



## **IAVS Membership Committee suggestions for increasing the membership Palermo, 2017**

### **Introduction**

Analysis of the experiences of other biological societies showed that attracting new members only cannot solve problem of low membership. We must create an atmosphere is for the members of IAVS that provides:

- the best vehicle for professional communication;
- the best atmosphere for realization of scientific ideas;
- information about the most promising trends in the field of vegetation science and related fields;
- a supportive atmosphere for the development of new ideas;
- inclusion of all fields of vegetation science and related fields (earth science, zoology, taxonomy, climatology, paleobiology etc.);
- a vehicle for stimulating interdisciplinary studies;
- a vehicle to encourage studies at all geographic scales: from local to global;
- opportunities for professional growth;
- a venue for stimulating, open and broad discussions;
- an atmosphere that moves vegetation science ahead.

Increasing membership will require coordinated efforts at different levels of IAVS organizations: Council, Committees, working groups and members.

### **1. Analysis of the current situation: major factors pushing people off the IAVS**

1.1. We have very nice and complete vision statement, but no clear strategy for a certain period of time, stating which fields in vegetation science we need to develop for the best progress. What do we expect in the field of vegetation science to comprise in 2020, 2030? What should be the IAVS contribution to global UN programs on species conservation, carbon sequestration, global water resources, others?

1.2. IAVS as an association has some features characteristic of closed club, because of its extremely tight connection with IAVS affiliated journals. This is good for business, but many IAVS members and potential members interpret the requirements of the IAVS journals, e.g. scope and international relevance of articles, as the IAVS policy regarding what is important and relevant in the field of vegetation science as a whole. In Council discussions we emphasize the difference between IAVS journals, which are owned by our association and non-IAVS vegetation science journals, which are not. We see a benefit to our society in appealing to all vegetation scientists, regardless of where they choose to publish their work. We seek to avoid competition between the journals leading to isolation of different groups associated with those journals. .

1.3. Professional associations from similar fields may be more attractive to potential, especially young, members.

1.4. Lack of (reasonably) aggressive advertisement of the IAVS.

## 2. Suggestions of the Membership Committee to IAVS Council

### 2.1. Strategy

- To develop an IAVS strategy demonstrating major results expected by IAVS in different fields of vegetation science. Some working groups now made great progress in strategic planning, and we are able to make some prognoses and setup major tasks for the period 5-10 years ahead for such fields as vegetation databases, vegetation classification, vegetation spatial and temporal modeling, other fields. This will help young scholars identify the most promising topics around which to build their future career.
- To connect IAVS strategy with global biota and human being related strategies elaborated by global organizations (UN, others).

### 2.2. Openness and networking

The first step to building relationships with vegetation scientists involved non-IAVS journals could be the official invitations to journals to make their presentations at the annual IAVS symposia as posters or exhibition desks. The second step could be preparation and signing the bi-lateral MOUs with journals. It would be great if we could consider the creation of a consortium of vegetation science journals in future for the mutual benefit of IAVS and all the journals.

Javier Loidi: [There are several journals, many of them national and non-English (or not-only-English) which traditionally have been publishing (an supporting) VS on a national or regional scale. The information provided by them is formidable in historical terms as they have fed the splendid data banks we are enjoying now, for instance, they have been providing information for regional and national surveys and reports for nature conservation policy, etc. Such a wide array of journals represents the work of hundreds of colleagues who have been working along years sampling data in their territories. For many of them, now IAVS is an exclusive club, a sort of aristocracy of VS which only admits people who are able to publish in ISI journals and is competent in English (and has enough money to attend the symposia). If we do not change this paradigm, we will never enlarge our membership and probably, in the long term, we will not be able to endure the competition of other well-established associations in Ecology and we will start the way towards extinction. The world of VS is much broader than that elitist conception. We have to manage to include in some way a major part of the Vegetation Scientists of the world who are doing their job honorably but they do not find themselves comfortable inside IAVS. For that we have to consider the "humble" national journals because they still are the channel these colleagues find a place to publish their reports and often in their language. These journals, often not only publishing about vegetation but also other issues such as flora or taxonomy, could be laxly linked to IAVS, of course in a much less intensive form as Phytocoenologia is nowadays, not to mention JVS and AVS. Some tentative ways or relating with them are: Give some information about them in our web page; They put some information about IAVS in their cover or information pages.

In the western European area, I can mention: *Folia Geobotanica* (Czech Rep.); *Tuexenia* (Germany); *Documents Phytosociologiques* (France); *Lazaroa* (Spain); *Plant Sociology* (Italy); *Hacquetia* (Slovenia); *Guineana* (Spain); *Quercus* (Portugal); *Berichte der Reinhold Tüxen Gesellschaft* (Germany); *Acta Botanica Gallica* (France); *Global Geobotany* (Spain); *International Journal of Geobotanical Research* (Spain); others ...

In the operation of enlarging IAVS to all the vegetation scientists of the world, two main keystones can be addressed: the "little" national journals we can try to approach of offer

some visibility and the different Working Groups and Regional Sections. Both approach us to that people and we have to make them easy and attractive to join us. The more active are the WGs, the more visible will be IAVS and easier will be recruiting new members].

- Collaboration with close professional societies to stimulate multidisciplinary research as a means to fulfil our strategic tasks.

Javier Loidi: [A certain cooperation or alliance with some national associations existing currently, particularly in Europe, can be convenient: Association Française de Phytosociologie, Sociedad Española de Geobotánica, Società Italiana di Scienza della Vegetazione, Rheinhold Tüxen Gesellschaft, etc. These associations also promote VS usually in a more Braun-Blanquet approach frame, but that is also within the scope of IAVS. We should promote finding ways of cooperation with them in some way, for instance, their members receiving automatically our information or Bulletin and vice-versa (for advantages in the symposia and subscription fees).].

- Establish a mechanism to ensure that local vegetation studies published in local journals and books in diverse languages are visible to international audiences. Here, we suggest a section of the IAVS website entitled 'Vegetation survey abstracting' with very summary information on authors, their contact information, title, source of publication, vegetation type surveyed and number of vegetation plots it is based upon. This could appeal the interest of groups working for local and regional administrations, consultancy and so on. Those who are needed to apply VS at the detailed scale; they could be benefited of a more direct flow of the knowledge generated by the more theoretical and globally working groups.

### 2.3. Attracting new members

- **Advertising.** The 'official' poster of IAVS (with supplementary booklets, pamphlets) must be designed and updated every year for presenting the association in all scientific meetings related to vegetation science. The poster and pamphlets must be freely downloadable from the IAVS website in ready-to-print form to allow IAVS members to produce hard copies and distribute it at all meetings he or she participates in.

- **Inviting.** Following a suggestion by Mike Palmer, the template of the official invitation letter, with all necessary information on conditions and benefits of membership, must be elaborated and freely accessible to IAVS members to enable them to personally invite of colleagues to join IAVS.

- **Trial membership for young scholars.** Awarding beginners in vegetation science, who just published his or her first vegetation science paper or dissertation, for 1-3-year free trial membership by direct invitation for the prominent achievements (dissertation defended, paper of high interest published, others). It would be good if the IAVS financial advisers could calculate possible quotas of trial memberships per year considering current financial situation.

Pavel Krestov: [Most promising, to my view, are the vegetation scientists who work more or less independently and just do not know how good IAVS is (past decade of IAVS history demonstrates this trend of improvement really clearly). I am sure, that this group is most rich in young people, who are looking for best scientific society to build up their carrier. It is

possible that they are members of several societies (where they pay very low fee(s)). In this case we can approach them and ask why not try with us, we are really good for your future activity. Just try one year free! I am pretty sure, that if such persons come to symposium and personally meet people who authored major textbooks in vegetation science, they will just have no choice other than joining IAVS as regular members.]

Javier Loidi: [Perhaps 10 years after receiving a degree or 5 years after PhD (or both). The PhD should be on an issue related to VS, this has to be reviewed by a committee or something similar. CV should also be evaluated for each case. Trial membership is a full membership with all the advantages (reduced rates for symposia, reduced fees for journals, information in the web page). Duration 1 year (less than that is to me non-effective). The idea is to select our trial members targeting in really potential future full members. Less quantity but better quality.]

- **Using social media.** Elaborating Facebook page, actively inviting vegetation scientists to sign on the IAVS group and provide information on IAVS membership conditions and benefits.

### **3. Suggestions of the Membership Committee to IAVS Committees**

#### **3.1. Awards Committee**

- To apply reasonable diplomatic efforts to convince the awardee to become a member of IAVS;

Javier Loidi: [And convince them to attend the symposia and excursions. This is an important point because the expectation that relevant people is going to attend personally such events is quite appealing for young people. They should also have special sessions in which attendants could interact with them. Inviting them to symposia is a possibility, but not only to give a talk, also to participate in such sessions where young scientists can pose questions and discuss directly and in person with the "great wise people". We could think about the format of such special sessions (round table or so)].

- Consider opportunity to organize the contest of vegetation science dissertations, and opportunity to establish the best dissertation award.

#### **3.2. Global Sponsorship Committee**

- To elaborate criteria of eligibility for trial membership.

#### **3.3. Meeting Committee**

- Considering applications for further meetings, encourage organizers to have special features for attracting young scientists to participate: special funding from the organizing committee, workshops, lectures from prominent science persons, others.

#### **3.4. Website & Social Media Special Committee**

- Consider re-design of the membership area on the IAVS website to provide the opportunity for IAVS members to see each other in the open section of member area, post



their contact data, links to institutional personal pages and to personal pages in scientific social network.

- Add Q&A section to the web site, with such questions as:

- How much are the annual membership fees?
- Where can I find out more about free membership?
- Where can I find the application form for joining IAVS?
- What forms of payment do you accept?
- I would like to know more about the status of my membership. Who can give me details?
- I have some suggestions on improving the work of the IAVS, how can I send them?
- How can I sign up for the IAVS Bulletin?
- How do I access the IAVS membership zone on the website?
- How do I create my personal page on the IAVS website?
- How can I learn who are the IAVS members?
- How do I post my organization's event on the IAVS calendar of meetings?
- How do I post my job offer?
- How can I join working group?
- How can I submit information for the IAVS Bulletin?
- How can I obtain support to participate in IAVS symposium?
- Others

#### **4. IAVS Working Groups**

- Make suggestions to IAVS strategy from the point of view of the Working Group.
- Encourage young members of WG, not IAVS members to join association.

We will be grateful for your comments!