

Report on the activities of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) to the IAVS Council (2022), covering the period July 2021 – May 2022

Compiled by the EDGG Representative to IAVS; Jürgen Dengler, 31 May 2022

The Working Group (<https://edgg.org>)

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) deals with flora, fauna, vegetation, ecology and conservation of any type of natural and semi-natural grassland in the Palaearctic biogeographic realm. On 10 May 2022, we had 1,370 members from 65 countries. From the eight Executive Committee members, recently Alla Aleksanyan has resigned for personal reasons. You find the names of the responsible chairs behind each task.

EDGG conferences (Didem Ambarli & Stephen Venn)

The Covid-19 pandemic took a toll also from EDGG. We had to cancel the **Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC)** in Tolosa, Spain, originally planned in September 2020 and then in September 2021, already twice. Now it will be conducted in September 2022, hosted by Idoia Biurrun and colleagues: <https://edgg.org/egc2022>.

The first **Asian Grassland Conference (AGC)** was organised by the EDGG represented by Didem Ambarli, Alla Aleksanyan, Stephen Venn, Frank Yonghong Li and Jiangshuang Wu, from 19-21 April as a pure online event: <https://edgg.org/AGC>. Financial support of IAVS (7000 EUR) and the Inner Mongolian University (ca. 1500 EUR) allowed us to **offer participation free of charge to everyone**. The conference was organised by a Turkish event company on a **professional and attractive online platform**. On each of the three days, we had a keynote lecture, followed by three parallel oral sessions, followed by a poster session with pre-recorded speed talks before. The regular talks were basically given live unless the presenter had technical problems. In such a case there was a pre-recorded version that could be shown. The days were completed with online interactive workshops on various topics and a virtual happy hour. Technically everything worked quite well, but we learned a few things that could be improved from side of the organisation, e.g., having the Happy Hour open the whole day and inserting breaks between blocks of presentations. We had nearly 250 participants, many of them from low-income countries and for the first time in an EDGG or IAVS event. We believe that this is largely because we did not request any fees. While indeed many valuable aspects of a live conference were missing, such an online event (if free of charge) has other advantages: (a) If free of charge, one can attract people who never attended a live conference; (b) with approximately the same amount of money which in form of travel grants in a live conference could partially pay the costs for one dozen participants, we could make the whole event free for everybody; (c) we dramatically reduced the carbon footprint of the event. Thus, in the closing event, there was broad interest in having a second Asian Grassland Conference organised in a similar way somewhen in the future.

TalkGrasslands! (Stephen Venn)

In winter 2021/22, we conducted the second series of online keynote talks on grassland topics by internationally renowned specialists, called **"TalkGrasslands!"**. On 23th November 2021 Martin Diekmann offered the talk **"Driving factors of long-term vegetation changes in grasslands"**, and on 14th December we had the opportunity to listen to Paolo Biella in this talk entitled **"Linking plants and pollinators: a story of local disturbance events and anthropized landscapes"**. Finally, Jitka Klimešová gave her talk **"Grasslands: the hidden part"** on 11th January 2022. The three talks were well attended, and the series will be continued in winter 2022/23.

Field Workshops (Iwona Dembicz & Idoia Biurrun)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the regular EDGG Field Workshop in Eastern Ukraine had been postponed from May 2020 to May 2021 and then again to May 2022. We are deeply saddened that the Russian war against the peaceful Ukraine now has forced us to cancel this long-awaited event.

In September 2021, Jürgen Dengler hosted the second ad-hoc Field Workshop on subalpine and alpine open vegetation of the Swiss Alps (16th FW), which was well attended by 15 participants from six countries. For 2022, there are so far no plans for ad hoc Field Workshops, but EDGG members who wish to organise one spontaneously are invited to get into contact with the Field Workshop Coordinators. The next regular Field Workshop will now be conducted in June 2023 in Vinschgau and neighbouring dry valleys of northern Italy, hosted by Andreas Hilpold (EURAC) and colleagues. More details will be announced in the autumn issue of *Palaeartic Grasslands*.

In the reporting period, two reports from Field Workshops have been published:

- Moysiienko, I., Vynokurov, D., Shyriaieva, D., Skobel, N., Babitskyi, A., Bednarska, I., Bezsmertna, O., Chusova, O., Dengler, J., (...) & Dembicz, I. 2022. Grasslands and coastal habitats of Southern Ukraine: First results from the 15th EDGG Field Workshop. *Palaeartic Grasslands* 52: 44–83.
- Dengler, J., Cykowska-Marzencka, B., Seiler, H., Catalano, C., Dolnik, C., Guarino, R., Indermaur, A., Pasta, S., Putfarken, D., (...) & Dembicz, I. 2022. Vegetation diversity in the Swiss Alps – Impressions from the 16th EDGG Field Workshop. *Palaeartic Grasslands* 52: 87–102.

Moreover, three scientific papers have been published based on regional Field Workshop data and one is in press:

- Magnes, M., Willner, W., Janišová, M., Mayrhofer, H., Khouri, E.A., Berg, C., Kuzemko, A., Kirschner, P., Guarino, R., (...) & Dembicz, I. 2021. Xeric grasslands of the inner-alpine dry valleys of Austria – new insights into syntaxonomy, diversity and ecology. *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 2: 133–157.
- García-Mijangos, I., Berastegi, A., Biurrun, I., Dembicz, I., Janišová, M., Kuzemko, A., Vynokurov, D., Ambarli, D., Etayo, J., (...) & Dengler, J. 2021. Grasslands of Navarre (Spain), focusing on the *Festuco-Brometea*: classification, hierarchical expert system and characterisation. *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 2: 195–231.
- Moyiyenko, I.I., Umanets, O.Y., Dengler, J., Guarino, R., Dembicz, I., Kucher, O.O., Skobel, N.O. & Bednarska, I.O. 2022. *Torilis pseudonodosa* Bianca (*Apiaceae*) – new species for the flora of Ukraine. *Black Sea Botanical Journal* 17: 98–106.
- Bergauer, M., Dembicz, I., Boch, S., Willner, W., Babbi, M., Blank-Pachlatko, J., Catalano, C., Cykowska-Marzencka, B., Gehler, J., (...) & Dengler, J. in press. Scale-dependent patterns and drivers of vascular plant, bryophyte and lichen diversity in dry grasslands of the Swiss inneralpine valleys. *Alpine Botany*.

Palaeartic Grasslands (Rocco Labadessa, Idoia Biurrun, Jürgen Dengler & Anna Kuzemko)

EDGG's **diamond open access journal**, *Palaeartic Grasslands* (PG), has developed well. It is now published very regularly in 3-month intervals, thus in the reporting time three issues (50–52) appeared with a total of 185 pages. Apart from reports, news, short contributions and photographic items (Photo Stories, Glimpses of a Grassland, Photo Competition), also three peer-reviewed scientific articles have been published. While the DOIs of items published in *Palaeartic Grasslands* of several years were not working because they had not been registered by FASEB/MCI, this issue was finally solved by MCI in 2021. Unfortunately, the new DOIs of 2022 are again not functioning.

EDGG-edited publications (Jürgen Dengler & Didem Ambarli)

EDGG is continuing its tradition of edited Special Features in international journals. Two such Special Features have been completed in the reporting period:

- In *Tuexenia* 41, Steffen Boch and co-editors published a Special Feature under the title “Grasslands of temperate Europe in a changing world” comprising seven articles and an editorial.
- In *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 2 and 3, Jürgen Dengler and co-editors published a Special Collection under the title “Classification of grasslands and other open vegetation types in the Palaearctic” comprising seven articles and an editorial. See <https://vcs.pensoft.net/collection/221/>

Currently, four EDGG-edited Special Features are in preparation, but all are struggling from low submission rates, probably due to “post-Covid-19 depression”:

- In *Vegetation Classification and Survey*, Jürgen Dengler and co-editors are preparing a Special Collection on “Grasslands of Asia” in conjunction with the Asian Grassland Conference.
- In *Biodiversity and Conservation*, Didem Ambarli and co-editors are preparing a Special Feature on “Biodiversity and conservation of Asian grasslands” in conjunction with the Asian Grassland Conference.
- In *Hacquetia*, Orsolya Valkó and co-editors are preparing a new Special Feature on “Fauna, flora, vegetation and conservation of Asian grasslands” in conjunction with the Asian Grassland Conference.
- In *Tuexenia*, Steffen Boch and co-editors are preparing a new Special Feature in the long series of EDGG-edited Special Features in this journal.

GrassPlot, the EDGG database (Jürgen Dengler, Idoia Biurrun, Iwona Dembicz and others)

In the reporting period, we concentrated on increasing the consistency and completeness of header data and metadata rather than adding new datasets.

However, a series of new papers could be published:

- Dembicz, I., Dengler, J., Gillet, F., Matthews, T.J., Steinbauer, M.J., Bartha, S., Campos, J.A., De Frenne, P., Dolezal, J., (...) & Biurrun, I. 2021. Fine-grain beta diversity in Palaearctic open vegetation: variability within and between biomes and vegetation types. *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 2: 293–304.
- Ulrich, W., Matthews, T.J., Biurrun, I., Campos, J.A., Czortek, P., Dembicz, I., Essl, F., Filibeck, G., Giusso del Galdo, G.-P., Güler, B., Naqinezhad, A., Török, P. & Dengler, J. in press. Environmental drivers and spatial scaling of species abundance distributions in Palaearctic grassland vegetation. *Ecology*. DOI: 10.1002/ecy.3725.
- Graco-Roza, C., Aarnio, S., Abrego, N., Acosta, A. T., Alahuhta, J., Altman, J., (...), Dembicz, I., Dengler, J., (...) & Soininen, J. in press. Distance decay 2.0 – a global synthesis of taxonomic and functional turnover in ecological communities. *Global Ecology and Biogeography*. DOI: 10.1111/GEB.13513.

Various other paper projects are currently in preparation, and we are again open to data contributions. For details see: <https://edgg.org/databases/GrassPlot>.

IAVS-supported EDGG projects

By end of 2020, IAVS generously granted EDGG financial support for three projects, all of which were delayed severely by the persons in charge due to Covid-19, health issues or pregnancy/motherhood. Now we are glad to report that two have been successfully finished:

- “Analysis of the soil samples from the EDGG Field Workshops in Switzerland”. Finished in April 2022.
- “Preparation of the bryophyte and lichen data of the EDGG Field Workshops in Navarre and Serbia”. Finished in May 2022

The third one “Preparation of the species composition data in the GrassPlot database” is still ongoing.

EDGG supports Ukraine

To support Ukrainian grassland scientists suffering from the Russian war in their country, EDGG has conducted several activities, e.g. devoted issue 52 of *Palaeartic Grasslands* to Ukraine, establish a mailing list EDGGsupportsUkraine and a section of the website devoted to this topic (<https://edgg.org/index.php/supportUkraine>). Members of the EDGG Executive Committee are holding regular online meetings with EDGG members from Ukraine. Finally, shortly after the start of the war, we decided to start a charitable donation campaign among our members to support Ukrainian scientists who had to flee the country or who stay inside Ukraine but lost (part of) their income due to the war. Since IAVS requires that all finances of Working Groups are handled via IAVS, it took two months, but now we are close to a solution and hope to launch the call in early June. We hope for significant donations from our members so that we can support several of our Ukrainian colleagues in need.