LRPs (Vermeer *et al.*, 2014; Ramakrishna *et al.*,
118 2019).

119 LR development can only be achieved by the interconnection of communication networks.
120 Until recently, much of the focus has been put on the phytohormone auxin and reactive
121 oxygen species (ROS), but accumulated evidence in *A. thaliana* indicates that pairs of CW
122 signalling peptides and their receptors are also involved in the control of LR development
123 (Jourquin *et al.*, 2020; Ou *et al.*, 2021). At each developmental phase, auxin plays an
124 important role (Du & Scheres, 2018). For instance, an auxin source originating from the

125 primary root cap cells stimulates the formation of the LR pre-branch sites in XPP cells (Xuan
126 *et al.*, 2015). Besides, ROS have a strong impact on CW properties. They can be produced by
127 RESPIRATORY BURST OXIDASE HOMOLOG (RBOH) plasma membrane proteins and
128 CW class III peroxidases (CIII Prxs) through the dual hydroxylic and peroxidative cycles
129 leading to either CW loosening or CW stiffening (Francoz *et al.*, 2015). Both *RBOH* and *CIII*
130 *Prx* genes appear to regulate ROS production in the overlaying tissue to facilitate LR
131 emergence (Manzano *et al.*, 2014; Orman-Ligeza *et al.*, 2016).

132 THESEUS 1 (THE1), a plasma membrane receptor-like kinase (RLK) with an extracellular
133 malectin domain, and its ligand RAPID ALKALINIZATION FACTOR 34 (RALF 34)
134 regulate LR initiation by fine-tuning the asymmetric divisions of the founder cells (Murphy *et al.*,
135 2016; Gonneau *et al.*, 2018). The signalling module RALF34/THE1 also seems to depend
136 on FERONIA (FER) another RLK with an extracellular malectin domain that is known to
137 perceive other RALF peptides (Gonneau *et al.*, 2018). Together with FER, THE1 is thought to
138 be part of a surveillance system of the CW (Wolf & Höfte, 2014). A second signalling module
139 example is provided by the INFLORESCENCE DEFICIENT IN ABSCISSION (IDA) CW
140 peptide and its receptors HAESA (HAE) and HAESA-LIKE2 (HSL2), both belonging to the
141 leucine-reach repeat (LRR)-RLK family. This module can promote cell separation in the
142 tissues overlaying the LR primordium by up-regulating genes encoding CW remodelling
143 proteins (Kumpf *et al.*, 2013). Indeed, *IDA*, *HAE* and *HSL2* are expressed in the tissue layers
144 covering the LR primordium and are up-regulated by auxin (Kumpf *et al.*, 2013). A third
145 signalling module composed of CLAVATA3/ESR-RELATED PROTEINS (CLEs) and
146 CLAVATA1 (CLV1) LRR-RLK acts as a negative regulator of LR primordium growth and
147 elongation without affecting LR initiation (Araya *et al.*, 2014). *CLE2*, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are
148 repressed upon nitrogen deficiency (Ma *et al.*, 2020) suggesting that the CLE/CLV1 module
149 links the perception of environmental cues and LR development. Despite these notable

150 examples, however, a comprehensive list of the receptors involved in CW changes during
151 plant development is still missing.

152 LecRK-I.9, a Legume-type lectin receptor kinase of *A. thaliana*, has previously been
153 shown to mediate CW-plasma membrane contacts through protein-protein interactions
154 suggesting both a structural and a signalling role at the cell surface (Gouget *et al.*, 2006).
155 LecRK-I.9 also plays important roles in plant innate immunity suggesting that the proteins
156 maintaining CW-plasma membrane contacts also function in plant defence (Bouwmeester *et*
157 *al.*, 2011; Balagué *et al.*, 2017). While the ability of LecRK-I.9 to bind complex
158 carbohydrates is assumed, but not experimentally proven (Gouget *et al.*, 2006), LecRK-I.9
159 was identified as a receptor for extracellular ATP and alternatively named DORN1 (Choi *et*
160 *al.*, 2014). It is assumed that ATP is released during physical damage of cells as a danger
161 signal.

162 This study shows that LecRK-I.9 also controls LR development. Null mutants for *LecRK-*
163 *I.9* show alterations in the number of LRs and in their density, as well as in the
164 methylesterification of HG and the activities of CW remodelling enzymes. A transcript
165 abundance analysis, comparing a *lecrk-I.9-1* mutant and wild-type plants, revealed the de-
166 regulation of about 450 genes, one-third of which encoding CW-related proteins. Of particular
167 interest was a group of up-regulated genes in the mutant that encode CW remodelling
168 enzymes, but also a group of down-regulated genes that encode signalling peptides among
169 which *CLE2* and *CLE4*. We conclude that LecRK-I.9 is part of a signalling network
170 negatively regulating both pre-branch site formation and LR emergence and growth.

171

172 **Materials and methods**

173 **Plant materials and growth conditions**

174 All the experiments were performed using the *A. thaliana* ecotype Col-0 plants. Seeds of the
175 T-DNA insertion lines *lecrk-I.9-1* (SALK_042209) and *lecrk-I.9-2* (SALK_024581) (Balagué
176 *et al.*, 2017) were obtained from the Nottingham Arabidopsis Stock Centre. The *CaMV35S::*
177 *LecRK-I.9* overexpressor (*Ox-1*; *Ox-2*) and the *proLecRK-I.9::GUS* lines were previously
178 described (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2011; Balagué *et al.*, 2017).

179 Seeds (15 mg) were surface-sterilized with 1 mL 2% sodium hypochlorite for 20 min.
180 After five washes with sterile tap water, the seeds were placed in 250 mL Erlenmeyer flasks
181 containing 50 mL of a half Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium (20 mM KNO₃) (Sigma-
182 Aldrich M5519, St Louis, MO, USA) supplemented with 1% sucrose (w/v) at pH 5.7 (KOH).
183 The seeds were germinated and grown in flasks placed on a rotary shaker (130 rpm, New
184 Brunswick orbital shaker model G 10-21, Edison, NJ, USA) under a photoperiod of 16 h (75
185 $\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$)/8 h dark at 20°C for 7 days. Low-concentrated nitrate media were made using
186 half nitrogen-free MS salts (Sigma-Aldrich M0529) supplemented with 1.5 mM CaCl₂, 0.75
187 mM MgSO₄, 0.5 mM KH₂PO₄, 10 mM KCl, 0.5 mL/L organics (Sigma-Aldrich M3900),
188 either 1 mM or 0.1 mM KNO₃ and 1% sucrose (w/v) at pH 5.7 (KOH).

189 To obtain adventitious roots, seeds were sown on 1.2% (w/v) agar plates containing ½ MS
190 medium supplemented with 1% sucrose (w/v) at pH 5.7 (KOH). The seeds were germinated
191 and grown in the dark for 4 days. Etiolated seedlings were then transferred to new agar plates
192 containing an MS-based medium (see above) with 1 mM KNO₃. Etiolated seedlings were
193 lying flat on the solid medium and the plates were placed vertically under a photoperiod of 16
194 h (75 $\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$)/8 h dark at 25°C for 7 days.

195

196 **Generation of constructs**

197 All the constructs were generated using the gateway® cloning technology.

198 To make the *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9::tagRFP* construct (*LecRK-I.9: At5g60300*), a 1486
199 bp genomic DNA fragment upstream of the start codon of *LecRK-I.9* together with its coding
200 sequence was amplified by PCR. The same DNA fragment was used to complement *lecrk-I.9-*
201 *I* and *lecrk-I.9-2*.

202 To make the *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9Δkinase::tagRFP* construct, a 1486 bp genomic
203 DNA fragment upstream of the start codon of *LecRK-I.9* together with part of the coding
204 sequence of *LecRK-I.9* including the signal peptide, the Legume lectin domain, the
205 transmembrane domain and the arrest sequence, but omitting the kinase domain and the C-
206 term extension was amplified by PCR. This construct was used to create dominant negative
207 mutant lines.

208 To create the *proPME2::eGFP::GUS* reporter (*PME2: At1g53830*), the
209 *proCLE2::eGFP::GUS* reporter (*CLE2: At4g18510*) and the *proCLE4::eGFP::GUS* reporter
210 (*CLE4: At2g31081*), DNA fragments carrying 1562 bp, 1546 bp and 1556 bp genomic DNA
211 upstream of their respective start codons were amplified by PCR, respectively.

212 All the fragments were amplified by PCR from the *A. thaliana* Col-0 genomic DNA using
213 the AccuPrime™ *Taq* DNA Polymerase High Fidelity (Invitrogen®, Carlsbad, CA, USA).
214 The primer sequences are given in Supplementary Table S1. All the PCR fragments were
215 cloned in the pDONR207 entry vector (Invitrogen®), except for the PCR fragments to make
216 the *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9::tagRFP* and the *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9Δkinase::tagRFP*
217 constructs which were inserted between the *EcoRI* and *BamHI* sites of the Gateway® tagRFP-
218 AS-N entry vector (Evrogen, Moscow, Russia). After each transformation of *Escherichia coli*,
219 the plasmids obtained from single colonies were sequenced. Expression vectors were
220 generated by LR reactions using the pDONR207 entry clones and the destination vector
221 pKGWFS7 (no promoter, *eGFP* and *GUS* reporters) (www.psb.ugent.be/Gateway) or the
222 tagRFP-AS-N entry clones and the binary vector pAM-PAT-D35S-GWY-3HA-RTerm (gift

223 from L. Deslandes, INRAe, Auzeville-Tolosane, France). The *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*
224 GV3101::pMP90 strain was transformed with the recombinant vectors and used to stably
225 transform WT, *lecrk-I.9-1* or *lecrk-I.9-2* plants with the floral dip method. T2 and T3
226 progenies were used for analysis.

227 The *DR5::GUS/lecrK-I.9-1*, *DR5::GUS/lecrK-I.9-2* and *DR5::GUS/lecrK-I.9-2Δkinase*
228 plants were obtained by crossing experiments using *DR5::GUS* plants (Ulmasov *et al.*, 1997).

229

230 **Microarray analysis and data processing**

231 Col-0 and *lecrk-I.9-1* seedlings were grown from seeds for 7 days in 250 mL Erlenmeyer
232 flasks containing 50 mL of a half Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium (20 mM KNO₃)
233 (Sigma-Aldrich M5519, St Louis, MO, USA) supplemented with 1% sucrose (w/v) at pH 5.7
234 (KOH). Three biological replicates were conducted with one flask yielding a single biological
235 replicate. Upon harvest, plant material was washed with UHQ water. For each flask, ~1000
236 root segments between the root tip and the root-hypocotyl junction were pooled, frozen in
237 liquid nitrogen, and stored at –80°C until use.

238 The Col-0 and *lecrk-I.9-1* root samples were sent to OakLabs (Hennigsdorf, Germany),
239 where total RNA isolation, sample preparation and hybridization to ArrayXS Arabidopsis
240 were performed on January 2016 (<http://www.oak-labs.com/>) (Supplementary Dataset 1).
241 ArrayXS Arabidopsis is an 8x60K Agilent microarray which contains 32072 gene-specific
242 tags, corresponding to 30541 gene loci.

243

244 **RNA extraction and quantitative RT-PCR**

245 Total RNA was extracted from roots sampled as above using the SV total RNA isolation kit
246 system following the manufacturer's instructions (Promega, Madison, WI, USA). cDNA was
247 synthesized with Superscript III reverse transcriptase (Invitrogen®) using 1 µg of total RNA.

248 Real-time quantitative PCR (qPCR) was performed on a QuantStudio6 apparatus (Applied
249 Biosystems®, Carlsbad, CA, USA) using Takyon™ reagents (Eurogentec, Liège, Belgium).
250 MasterMix, 5 pmol of each primer and 1 µL of a 5-fold dilution of RT reaction product were
251 in a 10 µL final reaction volume with PCR cycling conditions as follows: 10 min at 95°C,
252 followed by 40 cycles of 15 s at 95°C, 60 s at 60°C. The primers are listed in Supplementary
253 Table S1. All the reactions were checked for their dissociation curves. ΔCT between each
254 gene and the internal controls (*At2g28390*, *At4g33380* and *At5g55210*) were then calculated
255 for each sample and expression levels for each gene were calculated as $2^{-\Delta CT}$ and expressed in
256 arbitrary units.

257

258 **Histochemical assays, microscopy**

259 For histochemical GUS assays, seedlings of five independent lines of transgenic plants were
260 infiltrated under vacuum with GUS staining buffer: 50 mM sodium phosphate buffer (pH 7.2),
261 0.5 mM potassium ferrocyanide, 0.5 mM potassium ferricyanide, 10 mM EDTA, 0.01% (v/v)
262 Triton X-100, and 1 mM 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl-glucuronic acid (X-Gluc). Incubation
263 times ranged from 5 min to 1 h after vacuum infiltration. Seedlings were fixed in a solution of
264 formaldehyde acetic acid ethyl alcohol (FAA) containing 10% formalin (3.7% final
265 concentration of formaldehyde), 5% acetic acid, and 50% ethanol in water, and embedded in
266 paraplast: 14 µm-thick tissue sections were visualised using a Nikon Eclipse Ti inverted
267 microscope with colour CMOS camera DS-Fi3 driven by NIS software (Nikon Europe B.V.,
268 Amstelveen, The Netherlands). A 20 x/0.45 dry lens and a bright field source were used to
269 visualise the staining. Whole seedlings of the five independent lines were imaged using
270 scanner slides (Nanozoomer HT, Hamamatsu Photonics France, Massy, France) equipped
271 with a 20 x lens and a bright field source.

272 The fluorescence patterns of WT x *proPME2::eGFP* plants, as well as those of
273 *proCLE2::eGFP* and *proCLE4::eGFP* plants, were visualised using a Nikon Eclipse Ti
274 inverted microscope as above. A 20 x/0.45 dry lens and a GFP B-2A filter set were used (long
275 pass filter: excitation 450 nm/490 nm, dichroic mirror 505 nm, emission 520 nm). LecRK-I.9-
276 tagRFP tissue localisation was visualised using a spectral confocal laser scanning system
277 (SP8, Leica, Wetzlar, Germany) equipped with an upright microscope (DMi8, Leica).
278 Observations were performed using an immersion lens (HC PL Fluotar N.A. 40 x/0.80,
279 Leica). An argon laser emitting at 543 nm was used to collect fluorescence in the range
280 between 560 and 640 nm.

281

282 **Immunohistochemistry of cell wall polysaccharides**

283 Whole-mount immunohistochemical assays were used to analyse the occurrence of CW
284 polysaccharides in roots using sample preparation adapted from Hejatko *et al.* (2006) and
285 immunolabelling adapted from Francoz *et al.* (2019). The distribution patterns of
286 polysaccharides were revealed using rat monoclonal antibodies LM19 and LM20 recognising
287 low-methylesterified HGs and partially-methylesterified HGs, respectively
288 (<https://www.kerafast.com>). Col-0 and *lecrk-I.9-1* seedlings were grown for 7 days in 250 mL
289 Erlenmeyer flasks containing 50 mL of a half Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium (20 mM
290 KNO₃) (Sigma-Aldrich M5519, St Louis, MO, USA) supplemented with 1% sucrose (w/v) at
291 pH 5.7 (KOH). Seedlings were fixed in 4 % (w/v) paraformaldehyde, 15% (v/v) dimethyl
292 sulfoxide, 0.1 % (v/v) tween-20 in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) solution pH 7.4
293 complemented with 1:1 (v/v) heptane. After three 1-min vacuum cycles, the fixation occurred
294 for 45 min at room temperature while shaking (100 rpm). Seedlings were washed twice 5 min
295 in 100% methanol, thrice 5 min in 100% ethanol, and then permeabilised in a solution
296 containing ethanol and Roti®Histol (Carl Roth GmbH, Karlsruhe, Germany) (1:1, v/v, 35 min

297 at room temperature). Seedlings were further rinsed twice in 100% ethanol and rehydrated in
298 an ethanol series: 75%, 50% and 25% (v/v) in PBS. After four rinses in a buffer containing 10
299 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 500 mM NaCl, 0.3% (w/v) Triton X-100 (TTBS), the seedlings were
300 transferred to TTBS containing 5% (w/v) non-fat dry milk. Immunolabelling experiments
301 were performed with LM19 and LM20 (1:10 dilution in TTBS-milk, 2 h incubation) followed
302 by anti-rat IgG-Alexa488 (Invitrogen®) or anti-rat IgG alkaline phosphatase conjugate
303 (Sigma-Aldrich A8438) secondary antibodies (1:200 dilution in TTBS-milk, 1 h incubation).
304 Simple labelling with secondary antibodies was performed as a negative control. Alkaline
305 phosphatase was revealed in the NBT/BCIP chromogenic substrate [nitro blue tetrazolium
306 chloride (NBT) 350 $\mu\text{g}\cdot\text{mL}^{-1}$, 5-bromo 4-chloro-3-indolyl phosphate (BCIP) 175 $\mu\text{g}\cdot\text{mL}^{-1}$, in
307 100 mM Tris-HCl pH9.5, 100 mM NaCl, 10 mM MgCl_2]. Seedlings were mounted between a
308 slide and coverslip and imaged using a scanner (Nanozoomer HT) equipped with a 20x lens
309 and a bright field source to visualise the blue-purple product of the enzymatic reaction with
310 alkaline phosphatase, or with a 40x lens and a filter set (excitation 482 nm/518 nm, dichroic
311 mirror 488 nm, emission 525 nm/530 nm) to visualise the Alexa488 fluorescence. Images
312 were analysed using the ImageJ software (<https://imagej.nih.gov/ij>) to quantify the number of
313 pixels per unit area covering the root elongation zone.

314

315 **Enzyme activity assays**

316 *A. thaliana* seedlings from various genetic backgrounds were grown for 7 days in 250 mL
317 Erlenmeyer flasks containing 50 mL of a half Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium (20 mM
318 KNO_3) (Sigma-Aldrich M5519, St Louis, MO, USA) supplemented with 1% sucrose (w/v) at
319 pH 5.7 (KOH). Three biological replicates were conducted with one flask yielding a single
320 biological replicate. Upon harvest, the seedlings were washed with UHQ water. For each
321 flask, ~1000 root segments were sampled, as for the transcriptomics study. For PME activity,

322 a soluble protein fraction was extracted from an exact amount of tissue (a dry mass of at least
323 10 mg is required) by homogenisation in 400 μ L of 20 mM sodium phosphate buffer pH 7.4
324 containing 1 M NaCl, 10 μ M β -ME, 4 μ L of protease inhibitor cocktail (Sigma-Aldrich
325 P9599) and subsequently centrifuged at 12,000 g for 5 min at 4°C. The extraction step was
326 repeated once and the supernatants were combined. The extracts were then desalted on Bio-
327 Gel® P-6DG gel (BIO-RAD, Hercules, CA, USA) equilibrated with 20 mM sodium
328 phosphate buffer pH 7.4 containing 0.15 M NaCl. PME activity was determined using the
329 alcohol oxidase coupled assay (Klavons and Bennett, 1986). For PG activity, a similar soluble
330 protein fraction was prepared but with 20 mM sodium acetate buffer pH 5.0. PG activity was
331 determined by measuring the release of galacturonic acid (GalUA) residues from
332 polygalacturonic acid (Sigma-Aldrich P3889) using GalUA as the standard (Boudart *et al.*,
333 2003).

334

335 **Cell wall monosaccharide composition**

336 Lyophilised root tissues were obtained as described above. Total cell wall sugar composition
337 was determined as previously described (Lahaye *et al.*, 2020). Briefly, Alcohol Insoluble
338 Materials (AIMs) were extracted from 20 to 30 mg of lyophilised root tissues using Dionex™
339 ASE™ 350 accelerated solvent extractor (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., Waltham, MA,
340 USA). The identification and quantification of cell wall neutral sugars were performed by
341 gas-chromatography (Trace GC Ultra, Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.) after sulphuric acid
342 degradation with or without a pre-hydrolysis step using 13 M sulphuric acid to determine the
343 amount of glucose residues from acidic-resistant cellulose. Uronic acids in acid hydrolysates
344 were quantified using the methoxydiphenyl colorimetric acid method (Blumenkrantz and
345 Asboe-Hansen, 1973).

346

347 **Degree of HG methylesterification**

348 The degree of methylesterification was determined as follows. A dry mass of at least 10 mg
349 was immersed in 96% boiling ethanol for 20 min. After centrifugation at 12,000 g for 5 min,
350 the insoluble material was left under magnetic stirring for 15 min in 70% ethanol. This step
351 was repeated thrice. The pellet was resuspended in 1 mL 1:1 CHCl₃/MeOH (v/v) and left
352 under stirring for 15 min. The residue was dried by solvent exchange (ethanol, acetone) and
353 left overnight at room temperature to give an alcohol-insoluble residue (AIR) (Levigne *et al.*,
354 2002). Pectins were isolated from AIR by acidic extraction (200 mM HCl pH 1.0, 95°C for 30
355 min). After centrifugation at 12,000 g for 5 min, the acidic extraction was repeated thrice.
356 Supernatants were pooled and neutralised with 2 +N KOH. Pectins were hydrolysed in 2 N
357 KOH at least for 30 min at room temperature and then neutralised with 2 N HCL. The uronic
358 acid content and the degree of methylesterification were determined as described
359 (Blumenkrantz and Asboe-Hansen, 1973; Klavons and Bennett, 1986).

360

361 **Quantification and statistical analysis**

362 Transcriptomics and RT-qPCR data, measurements of PME and PG activities, measurements
363 of the degree of pectin methylesterification, and counting of lateral roots per seedling were
364 statistically analysed by Student's t-tests. To quantify fluorescence (as defined in Fig. 3B, C),
365 images were analysed using the ImageJ software (<https://imagej.nih.gov/ij>) to determine the
366 number of pixels per unit area covering the root elongation zone. Values were statistically
367 analysed by a Student's t-test.

368

369 **Results**

370

371 ***LecRK-I.9* is expressed at a high level in root tissues**

372 Public transcriptomics datasets indicate a high level of expression of *LecRK-I.9* in roots
373 (Brady *et al.*, 2007; Winter *et al.*, 2007). The *LecRK-I.9* tissue-specific expression pattern was
374 determined using its promoter region fused to the β -glucuronidase (GUS) reporter
375 (*proLecRK-I.9::GUS*). Seedlings of five independent stably transformed wild-type (WT) *A.*
376 *thaliana* plants, grown in liquid culture for 7d were analysed and representative images are
377 shown in Fig. 1. The *proLecRK-I.9* activity was mainly observed in the root apex and young
378 tissues and decreased in the older tissues (Fig. 1A). It was also found in the collar and the
379 phloem companion cells of the cotyledons (Fig. 1A, 1F and 1G). In the root tip, the *LecRK-I.9*
380 promoter was active in the epidermal cells of the meristematic and elongation zones as well as
381 in the endodermis, the pericycle and the stele, and to a lesser extent in the cortex of the
382 meristematic zone (Fig. 1B and 1D). In differentiated tissues, it was mainly active in the
383 endodermis, the pericycle and the stele (Fig. 1B, 1C and 1E).

384 To further characterise the *LecRK-I.9* expression pattern, transgenic plants expressing the
385 *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9::tagRFP* construct in the *lecrk-I.9-1* and *lecrk-I.9-2 loss-of-function*
386 mutant backgrounds were generated. If the GUS activity was readily observed after a short
387 incubation time in the previous experiment, the tagRFP fluorescence was poorly detected. It
388 outlined the epidermis cells of the root apices (Fig. 1H and 1I) consistently with the plasma
389 membrane localisation of LecRK-I.9 (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2011). This localisation showed a
390 striking polarisation of the signal in the radial faces of the epidermal cells of the elongation
391 zone. No significant signal was detected in other tissues of the seedlings. This result
392 suggested a high turnover or a low level of expression for LecRK-I.9::tagRFP.

393

394 **Transcriptomics identifies LecRK-I.9 as a putative regulator of cell wall dynamics**

395 *LecRK-I.9* expression was mostly localised in root tissues. The transcriptome of WT roots and
396 *lecrk-I.9-1* roots were compared to get some insight into the functions of LecRK-I.9.

397 Considering that the two *lecrk-I.9* mutants showed similar published phenotypes, and
398 previous transcriptional studies were published using *lecrk-I.9-1*, the latter was chosen for the
399 root-specific transcriptomic approach (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2011; Choi *et al.*, 2014; Balagué
400 *et al.*, 2017). The differential analysis retained 20,713 genes after data processing. Three
401 criteria of selection were used: (i) a mean raw value >100, (ii) a statistical analysis by a
402 Student's t-test with a *p-value* <0.05, and (iii) a fold-change >2.0 or <0.5 (Supplementary
403 Dataset 1).

404 Thus, 199 up-regulated and 263 down-regulated genes in *lecrk-I.9-1* roots compared to WT
405 were identified (Fig. 2; Supplementary Dataset 1). Control experiments using RT-qPCR for
406 17 genes confirmed the transcriptomics data (Supplementary Fig. S1). A distinctive feature of
407 this analysis was the over-representation of genes encoding CW and CW-related proteins:
408 39% of the up-regulated genes (78 among 199) and 25% of the down-regulated genes (65
409 among 263) (Fig. 2; Supplementary Dataset 1). Most of the up-regulated genes encoded CW
410 remodelling proteins, such as (i) pectin methylesterases (PMEs) and their inhibitors (PMEIs),
411 a pectin acetylesterase (PAE) and polygalacturonases (PGs, glycoside hydrolases 28, GH28)
412 acting on HGs; (ii) an expansin, a xyloglucan endotransglycosylase/hydrolase (XTH) acting
413 on cellulose and hemicelluloses; and (iii) cellulose synthase-like proteins (CSLBs)
414 contributing to the biosynthesis of hemicelluloses (Supplementary Dataset 1). Most of the
415 down-regulated genes encoded proteases or proteins related to lipid metabolism such as non-
416 specific lipid transfer proteins (nsLTPs) and GDSL esterase/lipase proteins possibly involved
417 in cuticle formation (Supplementary Dataset 1). Besides, the genes encoding oxido-reductases
418 and peptides were either up- or down-regulated (Fig. 2) and included CIII Prxs and plant
419 defensin-like proteins (PDFs) encoding genes.

420 The CW-related genes encoded CW polysaccharides biosynthesis enzymes *e.g.* callose
421 synthase complex (UDP-DEPENDENT GLYCOSYL TRANSFERASE 75B1, UGT75B1)

422 and hemicellulose biosynthetic enzymes (XYLOGLUCAN GALACTURONOSYL-
423 TRANSFERASE 1, XUT1) involved in root development as well as proteins involved in the
424 development of vascular elements such as LACCASE 11 (LAC11). In addition, many genes
425 were related to root developmental processes such as *BORON TRANSPORTER 2 (BOR2)*,
426 *CLE2* and *CLE4*, *INDOLE-3-ACETIC ACID INDUCIBLE 27 (IAA27)*, *MIZU-KUSSEI 1*
427 (*MIZI*), *PME2*, *XTH21* (Supplementary Dataset 1; Supplementary Reference List).
428 Altogether, these results suggest that LecRK-I.9 plays a role in the control of CW remodelling
429 in roots.

430 The Gene Ontology term analysis (<https://geneontology.org/>) of the genes which are up- or
431 down-regulated in *lecrk-I.9* confirmed the over-representation of genes encoding CW and
432 CW-related proteins (Supplementary Table S2). The up-regulated genes revealed biological
433 processes such as (i) dolichol biosynthesis that could be linked to the *N*-glycosylation
434 pathway, (ii) pectic catabolism, (iii) CW modification and (iv) root development. The down-
435 regulated genes were mostly related to biotic and abiotic constraints. In particular, the
436 responses to bacteria and/or fungi were illustrated in previous studies (Bouwmeester *et al.*,
437 2011; Balagué *et al.*, 2017).

438

439 ***lecrk-I.9* loss-of-function mutants are altered in cell wall polysaccharides and enzyme** 440 **activities**

441 To determine whether the transcriptomics profiles correlated with changes in the root CW
442 polysaccharide composition, the sugar contents and the degree of HG methylesterification of
443 roots were analysed. Whole roots were collected from various genetic backgrounds: (i) *lecrk-*
444 *I.9-1* and *lecrk-I.9-2* mutants, (ii) dominant negative mutants in *lecrk-I.9-1* and *lecrk-I.9-2*
445 backgrounds (*dnm1* and *dnm2*), and (iii) *LecRK-I.9* over-expressor lines (*Ox-1* and *Ox-2*). The
446 results showed no difference neither in total neutral monosaccharides, rhamnose, fucose,

447 arabinose, xylose, mannose, or galactose, nor in uronic acid contents (Supplementary Fig.
448 S2). Whole mount immunolocalisation was then performed using antibodies against low-
449 methylesterified (LM19) and partially-methylesterified HGs (LM20) (Fig. 3A, B).
450 Interestingly, a significant difference in the fluorescence intensity between *lecrk-I.9-1* and
451 WT root apices was observed in the epidermis using LM20 antibody (mostly in EZ and DZ)
452 (Fig. 3C), suggesting the presence of more methylesterified HGs in the *lecrk-I.9-1* epidermal
453 cell walls. Consistently, using a biochemical assay, a higher degree of HG
454 methylesterification was found in *lecrk-I.9-1* and *lecrk-I.9-2* as well as in *dnm-1* (Fig. 3D).
455 The over-expressor lines *Ox-1* and *Ox-2* showed a degree of HG methylesterification similar
456 to the WT.

457 To probe the observed changes in CW composition, the PME and PG activities in roots
458 were quantified. A 1.6-fold decrease in PME activity in *lecrk-I.9-1*, *lecrk-I.9-2*, *dnm-1* and
459 *dnm-2* were detected (Fig. 3E). These results were consistent with the LM20 immunolabelling
460 and the biochemical assay showing a higher degree of HG methylesterification in these lines.
461 However, 7 *PMEs* were up-regulated in *lecrk-I.9-1* (Supplementary Dataset 1). Six of the 7
462 *PME* genes are mainly expressed in the root epidermis (*PME2*, 8, 33, 47, 59 and 60)
463 (<https://bar.utoronto.ca/eplant/>), but, only one could be detected in the root proteome (*PME2*)
464 (<http://www.polebio.lrsv.ups-tlse.fr/WallProtDB/>). Furthermore, two *PMEIs* (*PMEI4* and *UNE11*)
465 expressed in the epidermis but not detected in the root proteome, were also up-regulated in
466 *lecrk-I.9-1*. Thus, the large size of the *PME/PMEI* family in *A. thaliana* (66 members) and the
467 tissue-specific gene expression could explain that the 9 up-regulated *PME/PMEI* genes
468 weakly contributed to the total PME activity. These data illustrate the complex fine-tuning of
469 the HG methylesterification status in *lecrk-I.9-1* roots. Finally, a 2-fold increase in PG
470 activity in *lecrk-I.9-1*, *lecrk-I.9-2*, *dnm-1* and *dnm-2* compared to the WT and the over-
471 expressor lines were detected (Fig. 3F). This was consistent with the up-regulation of several

472 *PGs* genes in *lecrk-I.9-1* (Supplementary Dataset 1). Taken together, our data show that
473 *LecRK-I.9* plays a crucial role in remodelling HGs through the regulation of PME and PG
474 activities.

475

476 ***LecRK-I.9* negatively regulates lateral and adventitious root development**

477 *LecRK-I.9* promoter activity was shown in the endodermis, the pericycle and the stele (Fig.
478 1B, 1C and 1E). CW remodelling has to occur to allow the emergence of LR from the
479 pericycle layer through the overlaying tissues (Banda *et al.*, 2019; Swarup *et al.*, 2008). Then,
480 the number of emerged LRs and the LR initiation index were analysed (Dubrovsky & Forde,
481 2012). When grown in the presence of 20 mM KNO₃ (the usual concentration of half-strength
482 Murashige and Skoog medium), both the number of emerged LR and the LR initiation index
483 slightly increased in *lecrk-I.9* and dominant negative mutants compared to WT, over-
484 expressors and complemented plants (Fig. 4A, B). A lower nitrate concentration in the culture
485 medium (KNO₃ 0.1 mM) was also tested. Even if nitrogen has a small effect on LR number
486 and density (Forde, 2014), it is a major element affecting CW composition and dynamics
487 (Fernandes *et al.*, 2016a; Qin *et al.*, 2019; Rivai *et al.*, 2021). When grown at 0.1 mM KNO₃,
488 *lecrk-I.9* and dominant negative mutants exhibited twice more LRs than WT, over-expressors
489 and complemented plants (Fig. 4C). LR initiation index increased on average by 1.3 times for
490 the *lecrk-I.9* mutants (Fig. 4D). So, both the LR initiation and the LR emergence processes
491 were affected.

492 Common key regulatory elements are shared by lateral and adventitious root formation
493 processes (Bellini *et al.*, 2014). However, unlike LRs, adventitious roots emerge from non-
494 root tissues. Here, adventitious root formation on etiolated hypocotyls was analysed. The
495 *LecRK-I.9* promoter activity pattern observed in adventitious roots was similar to that in LRs

496 (Supplementary Fig. S3A). As for LRs, *lecrk-I.9* mutants developed more adventitious roots
497 than WT, over-expressors and complemented plants (Supplementary Fig. S3B).

498 Auxin provides a key signal during LR development (Du & Scheres, 2018). To get
499 information about the auxin levels in the roots of the different genotypes, the auxin-
500 responsive reporter *DR5::GUS* was introduced in these lines. Auxin accumulation was readily
501 observed in the apex of primary roots (Supplementary Fig. S4A) and at all stages of LR
502 development from LRPs to emerged roots (Supplementary Fig. S4B). However, no significant
503 difference was found between the genotypes. Auxin does not appear to be targeted by the
504 *LecRK-I.9* signalling pathways.

505 In summary, *LecRK-I.9* acts as a negative regulator of lateral and adventitious root
506 development, independently from auxin.

507

508 **In low nitrate conditions, the *LecRK-I.9* promoter activity is repressed in roots,**
509 **particularly in the lateral root emergence zone**

510 Considering the increased LR and AR phenotypes detected in low nitrate conditions, a
511 comparative analysis of the *LecRK-I.9* promoter activity and gene expression between high
512 and low nitrate conditions was performed. Six-day-old seedlings grown in the presence of 20
513 mM or 0.1 mM KNO_3 showed similar patterns of *proLecRK-I.9::GUS* expression, *i.e.* a high
514 level of expression in the apex of the main root, and a lower one in older tissues (Fig. 5A, F).

515 In 11d-old seedlings, fully emerged LRs were present in both culture conditions: a high
516 promoter activity was detected in their apex as well as in their vasculature (Fig. 5B, G).

517 However, a marked difference was observed in the seedlings when looking at LRPs. While
518 still present at the high nitrate concentration, GUS activity was absent from LRPs at the low
519 nitrate concentration: such a difference was observed after a short time of GUS enzymatic
520 reaction (Fig. 5C, D, H, I). No difference was observed in fully emerged LRs (Fig. 5E, J).

521 For these experiments, a lower GUS activity in the seedlings grown at the low nitrate
522 concentration was noticed. Consistently, four times lower *LecRK-I.9* transcripts abundance in
523 the roots of seedlings grown at 0.1 mM KNO₃ compared to those grown at 20 mM KNO₃ was
524 found (Fig. 5K). Since *LecRK-I.9* negatively influences the expression of genes encoding CW
525 remodelling enzymes, the down-regulation of *LecRK-I.9* at the site of LR emergence could
526 facilitate the emergence process.

527

528 **At both low and high nitrate concentrations, *LecRK-I.9* regulates the transcription of**
529 **genes encoding CLE peptide precursors involved in lateral root development**

530 *LecRK-I.9* expression was strongly down-regulated upon nitrate deficiency. To know whether
531 the regulation was maintained in low nitrate conditions, the level of transcripts of selected
532 genes, such as those encoding PGs, PMEs, proteases and peptide precursors, previously
533 shown to be up- or down-regulated in *lecrk-I.9-1* by the microarray experiment, was then
534 measured by RT-qPCR. The expression of both up- and down-regulated selected genes in
535 *lecrk-I.9-1* was drastically reduced at 0.1 mM KNO₃ (Supplementary Fig. S1). For some
536 genes up-regulated at 20 mM KNO₃, the transcript levels were not detected (ND) at 0.1 mM
537 KNO₃ in both genotypes suggesting that the *LecRK-I.9* control observed at 20 mM KNO₃ was
538 no longer effective (*e.g.* *GH28-1*, *PME60*). On the contrary, although the level of transcripts
539 of *EXPA-B1* and *PME59* was much reduced in both genotypes, the regulation of their
540 expression by *LecRK-I.9* was maintained. The level of transcripts of the down-regulated
541 genes in *lecrk-I.9-1* root transcriptome, *i.e.* those for which *LecRK-I.9* acts as a positive
542 regulator, was also reduced at 0.1 mM KNO₃ in both genotypes, but to a lesser extent
543 (Supplementary Fig. S1). Remarkably, the *LecRK-I.9* positive regulation for *CLE2* and *CLE4*
544 expression, was still observed under low nitrogen conditions (Fig 6A). *CLE2* and *CLE4*
545 encode extracellular signalling peptide precursors described as negative regulators of LR

546 development (Araya *et al.*, 2014). While a strong decrease in *CLE2* and *CLE4* levels of
547 expression in low nitrate conditions was observed, a steady state for *CLE2* and an increase in
548 *CLE4* expression were previously reported (Araya *et al.*, 2014). However, the same research
549 group re-investigated nitrogen deficiency and showed a decrease in both *CLE2* and *CLE4*
550 levels of expression (Ma *et al.*, 2020). Also, the *CYSTEINE ENDOPEPTIDASE3 (CEP3)*
551 gene encoding a protease homologous to a rice CEP able to digest extensins *in vitro* and
552 induced in the context of programmed cell death (Helm *et al.*, 2008), was still found to be
553 positively regulated by LecRK-I.9.

554 The expression patterns of *PME2*, *CLE2* and *CLE4* in roots were then examined. *PME2*,
555 encoding a CW remodelling enzyme, was selected as a gene negatively regulated both by
556 LecRK-I.9 and under low nitrate conditions (Fig 6A; Fig S1A). Conversely, *CLE2* and *CLE4*
557 were selected as genes positively regulated by LecRK-I.9 and negatively regulated under low
558 nitrate conditions (Fig 6A; Fig S1B). The promoter sequences of *PME2*, *CLE2* and *CLE4*
559 were fused to the *eGFP* reporter and the constructs were introduced in WT and *lecrk-I.9-1*
560 plants. A weak activity of the *PME2* promoter was revealed at 20 mM KNO₃ in the cells
561 adjacent to LRPs in WT (Fig. 6B) and nowhere else in the root tissues. This activity was
562 detected early around the developing LRPs and remained identical when LRs were fully
563 developed. In the *lecrk-I.9-1* background, the *PME2* promoter showed similar activity as in
564 WT, but at a slightly higher level (Fig. 6C) consistently with a higher amount of *PME2*
565 transcripts as determined by RT-qPCR (Fig. 6A).

566 As for *PME2*, the activity of the *CLE2* promoter at 20 mM KNO₃ was detected at the early
567 stages of LR formation in the cells surrounding LRPs (Fig. 6D), similar to the pattern
568 previously described (Jun *et al.*, 2010). As root outgrowth progressed, *CLE2* promoter activity
569 was observed in the pericycle cells of the newly developed LRs. In fully developed LRs, the
570 *CLE2* promoter activity was still present at the junction between the primary root and LRs but

571 also extended in the pericycle cells without reaching the apex of LRs. In the *lecrk-I.9-I*
572 background, a similar pattern was observed with a much lower signal intensity (Fig. 6E)
573 underlying the strong positive regulation by LecRK-I.9. A lower intensity of the signal was
574 also observed when the seedlings were grown at the low nitrate concentration (Fig. 6F), and
575 no signal could be detected in the *lecrk-I.9-I* background (Fig. 6G).

576 The pericycle cells of the primary root of WT plants specifically displayed the eGFP
577 reporter signal driven by the *CLE4* promoter at 20 mM KNO₃ (Fig. 6H) as previously
578 described (Jun *et al.*, 2010). This signal was observed all along the primary root except in the
579 apex (not shown) and in the zones where LRs were initiated. The eGFP signal was absent in
580 emerged LRs and was up again in the pericycle cells of fully developed LRs. In the *lecrk-I.9-*
581 *I* background, no activity of the *CLE4* promoter was detected even after long exposure (Fig.
582 6I). Again, it suggests that LecRK-I.9 exerts a strong positive regulation on *CLE4* expression.
583 At the low nitrate concentration, the activity of the *CLE4* promoter was faintly observed in the
584 pericycle cells of primary roots of WT plants (Fig. 6J), but not at all in the *lecrk-I.9-I*
585 background (not shown).

586 In conclusion, LecRK-I.9 positively regulates the spatial expression of *PME2*, *CLE2* and
587 *CLE4*. The strong positive control of the expression of these genes occurs under high nitrate
588 conditions for *PME2* and under both high and low nitrate conditions for *CLE2* and *CLE4*.

589

590 **Discussion**

591 The results of the present study show that LecRK-I.9, having a Legume-type lectin
592 extracellular domain, has a developmental role in LR formation by regulating (i) CW
593 remodelling enzymes at the transcriptional and post-transcriptional levels, particularly those
594 involved in HG metabolism, and (ii) the transcription of *CLEs* encoding extracellular
595 signalling peptides reported to play roles in LR formation (Araya *et al.*, 2014). This is a new

596 role since such proteins have previously been reported to be involved in the response to biotic
597 and abiotic stresses (Bellande *et al.*, 2017). In particular, LecRK-I.9 was shown to be part of
598 the plant response to biotic and abiotic stresses (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2011; Balagué *et al.*,
599 2017; Choi *et al.*, 2014).

600 Our results on CW remodelling enzymes are consistent with a previous study focusing on
601 the transcriptional response to ATP of *dorn1-1* compared to WT (Choi *et al.*, 2014). *dorn1-1*
602 carries a point mutation inactivating the kinase activity of LecRK-I.9 (Choi *et al.*, 2014).
603 Analysis of these transcriptomic data showed 23 up-regulated and 39 down-regulated genes in
604 *dorn1-1* compared to WT (Supplementary Dataset 2). As revealed in our study, genes
605 encoding CW proteins were prevailing, representing 35% of the up-regulated (8 among 23)
606 and 28% of the down-regulated (11 among 39) genes. In both transcriptomic studies, the
607 identified genes encode proteins acting on the load-bearing CW polymers (cellulose,
608 hemicelluloses), the pectin matrix or the formation of a lignified CW (cellulose, lignin). Such
609 a large-scale control on CW structure may explain why LecRK-I.9 was also reported to be
610 involved in plant-pathogen interactions (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2011; Balagué *et al.*, 2017), the
611 CW being the first barrier of plant defence. The Gene Ontology term analysis confirmed the
612 involvement of LecRK-I.9 in such processes (Supplementary Table 2).

613 Of particular interest is the predominance of genes encoding enzymes related to HG
614 modifications such as PMEs and their inhibitors PMEIs, a PAE and PGs. HG, which is
615 synthesised in the Golgi and secreted into the CW in a methylesterified and/or acetylated
616 form, can be partially de-esterified by PMEs and PAEs in non-blockwise patterns. The
617 resulting partially-esterified HG can be cut in shorter fragments by PGs, thus leading to CW
618 loosening (Hocq *et al.*, 2018). Alternatively, PME-dependent blockwise de-esterification of
619 HG followed by Ca²⁺ crosslinking leads to the formation of pectin gels resulting in CW
620 stiffening (Lamport *et al.*, 2018). The pectin status influences CW structure and extensibility,

621 which can in turn regulate organ morphogenesis (Lampart *et al.*, 2018; Peaucelle *et al.*, 2008;
622 Peaucelle *et al.*, 2011). Also, it was shown that a weakening or a modification of the CW of
623 the cells overlaying LRPs, in particular the endodermis cells, is sufficient to promote their
624 emergence (Vermeer *et al.*, 2014; Roycewicz & Malamy, 2014). We show that LecRK-I.9
625 regulates the degree of HG methylesterification and the PME and PG enzymatic activities,
626 consistently with the transcriptional regulation of several *PME* and *PG* genes. It also
627 influences the balance between esterified and de-esterified HGs, as shown by our
628 immunohistochemistry experiments. Thus, LecRK-I.9 contributes to the regulation of CW
629 composition during secondary root organogenesis. These first outcomes have been
630 highlighted in a model providing an overview of the regulatory network proposed for LecRK-
631 I.9 (Fig. 7). Besides, *LecRK-I.9* expression prevails in the meristematic and elongation zones
632 of the root apices but is also found in the pericycle and the stele of older root tissues. LecRK-
633 I.9 may therefore function in controlling the CW dynamics at different stages of root
634 development.

635 Indeed, our phenotypic analysis shows that LecRK-I.9 is likely to have a negative role in
636 both LR initiation and emergence processes. Recently, it was shown that both esterified and
637 de-esterified HGs are differentially distributed at the sites of LR emergence and that genes
638 controlling HG esterification regulate the root clock and LR initiation (Wachsman *et al.*,
639 2020). The root clock is an oscillatory mechanism regulating gene expression, approximately
640 every six hours, which regulates the spacing of LRs by establishing a pre-branch site
641 (Moreno-Risueno *et al.*, 2010). Wachsman *et al.* (2020) performed an RNA-seq analysis on
642 five transverse sections including the oscillation zone, the marked pre-branch site and their
643 flanking regions. Very interestingly, most of the genes encoding pectin-related enzymes
644 identified in our transcriptome have their strongest expression in the oscillation zone, namely
645 *PME2*, *PME33*, *PME47*, two PGs (*GH28-1* and *GH28-2*) and the boron transporter *BOR2*.

646 Besides, *pme2* showed a reduced number of LRs (Wachsman *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, genes
647 encoding proteins involved in the biosynthesis or the remodelling of hemicelluloses have their
648 strongest expression in the oscillation zone, namely those encoding the expansin *EXPB1*, the
649 XG modifying enzymes *XTH21* and *XUT1* and the cellulose synthase-like protein *CSLB5*
650 (Wachsman *et al.*, 2020; Ramakrishna *et al.*, 2019). Consistently, *LecRK-I.9* appears to exert
651 its negative regulation over genes encoding CW remodelling proteins during very early events
652 of LR development, *i.e.* during the pre-branch site formation (Fig. 7 – stage 1) before the pre-
653 branch site was marked.

654 On the other hand, *LecRK-I.9* was found to be a positive regulator of the expression of
655 genes encoding CW proteases and CW proteins related to lipid metabolism. CW proteases are
656 likely to be involved in the turnover of CW proteins and the maturation of extracellular
657 signalling peptides and enzymes from secreted pro-proteins. Among the CW proteins related
658 to lipid metabolism, LTPG6 and LTP2 have been involved in the deposition of cuticular
659 waxes (Edstam *et al.*, 2013) and in the cuticle-CW interface integrity (Jacq *et al.*, 2017) in
660 aerial organs, respectively. The ABC transporter *CER5* and the transcription factor *MYB96*
661 are also positively regulated by *LecRK-I.9* (Supplementary Dataset 1). They are assumed to
662 be involved in the export and biosynthesis of cuticular waxes. So, *LecRK-I.9* may exert
663 control over both the CW polysaccharides and the composition of the cuticle which has
664 specific roles to protect and facilitate the emergence of LRs (Berhin *et al.*, 2019). Additional
665 experiments are required to precisely define the roles of the latter genes in roots.

666 Our study has also revealed that *LecRK-I.9* has strong positive control over *CLE2* and
667 *CLE4* expression. *CLE2* and *CLE4* are extracellular signalling peptides involved in LR
668 development (Araya *et al.*, 2014). Overexpression of *CLE2* and *CLE4* results in reduced LRP
669 emergence and growth without affecting LR initiation (Araya *et al.*, 2014). Our results clearly
670 showed distinct expression patterns for *CLE2* and *CLE4*. Both *CLE4* and *LecRK-I.9* are

671 expressed in the pericycle of lateral and primary roots and not expressed at the site of LR
672 emergence. This is consistent with *CLE4* acting as a negative regulator of LRP emergence and
673 growth and being positively regulated by LecRK-I.9 (Fig. 7 – stages 4 and 5). The expression
674 pattern of *CLE2* is different, *i.e.* it is expressed in the cells surrounding LRPs and later on in
675 the pericycle of LRs. Different functions for *CLE2* and *CLE4* are thus very likely.

676 Plant roots adapt their architecture depending on the availability of nutrients (Gruber *et al.*,
677 2013). Among them, nitrate has received particular attention. In *A. thaliana*, nitrate exerts its
678 effect on LR length rather than on LR number or density (Forde, 2014). However, nitrate
679 deficiency strongly affects both the polysaccharide composition and the enzymatic repertoire
680 of the CW (Fernandes *et al.*, 2016a; Fernandes *et al.*, 2016b; Qin *et al.*, 2019; Rivai *et al.*,
681 2021). All these studies showed a decrease in cellulose content which correlated with an
682 increase in hemicellulose and/or pectin contents. Regarding the CW remodelling proteins,
683 changes concern particular CW protein families, but also members of a given family, *e.g.*
684 XTHs and PMEs (Qin *et al.*, 2019; Rivai *et al.*, 2021). From our transcriptomics experiment,
685 the selected genes encoding CW remodelling proteins showed, at low nitrate concentration, a
686 drastic decrease of their expression level in such a way that LecRK-I.9 only maintains its
687 negative control on *EXPB1* and *PME59* transcription (Fig. 7B – stage 1). While *LecRK-I.9*
688 expression was also affected (four times less), the phenotypic analysis indicated an increase in
689 the LR initiation index in the mutant lines. It is then possible that LecRK-I.9 exerts a negative
690 regulation on another set of CW remodelling proteins involved in the pre-branch site
691 formation upon nitrate deficiency. In this condition, LecRK-I.9 retains its positive control on
692 *CLE2* and *CLE4* expression to regulate LR emergence and growth (Fig. 7B – stages 4 and 5).

693 Auxin is a key inductive signal during LR development. Our *DR5::GUS* reporter assays
694 showed no significant difference in auxin accumulation levels at the LR emergence sites
695 between the tested genotypes. Nevertheless, the differential expression of genes involved in

696 auxin transport and signal transduction were then analysed. A few of them were found: *PIN-*
697 *LIKES3* (auxin transport), *MIZ1* (auxin homeostasis), *IAA27* (auxin signalling) and
698 *GRETCHEN HAGEN3.6* (*GH3.6*, hormone conjugation). *MIZ1*, *IAA27* and *GH3.6* have been
699 reported to be involved in LR development (Moriwaki *et al.*, 2011; Nakazawa *et al.*, 2001;
700 Shahzad *et al.*, 2020). Interestingly, *GH3.6* is also involved in the control of adventitious root
701 formation (Gutierrez *et al.*, 2012). However, the overlap between our transcriptomic data and
702 those dedicated to auxin-dependent gene induction in LR development is extremely low
703 (Swarup *et al.*, 2008; Laskowski *et al.*, 2006; Lewis *et al.*, 2013). For instance, considering
704 the genes encoding CW remodelling proteins, only *PME60* was found. Most likely, LecRK-
705 I.9 depends on a regulation pathway that is not directly related to auxin signalling.

706 By regulating the expression of genes encoding several classes of proteins *e.g.* CW
707 remodelling proteins during the pre-branch site formation and extracellular signalling peptide
708 precursors involved in LR emergence and growth, LecRK-I.9 certainly plays a critical role in
709 coordinating the overall LR development. However, the signalling pathway involved remains
710 unknown. Recent studies have identified downstream targets of LecRK-I.9 in stress
711 conditions (Chen *et al.*, 2017; Kim *et al.*, 2023). An important issue is to know how and
712 which LecRK-I.9 signalling pathways are activated in developmental conditions. Since
713 LecRK-I.9 is mediating CW-plasma membrane contacts (Gouget *et al.* 2006) and mechanical
714 forces are causal in organ morphogenesis (Trinh *et al.*, 2021), the role of LecRK-I.9 as a
715 possible mechanosensor is a future direction of research.

716

717 **Supplementary material**

718 - Supplementary Dataset 1. The target genes selected from the transcriptomics analysis were
719 devoted to the comparison between WT and *lecrk-I.9-1*.

- 720 - Supplementary Dataset 2. The target genes selected from the transcriptomics analysis were
721 devoted to the comparison between WT and *dorn1-1* (Choi *et al.* 2014).
- 722 - Supplementary Reference List. References related to the Supplementary Datasets 1 and 2.
- 723 - Supplementary Fig. S1. Control experiments using RT-qPCR to confirm the transcriptomics
724 data.
- 725 - Supplementary Fig. S2. Monosaccharide contents of polysaccharides extracted from root
726 tissues of different *A. thaliana* genotypes.
- 727 - Supplementary Fig. S3. Adventitious root *lecrk-1.9* phenotype.
- 728 - Supplementary Fig. S4. Auxin levels in the roots of WT and *lecrk-1.9* mutants.
- 729 - Supplementary Table S1. Oligonucleotide primers were used for cloning and RT-qPCR
730 experiments.
- 731 - Supplementary Table S2. Gene Ontology term analysis.

732

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741

742 **Author contributions**

743 K.B. and H.C. designed experiments and analysed the results. K.B., D.R. and J.C. performed
744 most of the experiments. S.L.G. performed the analysis of CW polysaccharides. Y.M. and A.J.

745 provided imaging at the microscope facilities. H.C. supervised the project. K.B., V.B., E.J.
746 and H.C. wrote the manuscript. H.C. and E.J. managed the funding of the project. All authors
747 read, commented on, and approved the content of the manuscript.

748

749 **Conflict of interests**

750 The authors declare no competing interests.

751

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755

756 **Data availability**

757 Transcriptomics data have been deposited at GEO (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo>) under
758 the accession number GSE223898. Microscopy, RT-qPCR, biochemistry and plant
759 phenotyping data reported in this paper will be shared upon request.

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Figure legends

Fig. 1: *LecRK-I.9* is mainly expressed in root tissues. (A) *pLecRK-I.9::GUS* reporter expression was detected in 7d-old seedling root tissues as well as in the collar and the veins of cotyledons. (B to G) Promoter activity of *LecRK-I.9* in a root tip (B), in root cross-sections of the differentiation zone (C) and of the beginning of the elongation zone (D), in mature root tissue (E), in collar (F) and cotyledons (G). The GUS enzymatic reaction time was 10 min. MZ = meristematic zone; EZ = elongation zone; TZ = transition zone; DZ = differentiation zone; ep = epidermis; c = cortex; en = endoderm; p = pericycle; s = stele. (H and I) Fluorescence signal in the root epidermis visualised by confocal microscopy in 7d-old root apices of *lecrk-I.9-1* complemented *proLecRK-I.9::LecRK-I.9::tagRFP A. thaliana*: optical sections through the epidermis (H) and deeper tissue layers (I) in the elongation zone. Scale bars: 2 mm (A), 50 µm (B to G), and 25 µm (H and I).

Fig. 2. Comparative root transcriptome analysis between WT *A. thaliana* and the *lecrk-I.9-1* mutant identified genotype differentially expressed genes. Whole roots harvested from 7d-old seedlings grown in liquid culture were used for RNA isolation and microarray analysis. Genes were manually annotated to obtain a functional classification. (A) The number of genes up-regulated in *lecrk-I.9-1* with a focus on those encoding CW proteins (presence of a predicted signal peptide, absence of an intracellular retention signal) and CW-related proteins (absence of a predicted signal peptide and experimentally demonstrated CW-related function), *i.e.* 78 genes out of 199. (B) Functional classification of CW and CW-related up-regulated genes. (C) The number of genes down-regulated in *lecrk-I.9-1* with a focus on those encoding CW and CW-related proteins, *i.e.* 65 genes out of 263. (D) Functional classification of CW and CW-related down-regulated genes. The identified genes are listed in Supplementary dataset 1 with their expression ratio and locus identifier, the description of the gene, the primary gene symbol, the bibliographic references and the Student's t-test values.

Fig. 3: LecRK-I.9 regulates HG methylesterification and cell wall HG-related enzyme activities in root tissues. (A) and (B) Immunolocalisation of de-esterified HGs and partially methyl-esterified HGs in 7d-old seedling root tissues using LM19 and LM20 monoclonal antibodies, respectively. The meristematic zone (MZ) and elongation zone (EZ) are shown. Detection was carried out by alkaline phosphatase- (A) or alexa488 fluorochrome- (B) conjugated secondary antibodies. (B) Epifluorescence images (long pass filter, left panels) were superimposed to bright field images (right panels) for both wild-type (WT) and *lecrk-I.9-1* seedlings. Scale bars: 50 μ m. (C) Quantification of the fluorescence signal obtained in (B) (n=6). (D), (E) and (F) respectively shows the degree of HG methylesterification, pectin methylesterase and polygalacturonase activities in the whole root tissues of 7d-old seedlings

from different *A. thaliana* genotypes with modified *LecRK-I.9* expression levels. Ox: over-expressor lines. *dnm*: dominant negative mutant lines. The mean \pm standard deviation of four biological replicates is shown. Asterisk denotes statistically significant differences according to Student's t-test ($*P < 0.05$; $**P < 0.01$) between mutant and over-expressing lines vs WT plants.

Fig. 4: Lateral root *lecrk-I.9* phenotype. Lateral root number (A and C) and lateral root initiation index (B and D) of WT, knockout mutant (*lecrk-I.9-1*; *lecrk-I.9-2*), over-expressors (*Ox-1*; *Ox-2*), complemented (*ComplM-1*) and dominant negative mutant (*dnm-1*; *dnm-2*) lines. Seedlings were grown in two nitrate conditions (A and B, 20 mM KNO₃; C and D, 0.1 mM KNO₃) and observed after 11 days of culture. The mean \pm standard deviation of 40<n<75 seedlings is shown. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences according to Student's t-test ($***P < 0.01$; $**P<0.02$; $*P<0.05$) between mutant, over-expressors, complemented and dominant negative mutant lines vs WT plants.

Fig. 5: *LecRK-I.9* expression is down-regulated in roots under nitrate deficiency. *proLecRK-I.9:GUS* reporter expression was detected at both nitrate concentrations (*i.e.* 20 mM and 0,1 mM) in 6-day-old (A, F) and 11-day-old seedlings (B, G). The GUS enzymatic reaction time was 10 min. Scale bars: 5 mm (A, F) or 10 mm (B, G). (C, D, H, I) Promoter activity of *LecRK-I.9* in the zones of lateral root emergence. The GUS enzymatic reaction time was 10 min. Such a short time of reaction allows observing a lower GUS activity at the site of the lateral root primordium (Δ). This is particularly notable for the low nitrate concentration. Scale bars are 200 μ m. (D, I) Close-up views of the lateral root primordia and (E, J) fully emerged lateral roots from 11d-old seedlings. Scale bars: 200 μ m for emerged lateral roots; 100 μ m for lateral root primordia. (K) Transcript abundance of *LecRK-I.9* was determined by

RT-qPCR with cDNA generated from roots of 7-day-old wild-type seedlings grown in the two nitrate conditions. The mean \pm standard deviation of five biological replicates is shown. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences according to the Student's t-test (** $P < 0.01$).

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Fig. 7: Schematic representation of the regulatory network for LecRK-I.9 in roots. LR development follows a sequence of five main stages, (1) pre-branch site formation, (2) LR initiation, (3) LR morphogenesis, (4) LR emergence, and (5) LR growth. A – Upon high nitrate conditions, *LecRK-I.9* is expressed in the pericycle (blue) and appears to be involved in

CW remodelling processes at stage 1 of LR development. It is a negative regulator of genes encoding enzymes acting on pectins (*PMEs* and *PGs*), and hemicelluloses (*XTH21* and *XUT1*). The listed genes are controlled by *LecRK-I.9* and are involved in the pre-branch site formation (Wachsman *et al.* 2020). Also, *LecRK-I.9* regulates PME and PG activities and the degree of methylesterification of HG that is accurately controlled for the pre-branch site formation (Wachsman *et al.* 2020). On the other hand, *LecRK-I.9* is a positive regulator of *CLE2* and *CLE4* encoding CW peptide precursors described as negative regulators of LR emergence and growth (stages 4 and 5) (Araya *et al.* 2014). B – Upon low nitrate conditions, the expression of *LecRK-I.9* decreases in particular at the site of LR emergence (light blue). The expression of genes encoding CW remodelling proteins is drastically reduced except *EXPB1* and *PME59*. Although the expression of positively regulated genes also decreases (light green), *LecRK-I.9* maintains its regulatory function. As shown by root phenotyping, *LecRK-I.9* exerts a negative regulation at stages 1, 4 and 5 of LR development.

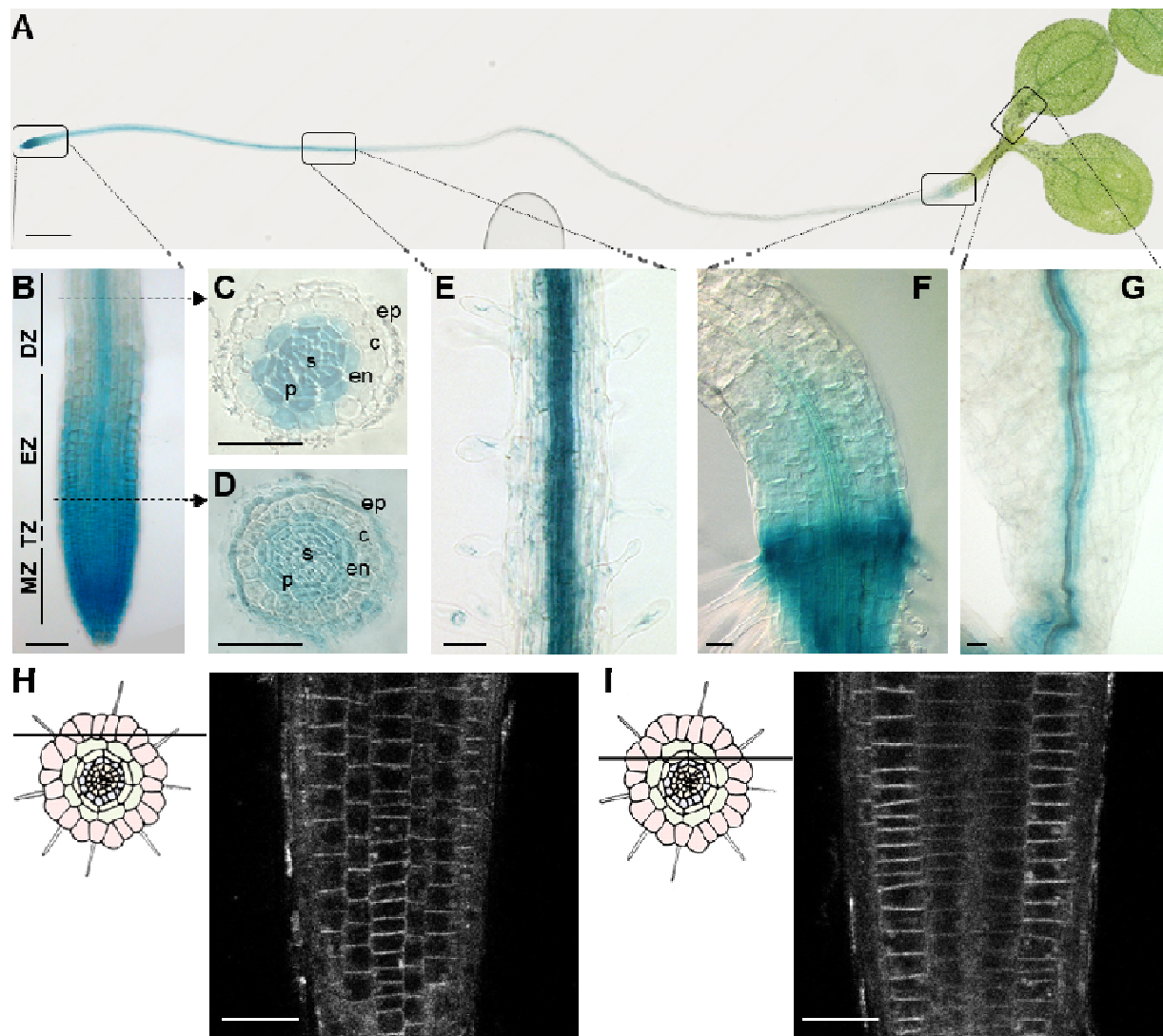


Fig. 1: *LecRK-1.9* is mainly expressed in root tissues. (A) *pLecRK-1.9::GUS* reporter expression was detected in 7d-old seedling root tissues as well as in the collar and the veins of cotyledons. (B to G) Promoter activity of *LecRK-1.9* in a root tip (B), in root cross-sections of the differentiation zone (C) and of the beginning of the elongation zone (D), in mature root tissue (E), in collar (F) and cotyledons (G). The GUS enzymatic reaction time was 10 min. MZ = meristematic zone; EZ = elongation zone; TZ = transition zone; DZ = differentiation zone; ep = epidermis; c = cortex; en = endoderm; p = pericycle; s = stele. (H and I) Fluorescence signal in the root epidermis visualised by confocal microscopy in 7d-old root apices of *isark-1.9-1* complemented *proLecRK-1.9::LecRK-1.9::tagRFP A. thaliana*: optical sections through the epidermis (H) and deeper tissue layers (I) in the elongation zone. Scale bars: 2 mm (A), 50 μ m (B to G), and 25 μ m (H and I).

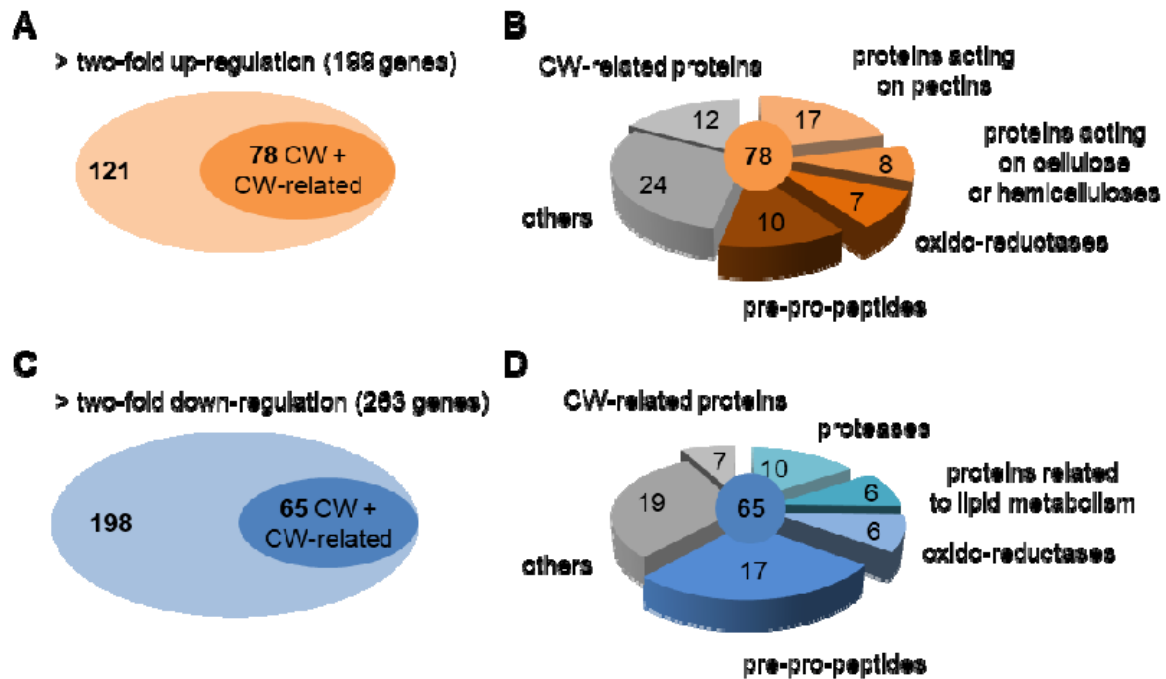


Fig. 2. Comparative root transcriptome analysis between WT *A. thaliana* and the *lecrc-1.9-1* mutant identified genotype differentially expressed genes. Whole roots harvested from 7d-old seedlings grown in liquid culture were used for RNA isolation and microarray analysis. Genes were manually annotated to obtain a functional classification. (A) The number of genes up-regulated in *lecrc-1.9-1* with a focus on those encoding CW proteins (presence of a predicted signal peptide, absence of an intracellular retention signal) and CW-related proteins (absence of a predicted signal peptide and experimentally demonstrated CW-related function), i.e. 78 genes out of 199. (B) Functional classification of CW and CW-related up-regulated genes. (C) The number of genes down-regulated in *lecrc-1.9-1* with a focus on those encoding CW and CW-related proteins, i.e. 65 genes out of 263. (D) Functional classification of CW and CW-related down-regulated genes. The identified genes are listed in Supplementary dataset 1 with their expression ratio and locus identifier, the description of the gene, the primary gene symbol, the bibliographic references and the Student's t-test values.

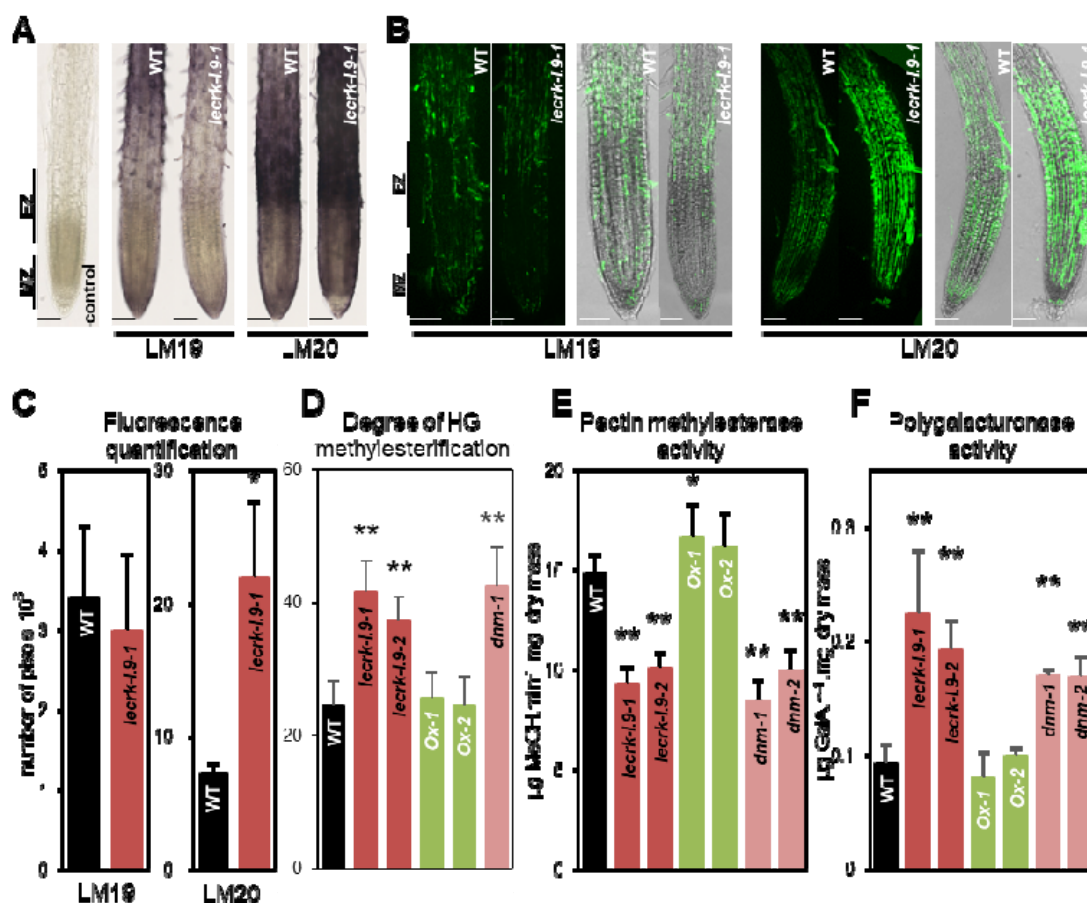


Fig. 3: LecRK-I.9 regulates HG methylesterification and cell wall HG-related enzyme activities in root tissues. (A) and (B) Immunolocalisation of de-esterified HGs and partially methyl-esterified HGs in 7d-old seedling root tissues using LM19 and LM20 monoclonal antibodies, respectively. The meristematic zone (MZ) and elongation zone (EZ) are shown. Detection was carried out by alkaline phosphatase- (A) or alexa488 fluorochrome- (B) conjugated secondary antibodies. (B) Epifluorescence images (long pass filter, left panels) were superimposed to bright field images (right panels) for both wild-type (WT) and *lecRK-I.9-1* seedlings. Scale bars: 50 μ m. (C) Quantification of the fluorescence signal obtained in (B) (n=6). (D), (E) and (F) respectively shows the degree of HG methylesterification, pectin methylesterase and polygalacturonase activities in the whole root tissues of 7d-old seedlings from different *A. thaliana* genotypes with modified *LecRK-I.9* expression levels. Ox: over-expressor lines. *dnm*: dominant negative mutant lines. The mean \pm standard deviation of four biological replicates is shown. Asterisk denotes statistically significant differences according to Student's t-test (* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$) between mutant and over-expressing lines vs WT plants.

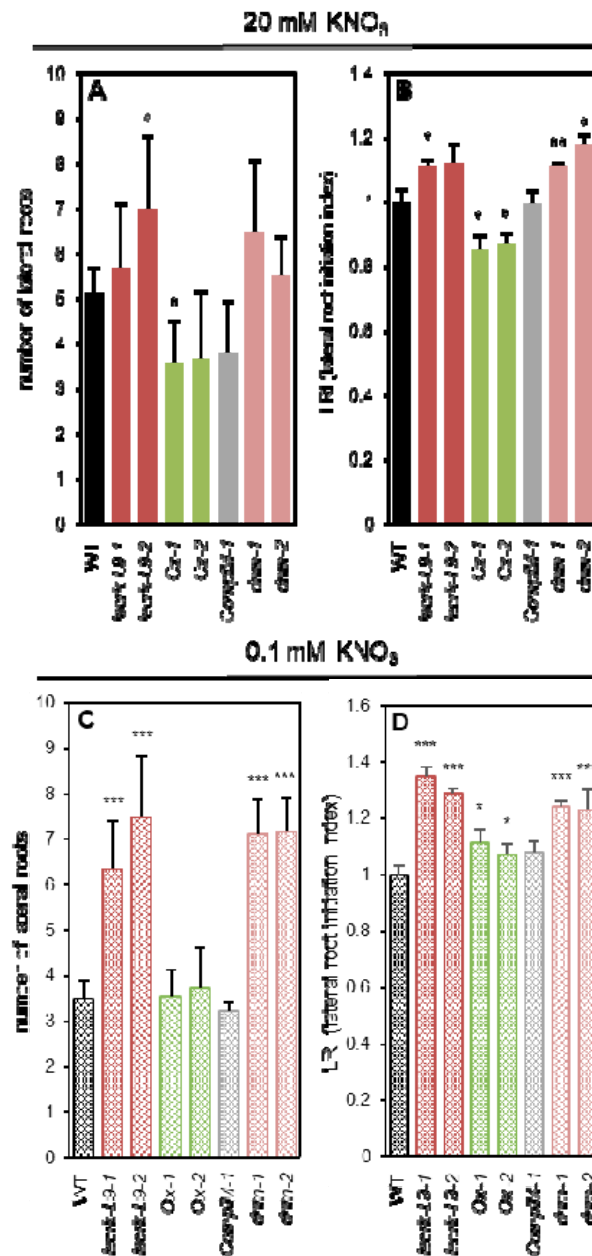


Fig. 4: Lateral root *lecrk-1.9* phenotype. Lateral root number (A and C) and lateral root initiation index (B and D) of WT, knockout mutant (*lecrk-1.9-1*; *lecrk-1.9-2*), over-expressors (*Ox-1*; *Ox-2*), complemented (*ComplM-1*) and dominant negative mutant (*dnm-1*; *dnm-2*) lines. Seedlings were grown in two nitrate conditions (A and B, 20 mM KNO₃; C and D, 0.1 mM KNO₃) and observed after 11 days of culture. The mean \pm standard deviation of 40 < n < 75 seedlings is shown. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences according to Student's t-test (****P* < 0.01; ***P* < 0.02; **P* < 0.05) between mutant, over-expressors, complemented and dominant negative mutant lines vs WT plants.

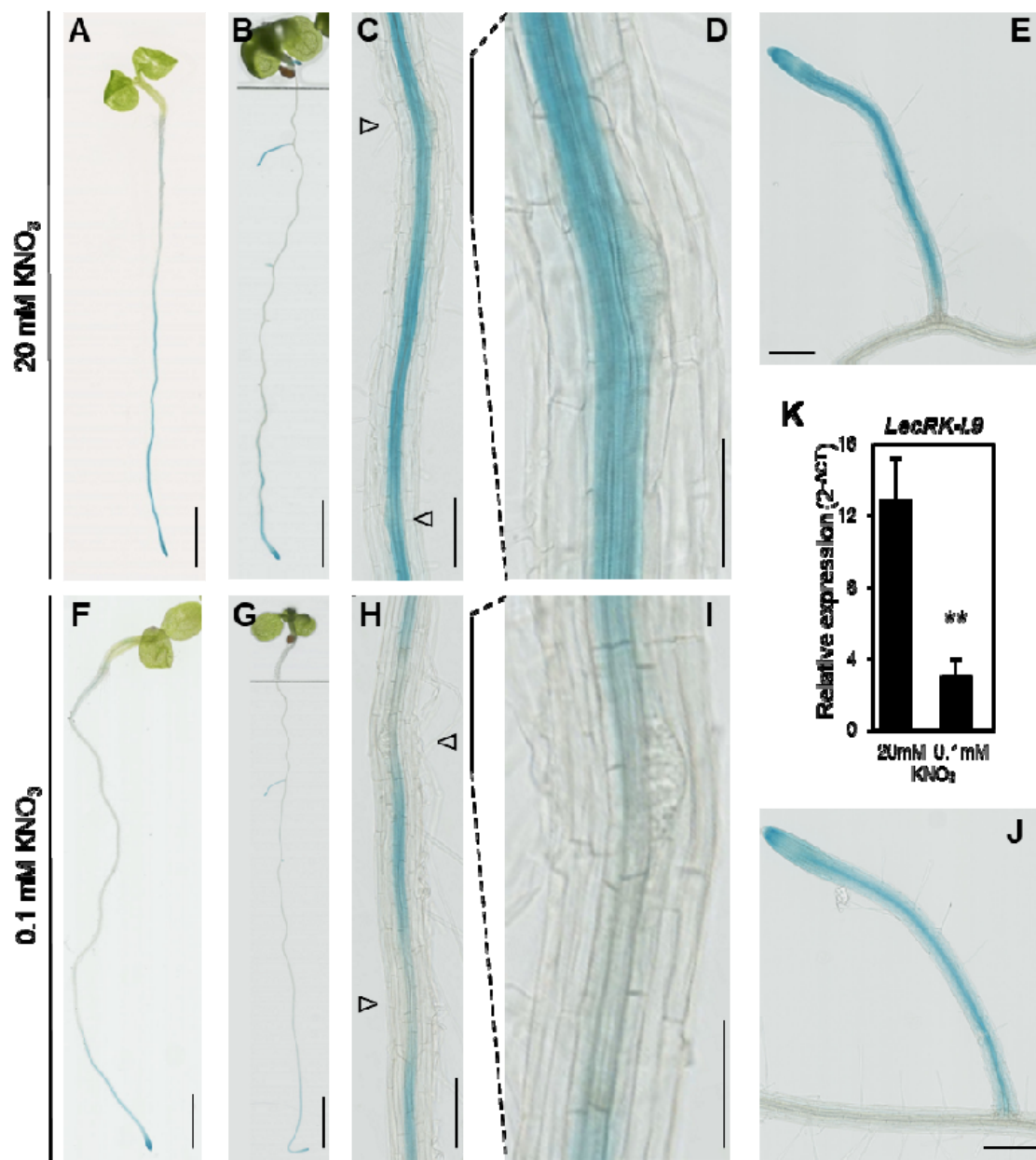


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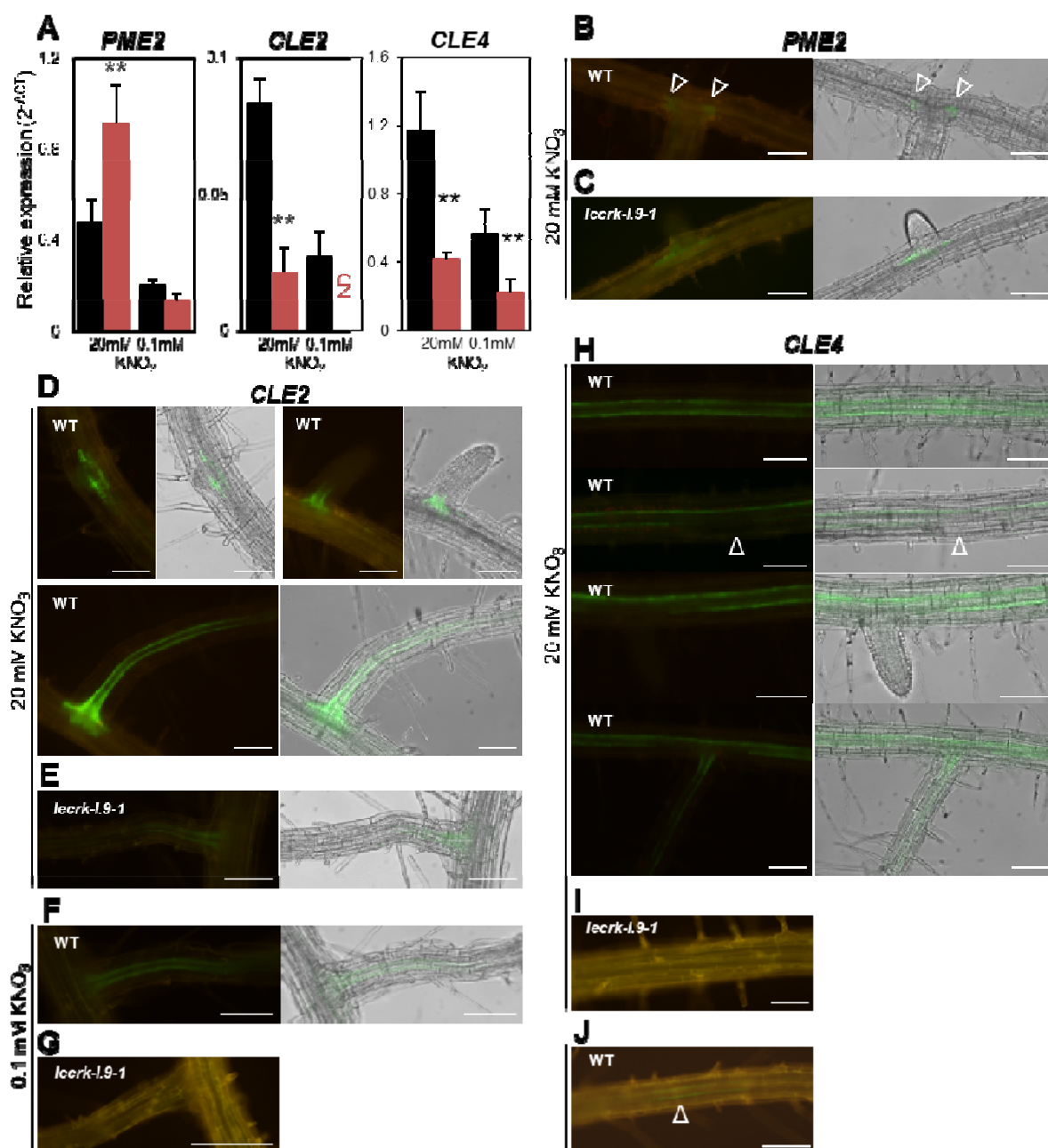


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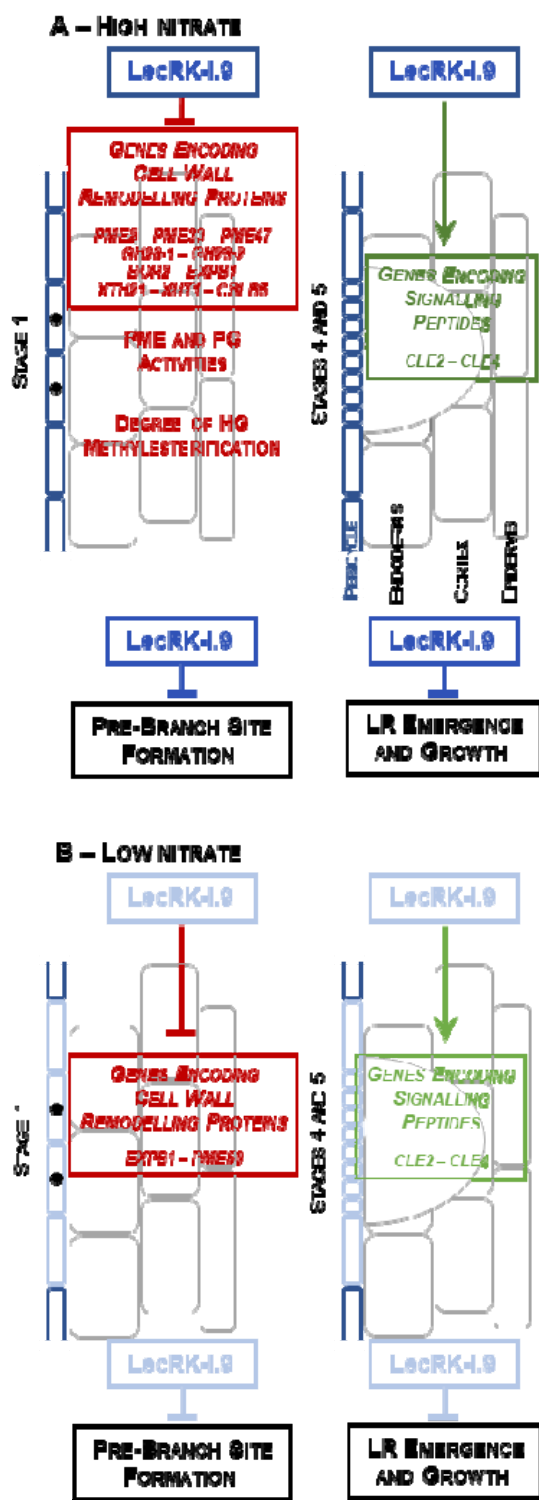


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