



Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG)

Report for the period from 15th June 2017 to 9th July 2018

Members and organisation of the EDGG

Since the last report in 2017, the number of EDGG members slightly increased and reached 1315 members from 67 countries as of 28th June 2018. Membership in EDGG is free of charge and can be activated by sending an e-mail to our membership administrator Idoia Biurrun (idoia.biurrun@ehu.es). So far the membership administration has been maintained separately from IAVS, creating double work and inconsistencies. A plan by FASEB and the IAVS Membership Committee to merge the membership databases of IAVS and all its subgroups, launched already in Pirenopolis, unfortunately never has materialised. The EDGG is governed by a 7-member Executive Committee (EC), which consists for the period 2017–2019 of Didem Ambarli (TR), Idoia Biurrun (ES), Jürgen Dengler (CH), Anna Kuzemko (UA), Péter Török (HU), Stephen Venn (FI) and Michael Vrahnakis (GR), each member with specific responsibilities.

Past EDGG events

The **14th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC)** took place 4-11 July 2017 in Latvia and Lithuania, hosted by Solvita Rušina (Latvia) and Valerijus Rašomavičius (Lithuania) and colleagues. The conference aimed at bringing together the latest research, and to link this to practical management and policy, contributing to the sustainability of semi-natural and natural grasslands. Emphasis was placed on cases where grassland ecosystems are affected by man-made and natural geographical borders. The conference took place in the newly built Academic Center for Natural Sciences of the University of Latvia and was attended by 92 participants from 19 countries.

Further information can be found from the conference homepage at:

<https://egc2017.namupro.de/>

The **15th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC)** took place at Sulmona, Italy, from 4–8 June 2018. The main topic of the conference was the conservation of grasslands through transdisciplinary and transnational cooperation. The conference wanted to put the basis for the establishment of a network of cooperation within the EDGG. The conference was attended by 64 participants from 17 countries.

Further information can be found at the conference homepage:

<https://edgg.namupro.de/egc2018>

Future EDGG events

The **11th EDGG Field Workshop** will take place in Austria from 6th to 13th of July 2018. The local organisers are Martin Magnes (Graz, Austria), Philipp Kirschner (Innsbruck, Austria) and Helmut Mayrhofer (Graz, Austria). The main idea of this workshop is to start a resampling of Braun-Blanquet's (1961) study of the vegetation of the "Inneralpine dry valleys" but with a standardised sampling approach and followed by state-of-the-art analyses of biodiversity patterns. The demand for participation was so high that for the first time not all interested colleagues could be accepted.

The **16th Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC)** (29 May – 05 June 2019) will be jointly hosted by the Universities of Graz (Austria) and Maribor (Slovenia). The hall sessions will take place in Graz, while post conference excursions will take place in Slovenia. Further information will be published in *Palaeartic Grasslands* and on the EDGG website. For the years 2020 et seq. there are various offers of conference venues, among them Bilbao, Spain.

The **12th EDGG Field Workshop** will take place in Armenia in summer 2019, hosted by Alla Alexanyan. The topic will be standardised biodiversity sampling of multiple taxa along an elevational gradient in the Caucasus. Further information will be published in *Palaeartic Grasslands* and on the EDGG website.

For future years there are many offers for hosting EDGG Field Workshops, among them Bosnia, Montenegro, Middle Asia, Central Spain, European Russia, Italian Alps, Inneralpine valleys of Switzerland, Northern Poland, and if the demand for participation remains at the current high level, possibly in some years two such events will be organised.

Publication activities of EDGG

EDGG has published two issues of its own electronic journal, the *Bulletin of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group*, within the reported period (Issues 35–36, all issues are freely available from <http://www.edgg.org/publications.htm>).



Recently, EDGG decided to re-launch the journal under the name *Palaeartic Grasslands*. While remaining the news platform for EDGG and its members, *Palaeartic Grasslands* aims at also being an attractive publication venue for scientific articles (which from now on are subject to "editorial review") and has an emphasis on aesthetic high-quality photographs from grasslands and their organism (including the two new contribution types "Photo Story" and "Photo Competition"). These changes have been implemented by Chief Editor Anna Kuzemko, Deputy Chief Editors Idoia Biurrun and Jürgen Dengler and the significantly enlarged Editorial Board. After the inaugural issue, published on the 4th of July 2018, it is planned to publish 4–6 issues per year.

Furthermore, the EDGG has continued its long-standing tradition of Special Issues/Features in international journals. In the current reporting period, the following Special Issues/Features were published under the coordination of the EDGG:

- The 12th **EDGG Special Feature in *Tuexenia*** focused on the vegetation, conservation and management of semi-natural and natural grasslands in Central Europe. It was edited by Thomas Becker, Balázs Deák, Anikó Csecserits and Viktoria Wagner. Altogether 41 authors from six countries (Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Serbia and Switzerland) contributed to the published papers. The content is open access: https://www.tuexenia.de/?page_id=765
- The fourth EDGG edited **Special Issue in the journal *Hacquetia*** was edited by Orsi Valkó, Stephen Venn, Michal Zmihorski, Idoia Biurrun, Rocco Labadessa and Jacqueline Loos. It was published in early 2018 and is available online and in hard copy. This special issue was initiated by members of the EDGG who attended the 13th Eurasian Dry Grassland Conference (EDGC) at Sighisoara, Romania, in September 2016. It contains six papers dealing with the conservation, ecology, syntaxonomy and zoology of grassland and steppe habitats from East Europe to central Asia. The content is open access: <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/hacq/17/1/hacq.17.issue-1.xml>.
- Furthermore, Jürgen Dengler, on behalf of the EDGG, edited the Palaeartic chapters for the book ***Grasslands of the world: diversity, management and conservation*** (CRC Press, Boca Raton, US). Seven regional chapters and a synthesis chapter have been written by numerous EDGG members from many countries. This book provides, for the first time, a consistent overview of all grasslands in the Palaeartic. It is now in print and its release is expected in the near future.
- Currently the 13th EDGG Special Feature in *Tuexenia* is about to be finished (publication expected in August 2018). New EDGG Special Features/Issues for 2019 are in preparation for the journals *Tuexenia*, *Hacquetia* and *Flora*.

Other EDGG media

The EDGG website (www.edgg.org) during the report period was maintained at a basic level. Reconstruction of the EDGG homepage has been started during this period. As a first step, the EGC webpage was reconstructed under the EDGG homepage/EGC conferences menu and used for EGC15 for the first time (please visit <https://edgg.namupro.de/egc2018>). The new design will be cloned for future conferences and workshops, which will decrease the webpage costs of the EDGG. Furthermore, most of the pages of the EDGG homepage were transferred to the new site (not yet public). The new content management system allows for each chair to modify the pages under their responsibility easily. The EDGG will finalize and launch the webpage in the coming weeks, possibly before IAVS Symposium.

In order to enhance the rapid dissemination of information to our members about EDGG activities, as well as in order to attract new members, a discussion on various topics related to grasslands research and conservation has been established in the EDGG Facebook group. It can be visited at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/938367279561202/?ref=bookmarks> Facebook page editors: Anna Kuzemko (anya_meadow@i.ua) and Stephen Venn (stephen.venn@helsinki.fi).

Database activities of EDGG

The EDGG's database of multi-scale plant diversity data in Palaearctic Grasslands "GrassPlot", launched in March 2017, developed very positively during the reporting period. Currently it comprises about 3,000 nested-plot series and nearly 170,000 plots in total. The GrassPlot Consortium has recently published a paper describing the database aims and contents:

Dengler, J., Wagner, V., Dembicz, I., García-Mijangos, I., Naqinezhad, A., Boch, S., Chiarucci, A., Conradi, T., Filibeck, G., (...), Biurrun, I. 2018. GrassPlot – a database of multi-scale plant diversity in Palaearctic grasslands. *Phytocoenologia*. DOI: 10.1127/phyto/2018/0267.

Further data are constantly being added, and a first set of two analytical papers is planned for the second half of 2018. More information at: <https://bit.ly/2HvVkgu>

Moreover, there are six national and supranational vegetation-plot databases of grasslands that are affiliated with EDGG: Romanian Grassland Database (RGD), Balkan Dry Grassland Database (BDGD), German Grassland Database (GrassVeg.DE), Nordic-Baltic Grassland Vegetation Database (NBGV), Ukrainian Grassland Database (UGD), and Turkish non-forest database. All are members of the European Vegetation Archive (EVA) and the first four showed a strong growth during the reporting period.

Financial issues

The main financial support of EDGG occurs via the IAVS. In 2017 and 2018, the IAVS provided an annual baseline support (€500), will provide travel grants for the EDGG Field Workshop in Austria (€2500) and the Eurasian Grassland Conference in Sulmona (€2500). The IAVS also provides an honorarium (€1500) to one EDGG representative to attend the annual IAVS Symposium, which will be held in Bozeman, Montana. The support is greatly appreciated by the EDGG.

The EDGG received an additional €3800 project funding for 2017 and 2018 for the reconstruction of its homepage. We covered the costs of linguistic editing of non-native authors in the EDGG special features in *Hacquetia* (in total of €394.24). For these we used our baseline funding from 2017 and surpluses from previous activities.

We cordially invite you to join the EDGG, its events and activities!

Péter Török (on behalf of the Executive Committee of the EDGG)