

## **IAVS Membership Committee report Bozeman, 2018**

### **Introduction**

One of the major goals of IAVS is to create an atmosphere is for the members 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**

In the period of 2017-2018 IAVS was a home for representatives of 69 countries of all continents (Fig. 1). Traditionally on the top of the countries on membership counting are Germany, United States, Japan and Spain. Recent annual symposia in Australia, Brazil and Italy caused a considerable growth of membership in these countries. Analyzing situation with vegetation science in countries it is visible that the IAVS membership in some of them is very low comparing with potential membership. The reasons are different: for Canada (12 members in 2017, 15 in 2018th) it is involvement of active vegetation ecologists in other professional societies, in Belarus (0 members) - relatively low income, in Mongolia (0 members) - lack of support of vegetation science at government level. Still underrepresented are the regions of south of South America, Central America, Central Asia, Near East and Africa except South Africa.

According to FASEB statistics, membership in 2018 decreased against the level of 2017 by 132 members (Fig. 2). Analysis of this situation shows that vegetation scientists make decision to renew membership or not in very practical way, and major driver in making decision is the intension to participate in the annual symposium. About the same pattern is shown by new recruits of IAVS. Most people join IAVS in the period of the annual IAVS symposium registration, and no people want to join in time between symposia.

Analysis of losses and gains in IAVS membership (Fig. 3) supports the crucial role of annual symposia in membership dynamics. The annual symposium in USA caused remarkable growth of membership in this country and loss of the membership in remote countries, where members estimate their chances to attend symposium as low.

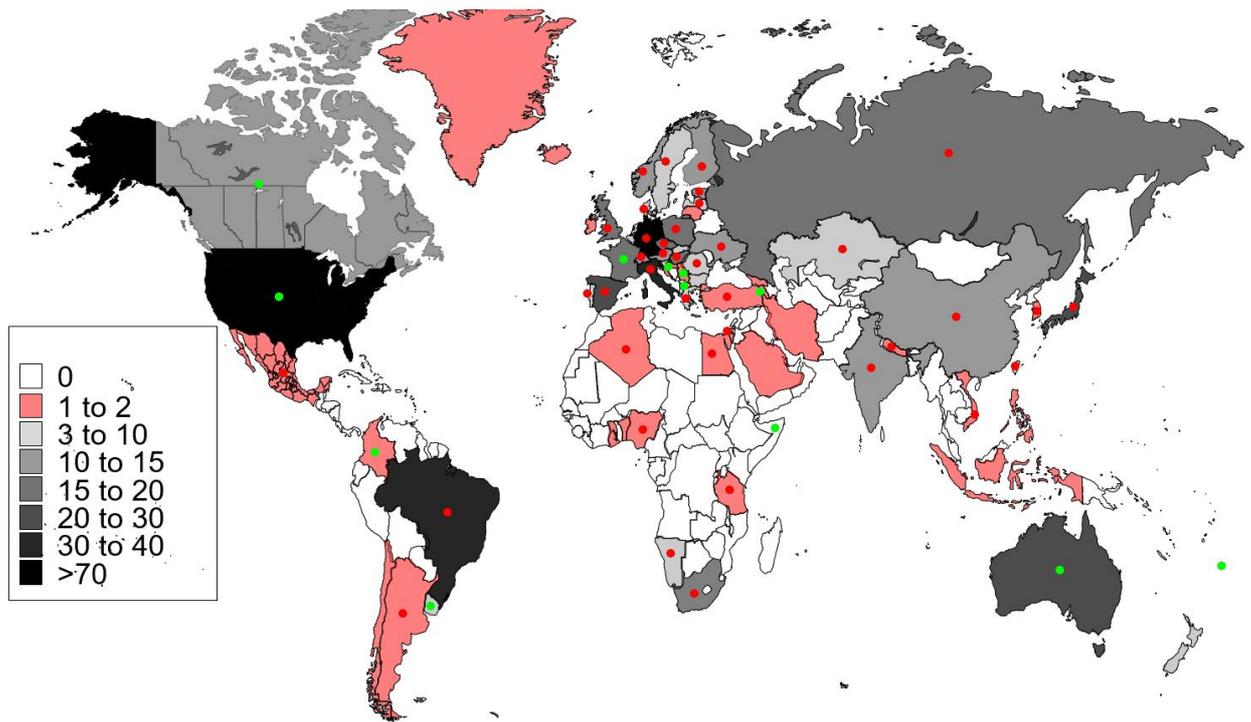


Figure 1. Number of IAVS members by countries by the end of 2017 (green dots mean gain of membership in 2018 and red dots mean loss)



Figure 2. Dynamics of membership

Another factor causing decrease of membership is poor notification of members about the date of membership expiration. Many IAVS members refused to pay fee because of lack of notification in December 2017 - January 2018. Many IAVS members explained why they did not pay fee by no intension to participate in the IAVS symposium this year and are going to renew membership in future. May be it make sense to apply special renewal fee in case, if member return to IAVS well beyond the deadline of renewal. Also it would be useful to have an automatic option of membership renewal in the payment form designed in the way to minimize efforts to repeat the annual payment.

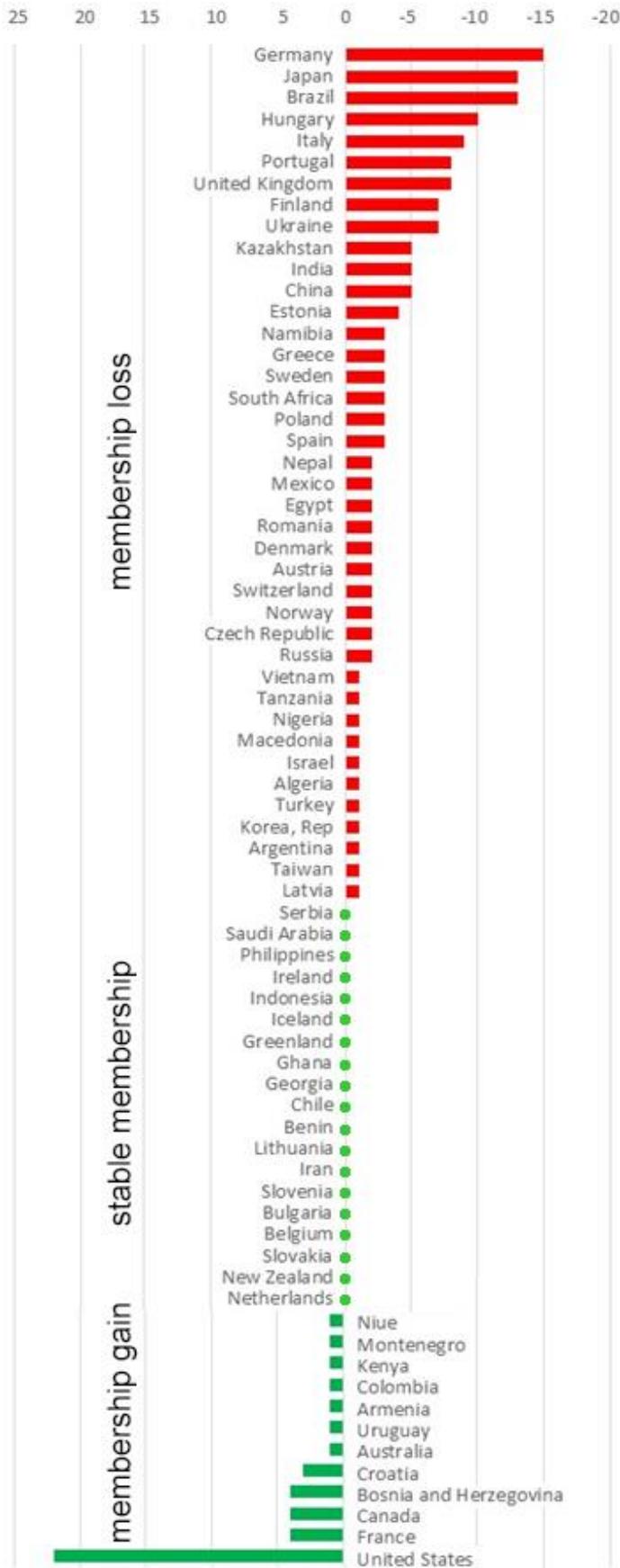


Figure 3. Losses and gains in IAVS membership in 2018, compared to 2017 membership counting (countries with zero membership were dropped out)

## **2. What is done from the suggestions to IAVS Council - 2017**

### **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.

- (2018) no progress in strategic planning; but a number of useful courses on vegetation classification, modeling and database management has been organized by working groups

- To connect IAVS strategy with global biota and human being related strategies elaborated by global organizations (UN, others).

- (2018) no progress

### **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.

- (2018) contracts and legal acts signed by IAVS contains strong limitations in such kind of activities, but it can be done privately on independent platform of IAVS

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

- (2018) no progress in this activity

- 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.

- (2018) this work in progress now, we create a list of local and regional vegetation surveys in different languages that will be submitted to the IAVS website by December 2018

### **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.

- (2018) several different-size posters have been designed and advertised through the IAVS facebook page, but no requests of print-ready files so far

- **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.

- (2018) in progress

- **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.

- (2018) no legal documents elaborated by IAVS so far, but study of the audience of young scientists in Russia showed no direct interest to use this option of membership; they are ready to undertake some efforts to join association only having in mind reduced fees for members during registration for IAVS symposium

- **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.

- (2018) this opportunity is used intensively for inviting new IAVS members, for informing audience and sharing useful information. So far we have 869 participants in the IAVS Facebook group

### 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;

- (2018) 2018 score is 100% of awardees are IAVS members. Also 3 of 4 plenary lecturers are IAVS members

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

- (2018) no progress in this activity

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

- To elaborate criteria of eligibility for trial membership.
  - (2018) no progress

### **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.
  - (2018) in 2018 organizers applied efforts to reduce living cost during symposium; ESA initiates the Ton Damman Award for participation of young scientists in IAVS annual symposium

### **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.
  - (2018) the membership area was considerably updated and became more friendly to user; payment procedure became much easier than it used to be before; however, the site needs to be more dynamic and interactive
- Add Q&A section to the web site, with such questions as:
  - (2018) big work done by Monika and published in the IAVS Bulletin

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

- Make suggestions to IAVS strategy from the point of view of the Working Group.
  - (2018) no progress so far
- Encourage young members of WG, not IAVS members to join association.
  - (2018) no progress (!) Working groups have many members, who are not and do not intend to be members of IAVS.