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PALAEARCTIC GRASSLANDS

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Palaearctic Grasslands, formerly published under the names *Bulletin of the European Dry Grassland Group* (Issues 1–26) and *Bulletin of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group* (Issues 27–36), is the journal of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG). It appears in three issues per year. *Palaearctic Grasslands* publishes news and announcements of EDGG, its projects, related organisations and its members. It also serves as an outlet for scientific articles and photo contributions.

Palaearctic Grasslands is freely available at https://edgg.org/publications/pg-journal and new issues are announced to all EDGG members.

Submissions following the Author Guidelines are welcome by the deadlines of the three issues: 31 January, 30 April and 31 October.

Scientific articles (Research Articles, Reviews, Forum Articles, Scientific Reports) should be submitted to the Receiving Editor Jürgen Dengler (dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com) and will then undergo peer review, so publication in a certain issue cannot be guaranteed.

All other text contributions (News, Announcements, Short Contributions, Book Reviews, Glimpses of a Grassland, Forthcoming Events) should be submitted to Idoia Biurrun (idoia.biurrun@ehu.es).

Photo contributions (photos for general illustrative purposes with captions; Photo Stories) and contributions to the section **"Recent Publications of our Members"** should be submitted to Rocco Labadessa (rocco.labadessa@gmail.com).

Contributions to Photo Competitions should be submitted to Edy Fantinato (edy.fantinato@unive.it).

Palaearctic Grasslands is published by EDGG c/o Prof. Dr. Jürgen Dengler, Plant Ecology, BayCEER, University of Bayreuth, Universitätsstr. 30, 85447 Bayreuth, Germany.

Palaearctic Grasslands on Google Scholar, vegsciblog.org

Editorial Board

On front cover page: *Narcissus minor* subsp. *asturiensis*, Picos de Europa, Spain. Photo: D. Borovyk.

Editorial

Dear readers,

With this issue of *Palaearctic Grasslands*, we are pleased to present a series of exciting updates and opportunities from the EDGG community.

We warmly thank all donors for their generous support to the EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists, which is now being formally closed. At the same time, financial contributions remain very welcome through the EDGG General Donation Fund, which will continue to support our activities, grants, and community initiatives.

Preparations are progressing for the 22nd EDGG Field Workshop in North-Eastern Poland, and for the joint events in Bulgaria, the 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) in Sofia and the 23rd Field Workshop in the Pirin Mountains. We warmly encourage EDGG members to consider participating in these promising opportunities for collaboration among grassland researchers and for fostering comparative studies across Eurasia.

We are pleased to report continued progress of the EDGG Special Features in *Tuexenia*, which showcase relevant research on Palaearctic grasslands.

This issue also includes a Scientific Report summarizing the 21st Field Workshop in the Turku Archipelago, and a photo story revisiting the 20th Field Workshop in the Southwestern Alps, capturing memorable moments and field experiences from these highly successful events.

Finally, we are delighted to share the results of the EDGG Photo Competition on the theme "Grassland geometries" and we are happy to encourage more contributions to the next competition dedicated to "Grassland butterflies".

We hope you enjoy this rich collection of news and invite you to stay actively involved in the EDGG community,

With warm wishes,
Rocco Labadessa

Eurasian cranes (*Grus grus*), Poland. Photo: J. Dengler.

News

Closure of the EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists and call for financial donations to the EDGG General Donation Fund

Following a recent decision of the Executive Committee, the remaining funds in our **EDGG Fund for Ukrainian Scientists** (ca. 610 EUR) will now be transferred to our grantee **Iuliia Vasheniak** in support of her project "Digitisation of historical vegetation relevés published in German literature".
With this final transfer, the **EDGG Ukrainian Fund account will be officially closed**. We would like to sincerely thank all donors who contributed to this initiative and supported our Ukrainian colleagues during this challenging time.

From now on, we kindly ask you to direct any future donations to the **EDGG General Fund**, which will continue to support EDGG activities and grants.
You can make donations, large or small, either by credit card or by bank transfer to the IAVS account. Please make sure to indicate the reference exactly as stated below, otherwise the money might not reach the EDGG Fund.

(A) By credit card (online platform):
You can donate **here**.

- Fees: **0.20 USD per transaction**
- Reference: **EDGG General Donation Fund**
- Please indicate whether you wish your name to be publicized as a donor.

(B) By bank transfer:

- Account Number: **4460 2665 3370**
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- Bank Name: **Bank of America**
- Address: **1101 Wootton Parkway, 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20852, USA**
- SWIFT: **BOFAUS3N**
- Routing/ABA # for wires: **026009593**
- Reference: **EDGG General Donation Fund**

If you consent to your name being listed as a donor, please send an email with your name, date, and amount of the donation to: anaqinezhad@gmail.com and idoia.biurrun@ehu.eus.

Thank you very much for your continued support to EDGG!

Alireza Naqinezhad, UK and Iran
anaqinezhad@gmail.com

Grassland in Eastern Carpathians, Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Photo: A. Kuzemko.

Call for photos for *Palaearctic Grasslands*

As usual, we are looking forward to receiving your contributions to the Photo Story section, as well as your photographs for general illustrative purposes.

Submissions for the **Photo Story** section are always welcome. Photo Story is an open space where members can submit their own photo collection on a specific grassland-related topic of their choice. High-quality photos should be provided together with their captions (at least species names or landscape description), a brief text and possibly other graphical elements (like a map or a drawing). The selection of photos should fit within 4-20 pages and the contributors should propose a preliminary layout (in PDF or MS Word format), which will be finally typeset by the Editors. As an example, you can look at the Photo Stories published in previous issues. As with scientific articles, Photo Stories undergo a review process with an emphasis on the quality of the photographs. There is no guarantee that they will be accepted without changes, and late submissions may be published in a subsequent issue. We would also like to encourage you to contribute to the **Global Vegetation Project** with your vegetation photographs. Please take a look at the project website for an overview of the global map and the data entry form.

If you want to contribute to Photo Stories, or if you simply want to help us with enriching this aspect of the journal, please submit your photos together with the required information to Rocco (rocco.labadessa@gmail.com).

Deadline for photo submissions is **30 April 2026**.

Rocco Labadessa, Bari, Italy
rocco.labadessa@gmail.com

Call for Photo Competition *"Grassland butterflies"*

Butterflies are among the most captivating and fragile inhabitants of grasslands. Their colours, intricate patterns, and delicate movements bring life and identity to grassland ecosystems. Beyond their beauty, they reveal the delicate interdependence between plants and insects and serve as sensitive indicators of environmental quality, reflecting the health of the ecosystems they inhabit. We are looking for photographs that capture the delicate beauty of grassland butterflies.

You are invited to send up to three high-quality photographs within the competition theme (full size JPEG or TIFF images, at least 300 dpi) together with captions giving a short title or description and information on the subject (species name, date, place name). The Photo Jury (see imprint) will select the best photographs. The three best shots will be awarded with full space in the next issue, but we reserve the right to use other submitted materials for illustrative purposes in other parts of the issue. If you want to take part in the competition, please submit your photos together with the required information to Edy (edy.fantinato@unive.it) by **30 April 2026**.

Edy Fantinato, Venice, Italy
edy.fantinato@unive.it

Zerynthia cerisy **in Prespes, Greece. Photo: P. Chmielewski.**

EDGG Event

Announcement of the 22nd EDGG Field Workshop: Syntaxonomy and diversity of dry grasslands of North-Eastern Poland

24 – 30 May 2026

Introduction

The 22nd EDGG Field Workshop will be held in North-Eastern Poland, at the location where Central, Eastern and Northern Europe meet, leading to the unusual diversity of habitats but also the possibility to contribute to unifying phytosociological classification systems across the continent. We will use the standardized, high-quality vegetation-plot sampling of EDGG (Dengler et al. 2016) to record vegetation composition, structural and environmental parameters across dry grasslands in the north-eastern corner of Poland. We will mainly sample standard 10-m² plots (to be used for vegetation classification) and from time to time nested-plot series (ranging from 1 cm² to 100 or 1000 m², "EDGG Biodiversity Plots") (for biodiversity studies with the GrassPlot database). In both cases, we will carefully sample not only vascular plants, but also bryophytes and lichens, and collect soils. The focus is on the dry grassland classes *Koelerio-Corynephoretea* and *Festuco-Brometea*, but we will also record some stands of the "neighbouring" classes *Molinio-Arrhenatheretea, Nardetea strictae* and *Trifolio-Geranietea*.

Our main goal is to supplement our existing extensive database of standardised 10-m² plots (more than two hundred plots) collected in the region during the recent years by several EDGG members (see e.g. Dembicz et al. 2025a), enabling completion of a comprehensive scientific publication on the syntaxonomy (and biodiversity) of the dry grasslands of North-Eastern Poland. In the longer perspective, we also plan a comprehensive classification of the dry grasslands in entire Poland, combining the NE Polish dataset with those from South Central Poland (8th EDGG Field Workshop 2015; see Kącki et al. 2014), the Lesser Polish Uplands (Dembicz et al. 2025b) and additional data to be sampled in North, West and South-East Poland during the coming years. The collected data will be contributed to the GrassPlot database (Dengler et al. 2018) and serve as the basis for more broad-scope scientific publications on diversity of Eurasian grasslands, as has been done in previous EDGG Field Workshops (e.g. Biurrun et al. 2021, Dembicz et al. 2021).

Figure 1. Meso-xeric grasslands with *Filipendula vulgaris, Galium verum* and *Briza media* in middle Narew valley. Photo: I. Dembicz.

Study area

The Field Workshop will take place in the north-eastern part of Poland from the capital Warsaw to the Polish-Lithuanian border. During the expedition we will travel north and east up the Narew river and its tributaries. On our way we will encounter sharp climatic gradients with increasing continentality but also lowering mean annual temperature (from 9.0 °C in Warsaw to 7.2 °C in Suwałki), increasing winter severity and to some extent also increasing precipitation (from 550 mm in Warsaw to 607 mm in Suwałki) (data for the period 1990-2020, klimat.imgw.pl). The Polish-Lithuanian border marks the division between the Continental and Boreal biogeographic regions (European Commission 2013) but in the Polish tradition the north-easternmost part of the country was already regarded as belonging to the hemiboreal zone due to the presence of some typical boreal elements among its flora, fauna and vegetation types (Kondradzki 1968; Szafer 1977).

The landscape of the area was shaped by the Pleistocene glaciations which covered it with up to 200 m thick deposits made of till, sands and gravels. The southern part of the region was not glaciated during the Last Glacial Maximum (Embelton 1984) and the main feature of its landscape, besides eroded glacial plains, are periglacial valleys once transporting the meltwaters and waters of Neman, Narew, Bug and Vistula westwards towards the North Sea. Those valleys, sometimes deeply craved into the surrounding moraines, are covered with both Pleistocene and Holocene fluvial sandy deposits (Kasprzak et al. 2024), which supported the development of dry grasslands of various types. The northern part of the area, belonging to the Lithuanian Lakeland region, was glaciated during the Last Glacial Maximum. Accordingly, it has a much more diverse landscape with hilly moraines reaching up to 300 m a.s.l., and a diversity of glacial landforms such as winding eskers, kames, deep craved lakes or extensive sandy outwash plains (Smolska et al. 2024).

The landscape of the region, once covered with extensive oak-hornbeam forests, has been gradually transformed by humans since the early Middle Ages. This transformation has lagged behind the rest of the country because the area was a transition zone between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West, and because the Baltic Yotvingians, one of the last non-Christianized tribes of Europe, persisted in the north-east until the 14th century. (Czerwiński et al. 2022). This backwardness was attributed to the region later on and led to the exceptionally well-preserved nature, both natural and semi-natural communities, persisting there until the end of 20th century. However, since that time, despite the creation of many nature conservation areas protected under the EU Natura 2000 directives, the land abandonment on one hand and the intensification and modernization of agriculture on the other had led to a decline of the area and quality of grassland habitats of the region, which is still ongoing (Korzeniak et al. 2025). Thus, one of the additional goals of our expedition is to document the diversity of the grasslands of the region before they are lost.

Figure 2. Acidic, pioneer sandy grassland with *Corynephorus canescens* and *Cladonia* species in the middle Narew valley. Photo: I. Dembicz.

As the dry grassland research in Poland was predominantly developing in southern and western Poland, until the second half of the 20th century it has been focusing mostly on *Festuco-Brometea* stands in the abovementioned regions (Medwecka-Kornaś 1959, Ceynowa 1968, Filipek 1974). After this period some studies on sandy grasslands (*Koelerio-Corynephoretea* class) were conducted in the post-glacial landscapes of Poland (Głowacki 1988, Czyżewska 1999, Dembicz et al. 2025) but the region of the workshop is still not thoroughly studied. Even less was known about the *Festuco-Brometea* communities of the North-Eastern Poland with the exception of the publication of Skolołowski & Kawecka (1984). The significance of the region for dry grassland ecosystems (both from *Festuco-Brometea* and *Koelerio-Corynephoretea* classes) was only recognized after establishment of Natura 2000 network, which was coupled with more comprehensive surveys (Obidziński 2010). However, no syntaxonomic revisions were carried out, leading to strong confusion as to whether some of the grasslands here should be placed in the *Kolerio-Corynephoretea, Festuco-Brometea, Trifolio-Geranietea* or *Molinio-Arrhenatheretea* and the respective habitats 6120, 6210 or 6510 of the Habitats Directive (Interpretation Manual 2013). Moreover, just a few hundred kilometres from our study area eastern European phytosociologists classify similar river-valley mesoxeric communities into the alliance *Agrostion vinealis*, currently placed in the order *Galietalia veri* and the class *Molinio-Arrhenatheretea*. Thus, all syntaxonomic information in the following text should be considered as preliminary − as the formal classification of the communities is the main goal of the workshop.

The main grassland types to be sampled during the workshop include pioneer sandy grasslands on acidic to neural valley and glacial sands and gravels rich in therophytes and lichens (alliances *Corynephorion canescentis, Sileno conicae-Cerastion semidecandri* and *Koelerion glaucae*) and mesoxeric grasslands on sandy but also finer-grain neutral to basic substrates of valley bottoms (alliances *Filipendulo vulgaris-Helictochloion pratensis, Armerion elongatae* and maybe *Agrostion vinealis*) and mesoxeric to xeric grasslands of glacial landforms (alliances *Filipendulo vulgaris-Helictochloion pratensis, Geranion sanguinei* or *Arrhenatherion*).

Figure 3. Wooded pasture with meso-xeric grassland patches in middle Narew valley . Photo: I. Dembicz.

Preliminary itinerary of the Field Workshop

- **Day 1. Sunday 24th of May**

  Arrival in Warsaw, possibly before noon. Departure from Warsaw and first sampling in the Narew river valley at the northern outskirts of Warsaw. Accommodation near the medieval town of Pułtusk.

- **Day 2. Monday 25th of May**

  Northern Mazovia. Fieldwork in the lower Narew river valley: dry grasslands of the *Filipendulo vulgaris-Helictochloion pratensis, Sileno conicae-Cerastion semidecandri, Corynephorion canescentis, Koelerion glaucae* and *Armerion elongatae* alliances. Accommodation near Pułtusk (same as day before).

- **Day 3. Tuesday 26th of May**

  Borderlands. Fieldwork in the Pisa and middle Narew valleys: dry grasslands of the *Filipendulo vulgaris-Helictochloion pratensis, Koelerion glaucae, Violion caninae* and *Armerion elongatae* alliances. Accommodation close to Łomża.

- **Days 4–6. Wednesday 27th of May – Friday 29th of May**

  Yotvingia. Fieldwork in the Polish part of Lithuanian Lakeland: different types of vegetation of the *Festuco-Brometea, Koelerio-Corynephoretea, Trifolio-Geranietea classes* and thermophilous meadows of *Molinio-Arrhenatheretea* class. Accomodation near Suwałki.

- **Day 7. Saturday 30th of May**

  Drive back to Warsaw (arrival in early afternoon).

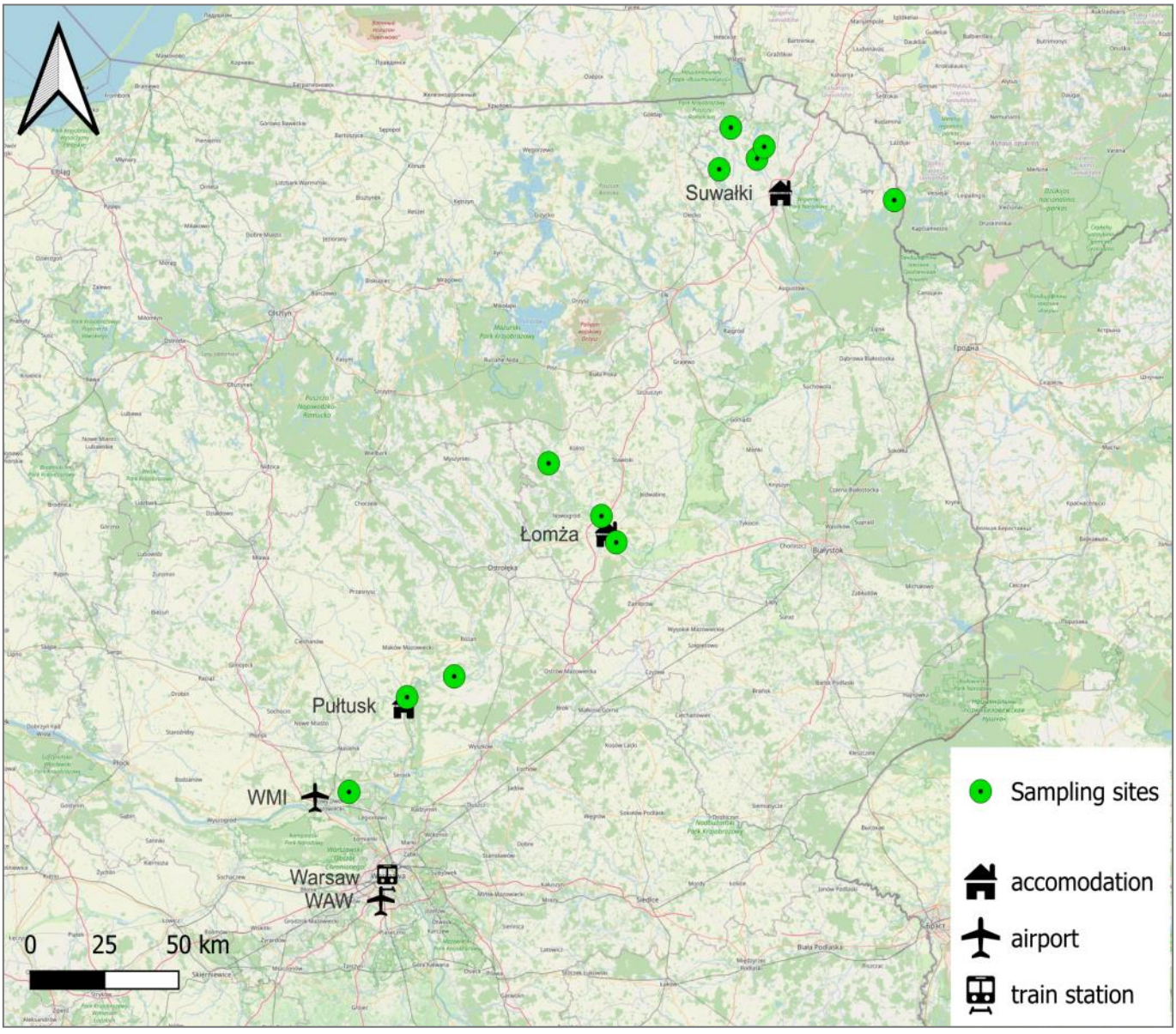

Figure 6. Map with approximate locations of sampling sites of the 22nd EDGG Field Workshop in Poland (May 2026).

Technical information

Accommodation and travelling

We will stay in three different accommodations during the Field Workshop. To keep the costs down and make the event more accessible, we will try to organize accommodation equipped with kitchens to allow us to prepare our own meals. Thus bring your own recipes suitable for such events with you, i.e. fast, tasty and possible to cook for a bigger group. For transportation, we will use two rented 9-seat minibuses and possibly also personal cars.

Travel information

The Field Workshop will begin in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. We aim to start on 24th of May around noon, which allows people to arrive with a night train from various parts in Europe or with a flight on the same day. The exact meeting location will be provided to registered participants closer to the start of the event. The expedition will conclude on 30th of May also in Warsaw in the early afternoon to enable most of you to travel home on the same day. Warsaw is a transportation hub, easy to reach by train, bus or plane from most of the places in Europe. As for the train travel direct international trains arrive to Warsaw from Berlin, Munich, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Kyiv and Vilnius. As for the air travel, keep in mind that besides the main Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW), located close to the city centre, there are two low-fare airports: Warsaw-Modlin (WMI) located close to our first sampling location (we could pick you there on our way) and Warsaw-Radom (RDO), which is located quite far to the south of the city.

Fees

The fees cover all costs for meals, travel, and accommodation, starting at 12:00 on 24th of May and ending at 14:00 on 30th of May. The fees for full participation are as follows:

- 500 EUR for students (including PhD students) who are IAVS members
- 600 EUR for postdocs, senior scientists, or other regularly employed persons who are IAVS members
- 600 EUR for students (including PhD students) who are not IAVS members
- 700 EUR for postdocs, senior scientists, or other regularly employed persons who are not IAVS members

Payment must be made via bank transfer not later than by the end of April 2026. The details of the transfer will be provided to the confirmed participants after their final approval. In the event of cancellation, we will refund the fees to the extent that the cancellation results in a cost reduction.

Figure 4. Meso-xeric pastures over steep and stony moraine hills in Lithuanian Lakeland. Photo: I. Dembicz.

How to apply

Participation is open to EDGG members only, but if you are not a member of EDGG you can join it for free in the application. We expect all participants to contribute equally to sampling, plant identification, sample processing, data post-processing, and related tasks. Preference will be given to applicants with good species knowledge in vascular plants, but particularly in bryophytes and lichens and to those who are willing to contribute to the soil analyses. For those who have not participated in several previous Field Workshops (and thus are well known to us), we ask for a short motivation letter, explaining why you are interested in participating and how you plan to contribute to the success of the workshop, both during and after the event.

You can apply for participation until **21 March 2026** via this online form. You need to provide the following information:

- Name
- Age
- Professional status (e.g., PhD student, postdoc, professor, unemployed)
- Affiliation
- Address
- Mobile phone number (for contact purposes, e.g., if you get lost in the field)
- Dietary requirements (no/vegetarian/other: please specify)
- Agreement to join EDGG (if not already a member)
- IAVS membership (yes/no)
- Ukrainian citizenship (yes/no)
- Motivation letter (up to 200 words) or indication that you participated in at least three Field Workshops before
- Willingness to help with bryophyte and lichen identification, soil analysis or data digitisation after the Field Workshop

Confirmation of participation will be provided no later than 15 April 2026. If the number of applications exceeds available places, participants will be selected based on the motivation letters and the competences you offer.

Travel grants

Unlike other Field Workshops, no travel grants are available for the 22nd Field Workshop as the EDGG Executive Committee has decided to allocate all travel grants in 2026 to the combined events of the 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference and the 23rd EDGG Field Workshop in Bulgaria in July this year. However, the rule that Ukrainian IAVS members are exempt from participation fees also applies for the 22nd Field Workshop.

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Figure 5. *Androsace septentrionalis* on pioneer xeric grassland in Lithuanian Lakeland. Photo: I. Dembiz.

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EDGG Event

21st Eurasian Grassland Conference in Sofia, 19–23rd July 2026, and 23rd EDGG Field Workshop in the Pirin Mountains, 14–18th July 2026

Second Call

Like 2025 in Finland, also this year, EDGG will combine the Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) with one of the annual EDGG Field Workshops. This allows members to participate in both events while having costs and carbon footprint of travel only once. The 23rd EDGG Field Workshop takes place immediately before the Eurasian Grassland Conference – with a one day break in between – and will also start and end in Sofia. One can register for both events combined, only for the EGC or only for the Field Workshop. Likewise, there is a joint Travel Grant Application. Below you can find the first details of the 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference, then details on the 23rd EDGG Field Workshop, followed by information on the fees, travel grants and application procedure for both events, and finally travel information.

21st Eurasian Grassland Conference "Connecting science and conservation for grassland sustainability" (Sofia, 19–23 July 2026)

General information

The 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference will be held in Sofia on 19–23rd July 2026, organised by the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG), a working group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS). EDGG is devoted to research on, and conservation of, natural and semi-natural grasslands throughout the Palaearctic biogeographic realm and deals with any taxonomic group (plants/ vegetation, animals or fungi). With the main theme "**Connecting science and conservation for grassland sustainability**", we aim to highlight the connection of studies on grassland ecosystems with management practices and conservation goals. This year's Eurasian Grassland Conference will be hosted by the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research (IBER) at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). IBER conducts research in fundamental and applied ecology, biodiversity, nature conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources. IBER trains PhD students in the fields of botany, mycology, zoology, ecology, conservation biology and environmental genetics. IBER also provides scientific and methodological support to state institutions and NGOs.

View of part of the city center of Sofia.

Venue

The city of Sofia is the capital and largest city of Bulgaria, situated in the center of the Balkan Peninsula, with a population of 1.5 million people. Geographically, it lies in the Sofia Valley, surrounded by the Vitosha, Lyulin, Lozenska and Balkan Mountains.

The city of Sofia has a long history, dating back to the 7th millennium BC, with a rich past as the Roman city of Serdica, the Bulgarian stronghold of Sredets, and an Ottoman provincial capital, before becoming the capital of modern Bulgaria in 1879. Today, Sofia combines vibrant culture, rich history and contemporary urban charm. One could enjoy exploring Roman ruins at the archaeological complex of Serdica, the city's Orthodox heritage, like the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, the 4th-century St. George Rotunda and the medieval St. Petka Temple, along with a variety of city parks, like the Borisova Garden, South Park, the City Garden in front of the National Theater, etc.

The conference will be held in the Hemus hotel. The hotel is located near one of the city's largest green spaces, South Park. It is close to the European Union metro station (3-5 minutes walk), making it easy to reach the central part of Sofia.

Hemus Hotel.

Scientific Programme

Within the main theme "**Connecting science and conservation for grassland sustainability**", the conference will feature seven main topics (session):

- Conservation, restoration, and management of Palaearctic grasslands
- Global change in Palaearctic grasslands
- Patterns, classification, and biogeography of Palaearctic grasslands
- Ecosystem functions, services, and trophic interactions
- Animals in Palaearctic grasslands
- Grasslands of the Balkan Peninsula
- Innovative methods, experimental approaches, and open science in grassland research

Within each of these thematic sessions, both oral and poster contributions are welcome. Additionally, posters on any other aspect related to Palaearctic grasslands are welcome.

Keynote speakers

Each half-day of the conference will be opened with a keynote talk by a renowned grassland specialist:

- **Borys Assyov** (Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, Bulgaria) **Tackling the unknown. Studying and conserving fungi in sand dunes** (Ecosystem functions, services, and trophic interactions).
- **Renata Ćušterevska** (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia) **Grassland syntaxonomy and ecological patterns in the Central Balkans** (Grasslands of the Balkan Peninsula).
- **Balázs Deák** (HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary) **Vanishing agrobiodiversity and the growing importance of small grassland fragments: the potential of Eurasian buri-al mounds in EU-level conservation and restoration policies** (Conservation, restoration, and management of Palaearctic grasslands).
- **Iwona Dembicz** (University of Warsaw, Poland) **Ecological scaling laws in Palaearctic grasslands: insights from EDGG Field Workshops and the GrassPlot database** (Innovative methods and open science in grassland research).
- **Jürgen Dengler** (Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Wädenswil, Switzerland) **Global change in the European grasslands – insights from local to continental studies** (Global change in Palearctic grasslands).
- **Ljiljana Tomović** (University of Belgrade, Serbia & Macedonian Ecological Society, Skopje, North Macedonia) **Distribution and conservation of reptiles in steppe, semi-arid and high-mountain pastures in Serbia and North Macedonia** (Animals in Palaearctic grasslands).

Preliminary time schedule

- 19th July (evening) – Registration, Welcome reception (icebreaker)
- 20th July – Registration, Opening ceremony, day 1 of the scientific programme
- 21st July – Day 2 of scientific programme, Grassland Party
- 22nd July – Mid-conference excursion to Vitosha Natural Park
- 23rd July – Day 3 of the scientific programme, EDGG Business Meeting, city tour

Mid-conference excursion

The Mid-conference excursion will take place in Vitosha Nature Park and Natura 2000 SCI Vitosha (BG0000113), Vitosha Mt. The Vitosha Nature Park is located in the immediate vicinity of the capital city Sofia and is the oldest Nature Park on the Balkan Peninsula (founded in 1934, with an area of over 270 km^2) and it also falls within the boundaries of the NATURA 2000 network of Bulgaria.

The Vitosha Nature Park includes two Nature Reserves: Bistrishko Branishte and Torfeno Branishte. During the excursion, we will experience the beautiful landscape of the Torfeno Branishte Reserve, composed of diverse meadow, scrub and mire ecosystems.

The Vitosha Mountain is characterized by a rich and diverse flora, vegetation and natural habitats, forming five altitudinal vegetation zones, including deciduous and coniferous forests and subalpine vegetation. Five vertical vegetation zones have been formed:

1. Xerothermic oak forest zone (up to about 650 m a.s.l.)
2. Meso-xerophitic zone of oak and hornbeam forests (between 650 and 800 m a.s.l.)
3. Beech zone (between 800 and 1600 m a.s.l.)
4. Coniferous zone (between [1500] 1600 and 1800 [1900] m a.s.l.)
5. Subalpine sparse forest and scrublands of dwarf pine and juniper (subalpine zone) (between 1900 and 2290 m a.s.l.).

Within the mountain's borders, 528 species of algae, 326 bryophytes, 369 lichenised fungi, 664 other macrofungi, and approximately 1859 vascular plants have been recorded. Eighty-four of these have conservation status, of which 59 are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria (14 "Endangered" and 45 "Vulnerable"). The endemic species are represented by 19 Bulgarian and 71 Balkan endemics (such as *Pinus peuce, Alchemilla bulgarica, Acer heldreichii, Aquilegia aurea, Sempervivum velenovskyi, Angelica pancicii, Senecio pancicici*, etc.).

The xerothermic and meso-xerothermic oak forests cover significant areas of the mountain and are heavily influenced by anthropogenic activity. Their composition includes various species of oak (*Quercus pubescens, Q. cerris, Q. daleschampii*), as well as *Carpinus betulus, C. orientalis, Acer campestre* and *Fraxinus ornus*. *Quercus daleschampii* forms more significant stands in the upper part of this zone. The predominant part of these forests is of coppice origin. The beech forest zone has a homogeneous species composition. Apart from *Fagus sylvatica*, other frequently encountered species are *Acer campestre, A. pseudoplatanus, Tilia platyphyllus, Quercus daleschampii* and *Carpinus betulus*. The coniferous forests occupy barely 5% of the park's area and are primarily composed of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*). The subalpine zone develops above the treeline and is formed by scrub communities of various blueberry species (*Vaccinium myrtillus, V. arctostaphyllus*), *Bruckenthalia spiculifolia* and *Juniperus sibirica*, along with grass-dominated phytocoenoses, typically featuring *Sesleria comosa, Nardus*

***Aquilegia aurea,* Vitosha Mt. Photo: B. Assyov.**

***Viola dacica,* Vitosha Mt. Photo: B. Assyov.**

stricta and *Festuca valida*. Mire ecosystems are found in the subalpine zone of the mountain, with significant portions of them falling within the two reserves. Their composition includes phytocoenoses dominated by *Deschampsia caespitosa, Molinia caerulea, Carex nigra, C. acuta*, and various peat mosses (*Sphagnum spp*.).

During the mid-conference excursion, we will visit the meadow, scrub, and mire ecosystems within the Torfeno Branishte Reserve (The Peat Reserve). It is characterised by high species diversity. Widely distributed species include *Geum coccineum, Parnassia palustris, Gentiana nivalis, Saxifraga stellaris, Caltha palustris, Ranunculus montanus, Carex echinata, C. nigra, Cardamine rivularis* and *Dactylorhiza cordigera*. Amongst the rare representatives of plants are two insectivorous species: *Pinguicula balcanica* and *Drosera rotundifolia*. There are also the Balkan endemics *Angelica pancicii, Senecio pancicii* and *Pseudorchis frivaldii*, as well as the Bulgarian endemic *Primula farinosa* subsp. *exigua*. A total of 12 species from the flora of Torfeno Branishte Reserve are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria under the "Vulnerable" category, including *Leontodon rilaense, Utricularia minor, Potentilla palustris* and *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

***Lilium jankae*, Vitosha Mt. Photo: B. Assyov.**

Organisation and support of the conference

Organizing committee: Kiril Vassilev, Iva Apostolova, Nikolay Velev, Desislava Sopotlieva, Magdalena Valcheva, Tsvetelina Terziyska, Beloslava Genova, Lyubka Dancheva.

Scientific committee: Kiril Vassilev (Bulgaria), Iva Apostolova (Bulgaria), Nikolay Velev (Bulgaria), Desislava Sopotlieva (Bulgaria), Borys Assyov (Bulgaria), Jürgen Dengler (Switzerland), Denys Vynokurov (Ukraine, Germany), Stephen Venn (Finland), Idoia Biurrun (Spain), Rocco Labadessa (Italy).

Conference sponsor: Pensoft is an independent academic publishing company, well known worldwide for its novel cutting-edge publishing tools, workflows and methods for text and data publishing. Pensoft publishes nearly 100 international journals, more than 800 book titles and conference materials. Pensoft publishes exclusively open access (OA) and is a strong protagonist in the open access movement. Pensoft publishes OA journals for various academic societies and institutions, including Vegetation Classification and Survey (VCS), one of the three official journals of IAVS, the mother organisation of EDGG. The company is involved in various research and technology projects to which it provides services in science communication, dissemination of research results, web and graphic design, organisation of events and others. Pensoft supports the Eurasian Grassland Conference in various ways and will be present with an information booth.

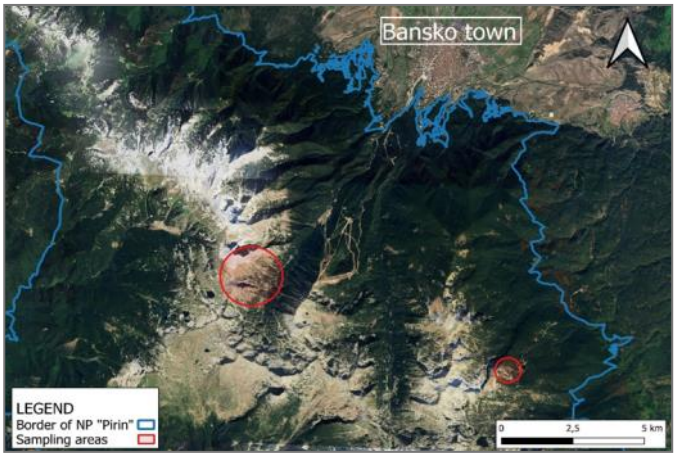
23rd EDGG Field Workshop in the Pirin Mountains (14–18 July 2026)

The 23rd EDGG Field Workshop will be conducted in the Pirin Mountains (Pirin National Park), SW Bulgaria, in the period 14–18th July. This research expedition continues the series of EDGG Field Workshops. It will take place immediately prior to the 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference. The Field Workshop will start in Sofia on 14th July and finish on the evening before the conference starts, making it possible for people to participate in both events.

In the tradition of the EDGG Field Workshops, this event will be devoted to the sampling of high-quality multi-scale and multi-taxon data on vegetation diversity (Dengler et al. 2016, 2021). While the majority of previous EDGG Field Workshops, including the 3rd EDGG Field Workshop in Bulgaria (Pedashenko et al. 2013; Dembicz et al. 2021), focused on dry grasslands (*Festuco-Brometea, Koelerio-Corynephoretea, Sedo-Scleranthetea*), we have now widened the scope to all natural and semi-natural non-forest habitats in the Palaearctic (see e.g. Dengler et al. 2020; Skobel et al. 2026).

Our sampling in the Pirin Mountains will primarily focus on subalpine and alpine grassland habitats on both acidic and base-rich bedrock, but may also extend to other open habitats, such as heathlands, screes, mires, or tall-forb communities, as was done during the two recent Swiss alpine Field Workshops (Dengler et al. 2020). As usual, we will sample not only vascular plants, but also bryophytes, lichenised fungi and soils, using the multi-scale approach of EDGG (Dengler et al. 2016).

The Field Workshop is open to all vegetation ecologists (Bachelor students to professors), who have good species knowledge and are interested in collaborative high-quality sampling. The generated data will be used for joint publications and contributed to the GrassPlot database (Dengler et al. 2018; Biurrun et al. 2021).



Sampling areas on the territory of the Pirin National Park.

Study area

Our study area is the Pirin Mountains and specifically the Pirin National Park, which covers a significant part of the mountain range. The Pirin National Park was established in 1962 and comprises of 404 km². On its territory, there are two Nature Reserves ("Bayuvi Dupki – Dzhindzheritsa" and "Yulen"). The territory is characterized by high habitat diversity and is part of the NATURA 2000 network in Bulgaria (BG0000209 Pirin).

Two regions are scheduled to be visited – the region of the Vihren Peak (2000–2800 m a.s.l.) and the region of the Bezbog Peak (2200–2600 m a.s.l.). The Vihren Peak is the highest peak of the Pirin Mt. at 2914 m a.s.l. The average annual rainfall is 1150 mm, and the snow cover reaches up to 3 m. The annual absolute minimum temperature goes down to –25°C, while the maximum temperature reaches 23°C. The region is dry because the peak is marble, which does not retain water. The Pirin Mountains have a very high floristic diversity. There are 1341 species of vascular plants (approx. 1/3 of the Bulgarian flora), 330 bryophytes, 424 lichenised

On the left, view of the Vihren peak region; Rocky slopes of habitat 6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands. On the right, view of the Bezbog Hut region; with habitat 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands (foreground) and habitat 4070 * Bushes with *Pinus mugo* (background). Photos: N. Velev.

fungi, 376 other macro-fungi, and several hundred species of algae. The flora of the Pirin Mountains is characterized by a high percentage of endemic species. It includes 17 locally endemic plants that are found only on this massif, 36 Bulgarian, and 110 Balkan endemics. Among the local endemics are *Papaver degenii, Oxytropis urumovii, O. kozhucharovii, Brassica jordanoffii, Arenaria pirinica, Erigeron vichrensis, Verbascum davidoffii, Rhinanthus javorkae*, *Thymus perinicus*. Along the road to Vihren Hut, the oldest conifer tree in Bulgaria can be seen – a specimen of *Pinus heldreichii*. Its age is estimated at more than 1300 years, and it has impressive dimensions – height 26 m, diameter 2.48 m, and circumference 7.80 m.

The sampling sites will include the following habitat types: 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths, 4070* Bushes with *Pinus mugo*, 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands, 6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands, 6230* Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas, 62D0 Oro-Moesian acidophilous grasslands.

The vegetation of the targeted areas is related to the classes *Loiseleurio procumbentis-Vaccinietea, Roso pendulinae-Pinetea mugo, Juncetea trifidi, Elyno-Seslerietea*, and *Nardetea strictae*.

Short itinerary of the Field Workshop

- **Day 1: 14 July** - Meeting in Sofia, transfer and accommodation in Bansko town. Joint sampling with introduction of the EDGG Biodiversity Plots sampling methodology on the territory of Pirin National Park (Denys Vynokurov & Jürgen Dengler).
- **Day 2: 15 July** - Sampling in the area around Vihren Hut (silicate substrate).
- **Day 3: 16 July** - Sampling in the area below Vihren Peak (calcareous substrate) and Banderitsa Hut.
- **Day 4: 17 July** - Sampling in the area around Bezbog Hut and Bezbog Peak (silicate substrate).
- **Day 5: 18 July** - Sampling in the area around Bezbog Hut (silicate substrate).

Accommodation & travelling

We will stay at the family hotel Chichin in the town of Bansko for the whole period.

The Field Workshop will start in Sofia, Bulgaria, at 8:00 on 14th July 2026. The exact meeting location will be provided to registered participants closer to the start of the event. The Field Workshop will end in Sofia at 20:00 on 18 July 2026.

Participation in the Field Workshop is limited to 20 participants in addition to the organisers. Participants are expected to contribute actively to the success of the collaborative work, both during and after the Field Workshop, by helping with identification of vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens, analyses of soil samples, data digitisation and statistical analyses.

Local Organisers: Kiril Vassilev & Nikolay Velev

EDGG Field Workshop Coordinators: Denys Vynokurov & Jürgen Dengler

***Thlaspi bellidifolium*. Photo: B. Assyov.**

***Saxifraga ferdinandi-coburgi*. Photo: S. Stoyanov.**

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***Centaurea achtarovii*. Photo: S. Stoyanov.**

***Viola perinensis*. B. Assyov.**

Registration & Fees

The registration for the 23rd EDGG Field Workshop (FW) and the 21st Eurasian Grassland Conference (EGC) will open in early February 2026. Please, visit the conference website for the latest information and fill in the Registration Form for both events. For any queries, please contact egc2026@abv.bg.

Key dates for both events

- Early-bird registration/payment EGC: until 31 March 2026
- Standard registration/payment EGC: until 20 June 2026
- Last minute registration/payment EGC: until 5 July 2026
- Abstract submission: until 10 May 2026
- Notification of abstract acceptance: 10 June 2026
- Registration FW: 15 April 2026
- Decision on FW application: 20 May 2026
- Payment FW: 15 June 2026
- Travel grant applications FW & EGC: 10 May 2026
- Travel grant decision: 31 May 2026

Applications

Conference contributions on the Eurasian Grassland Conference

Each participant can register up to one oral presentation and multiple poster presentations. The Scientific Committee reserves the right to change proposed oral presentations to poster presentations if there are too many registrations for oral presentations. Contributions must be registered until 20th May by sending authors, title and abstract using the Word template.

Field Workshop

To apply for participation in the Field Workshop, please fill-in the following online form until 15th April. Those who have not participated in at least three previous Field Workshops are expected to provide a short motivation letter. If the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, participants will be selected based on their motivation letters and the competencies they offer. Preference will be given to those who are able to identify bryophytes and lichens or analyse the collected soils or are willing to host one of the next Field Workshops.

Eurasian Grassland Conference fees

The fee for all participants except accompanying persons, includes the conference package (1 oral & 1 poster or 2 poster presentations, as well as conference materials), food (refreshments in the breaks and lunches on conference days, Welcome reception (Icebreaker), Grassland Party), city tour, mid-excursion.

For accompanying persons, the fee includes all of the above except the conference package.

		Early bird (15 March)	Regular price (20 June)	Last minute (5 July)
Normal price	IAVS members	300 €	330 €	350 €
	Non IAVS members	350 €	380 €	400 €
Student	IAVS members	250 €	280 €	330 €
	Non IAVS members	300 €	330 €	380 €
Accompanying person		390 €		

EDGG Field Workshop

The fees for the 23rd EDGG Field Workshop cover all costs for transfers, food and accommodation, starting at 8:00 on 14 July and ending at 20:00 on 18 July (both in Sofia). The fees are as follows:

- 350 € for students (including PhD students) who are IAVS members
- 450 € for postdocs, senior scientists, or other participants who are IAVS members
- 450 € for students (including PhD students) who are not IAVS members
- 550 € for postdocs, senior scientists, or other participants who are not IAVS members.

Payment for the Field Workshop must be made by 15th June 2026.

Payment

The registration fees should be paid through bank transfer to the following account before the given deadline (see above):

Transfer to: Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research
IBAN: BG44UNCR96603120718711
SWIFT: UNCRBGSF
UNICREDIT BULBANK, BC-BATENBERG, Sofia Bulgaria
Purpose of payment: "23rd FW 2026 - Sofia, fee Given name, Family name" or "EA Grassland Conf. 2026 - Sofia, fee Given name, Family name".
Example: "**EA Grassland Conf. 2026 – Sofia, fee Kiril VASSILEV**" or "**23rd FW 2026 – Sofia, fee Kiril VASSILEV**"
It is possible to make one transfer for both events (23rd EDGG Field Workshop & Eurasian Grassland Conference 2026). In this case the purpose for payment should be "EA Grac. Conf. 2026 & 23rd EDGG FW, Sofia).
Participants in the Field Workshop should send a copy of the bank transfer receipt to kiril5914@abv.bg (Kiril Vassilev – local organizer).
Participants in the EGC conference should send a copy of the bank transfer statement to the conference e-mail (egc2026@abv.bg).

Travel grants

Thanks to IAVS, the mother organisation of EDGG, we can offer a limited number of travel grants to IAVS members who participate in our events in Bulgaria (both or just one event). Travel grants are meant to give financial support to participants with financial constraints who make an important contribution to the events and possibly to the EDGG in general. Only persons who are IAVS members in 2026 are eligible (but IAVS membership fees are generally very low and various groups of people can even join for free). Only people travelling to/from Sofia in an environmentally friendly manner (i.e. bus, train or ferry) or flights if the distance is > 1500 km, can apply to additionally cover the travel costs.

An ad hoc committee from the EDGG Executive Committee and the local organisers will decide on travel grant applications. Priority will be given to the following groups of people:

- Students or applicants from low-income countries
- Applicants who contributed actively to the management of EDGG in recent years or are involved in the organisation of the events in Sofia (e.g. session chairs, scientific committee, General Assembly)
- Participants of the Eurasian Grassland Conference who submitted a convincing abstract for an oral or poster contribution (as presenting person)
- Participants of the Field Workshop who contribute with taxonomic expertise in bryophytes or lichens, are willing to analyse the soil samples or to organise a Field Workshop within the next few years.

The application for travel grants should be submitted via our online form until 1st May 2026. The notification about the travel grant decision will be communicated within one month after the application.

IAVS support for Ukrainian scientists

In addition to the travel grants, IAVS will cover the cost of the registration fees of Ukrainian IAVS members. The respective fees are paid directly by the IAVS to the local organising committee. Additionally, Ukrainian participants can apply for travel grants to cover the costs of their travel and accommodation.

Travelling to and in Sofia & accommodation

How to reach Sofia and the venues

Sofia is easily accessible from many European cities by bus/train, or via plane, arriving at Vasil Levski Sofia Airport (SOF). Several companies offer low-cost overland connections or flights. The international bus and train stations are also well connected to the city center by metro or bus. The airport is only 10 km from the city center.

The venue of the conference will be the Hemus Hotel (Sofia 1421, 25 Cherni vrah Blvd).

Directions from Sofia International Airport (Terminal 2)

1. Exit the airport building and turn left. Walk for 1–2 minutes until you reach Sofia Airport Metro Station.
2. Enter the station and pay €0.82 by tapping your bank card at the entrance gates or by purchasing a ticket from the vending machines.
3. Take the Metro in the direction of Slivnitsa Station.
4. Travel for approximately 28 minutes (12 stops) and get off at Serdika Station.
5. Get of the train and look for signs leading you to where you change Metro lines and change to the blue M2 line in Vitosha direction.
6. Then travel for 4 minutes (2 stops) and get off at the European Union (Evropeyski Sayuz) Metro Station.
7. The hotel is across the street from the Metro station, 90 m away.

***Aubrieta intermedia*. Photo: B. Assyov.**

Directions from the Central Railway Station

1. Exit the railway station and walk straight through the underpass.
2. Follow the signs to the Central Railway Metro Station.
3. Get on the M2 blue line in Vitosha direction and travel for 8 mins (4 stops) until you get to the European Union Metro Station.
4. Get off the Metro and exit the Station. The Hemus hotel is right across the street, 90 m away.

Moving around in Sofia

Sofia's public transport system is reliable and cheap: metro, trams, trolleys, buses.
Payment: Tap a debit/credit card at the POS terminal for a single travel ticket (€ 0.82).
Daily Cap: The maximum charge per day is € 2.04 (the cost of a day card), activated after the third public transport POS terminal single registration (excluding night buses). For more information about the Sofia public transport prices, see link.
Navigation: Use the Movit app or Google Maps for routes.
If you prefer driving, consider using Spark, a short-term car rental service that offers flexibility without the hassle of lengthy contracts. Keep in mind that the city center operates on a zoned parking system.

Accommodation in Sofia

There is a diverse range of hotel accommodation available within easy reach of the city center at reasonable prices. Participants, who choose accommodation in the hotel of the conference (Hotel Hemus) can take advantage of a discount (single room – 37€, double room – 44€ (no breakfast included); single room – 47€, double room – 64€ (with breakfast included)). To make your reservation, please send an email to marketing@hemushotels.com, mentioning as the purpose of the reservation "EA Grassland Conf. 2026 – Sofia". For more information you can also use the reception telephone + 359 2 816 5000.

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***Oxytropis urumovii*. Photo: S. Stoyanov.**

EDGG Publication

18th EDGG Special Feature in Tuexenia published (and call for the 19th Special Feature)

Members of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) and its predecessor organizations have been publishing Grassland Special Features in *Tuexenia* since 2005 (Dengler & Jandt 2005). The new Special Feature in Volume 45 of *Tuexenia* was published just before Christmas 2025. It was edited by Steffen Boch, Iwona Dembicz, Riccardo Guarino, Sonja Škornik and Jürgen Dengler and contained an editorial briefly reviewing the EDGG activities from November 2024 to September 2025 (Boch et al. 2025a), as well as five research articles. The contributions highlight different aspects of grassland research with a particular focus on diversity patterns across different, often neglected organisms, as well as across spatial scales, including topics related to plant–fungus–animal interactions and grassland restoration. Authored by 29 researchers from five countries, this collection reflects the broad diversity of expertise and membership within the EDGG.

In France, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, Seiler et al. (2025) sampled vegetation plots in grasslands used for horse husbandry. In a subset of 204 plots of 10 m*2*, the authors investigated grass endophytes, i.e. *Epichloe* fungi, which can occur in grasses of the genera *Festuca, Lolium*, and *Schedonorus*, and produce mycotoxins that might affect livestock. The aim of this study was to explore whether the prevalence of these mycotoxins is related to environmental conditions (by means of ecological indicator values) and plant diversity. While mycotoxins were detected at all seven sites under a broad range of environmental conditions, infection was associated with higher soil moisture and lower nitrogen indicator values. Grass cover and host dominance showed contrasting effects on mycotoxin prevalence in host species. Interestingly, there was no relationship between mycotoxin prevalence and temperature indicator value, biodiversity, or land-use type. The authors concluded that while endophyte infection is common in semi-natural grasslands in temperate Europe, it currently poses only a limited risk to livestock.

Sward disturbances and sowing of seed mixtures are widely used for grassland restoration purposes. However, the effects of these measures on bryophyte communities remain largely unclear. Therefore, Boch et al. (2025b) tested in a full-factorial experiment the short-term effects of disturbance and seed addition on bryophyte species richness and cover along a gradient in land-use intensity in 72 agricultural grasslands in Germany. In general, species richness and cover strongly decreased with increasing land-use intensity. Disturbances initially strongly decreased bryophyte richness and cover and resulted in high Sørensen dissimilarity between disturbed and undisturbed subplots. However, in the second year of the experiment, species richness no longer differed between disturbed and undisturbed subplots, and species composition became more similar, indicating a recovery of the communities. But bryophyte cover did not recover in the short term. Moreover, land-use intensity and seeding in general had no significant effect on the recovery of bryophyte communities. The quick recovery of bryophyte species richness indicates that grassland-restoration measures, including disturbances and seed addition, have no detrimental effects on bryophyte diversity.

The effectiveness of nature restoration methods often depends on site-specific conditions, yet assessments frequently focus narrowly on vegetation parameters. Blank-Pachlatko et al. (2025) addressed this gap by evaluating two grassland restoration methods in terms of their impact on vegetation, soil parameters and microbial communities in areas near the summit station of the Curtinella chairlift (2535 m a.s.l.) at Piz Corvatsch, Switzerland. The original vegetation in these areas was severely damaged by earthworks related to the construction of the chairlift and snow-making infrastructure. For the study, the authors analyzed an undisturbed alpine reference site alongside two restored sites: one treated with a seed mixture in 2017 and another with transplanted turf in 2020. At each site, nine 10 m^2 plots were established for vegetation surveys and soil sampling, with the latter undergoing physicochemical analyses and bacterial 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing (NGS). Several years after intervention, the restored sites remained significantly distinct from the reference grassland. The seeded plots showed reduced species diversity, richness and dominance by competitively strong non-native species. While turf transplantation enhanced the establishment of native species, it did achieve full vegetation cover during the studied period. Furthermore, soil in the restored sites was shallower and had lower microbial biomass and a bacterial community distinct from that of undisturbed sites. Based on these findings, including the identification of eight bacterial genera as indicators of undisturbed alpine soils, the authors recommend prioritizing topsoil preservation in restoration projects and allowing for spontaneous regeneration when erosion control is not a primary concern, reserving seeding for cases where rapid stabilization is required.

In Switzerland, the neophyte *Erigeron annuus* is considered to be harmful to the environment, particularly to native plant diversity, and is therefore listed as an “invasive alien

species". As the evidence for this listing is limited and contradictory, Genucchi et al. (2025) studied the potential impact of increasing cover of *Erigeron annuus* on native plant diversity in Switzerland. The authors sampled clusters of four 1-m^2 plots in 10 different grassland sites around Zurich, Northern Switzerland. Each cluster represented a local "invasion gradient" from no (or very low) to high *Erigeron annuus* cover. They then tested whether plant diversity, mean ecological indicator values (temperature, light, moisture, reaction, nutrients) and CSR strategy types are influenced by the cover of Erigeron annuus. Interestingly, the authors found that the cover of *Erigeron annuus* did not significantly affect species richness, Shannon evenness, Shannon diversity, mean ecological indicator values or CSR strategies. Although the species regularly invades relatively species rich grassland communities, its effect on the resident vascular plant community remained negligible in the study region. This was consistent with a literature review according to which other studies with sound methodology either found no effect or even a positive effect of Erigeron annuus on native plant diversity. The authors concluded that the determination of "invasive alien neophytes" should be based on solid scientific evidence to spend conservation money effectively on measures that improve the state of native biodiversity.

The paper by Dembicz et al. (2025) contributes to the understanding of Poland's dry grassland diversity by providing the first comprehensive syntaxonomic synthesis of these communities in the Lesser Polish Upland, a biogeographically complex transition zone between the Central European lowlands and the Carpathians. This study fills a critical gap in Central European grassland research by documenting the largely neglected *Koelerio-Corynephoretea* grasslands alongside the better-known *Festuco-Brometea* types. Beyond its syntaxonomic and ecological insights, the work has significant conservation implications, drawing attention to habitats that are both exceptionally diverse and increasingly threatened by land-use change and abandonment. Despite many Koelerio-Corynephoretea communities correspond to EU priority habitats, yet these remain underrepresented, compared to their counterparts from *Festuco-Brometea*, in protection and monitoring schemes. The findings thus call for a renewed focus on the full spectrum of dry grassland diversity, from calcareous slopes to sandy river terraces, within national and European conservation policies.

Tuexenia is a diamond open access journal and thus publication is free of charge for authors. All articles are freely available on the *Tuexenia* webpage. While publishing in *Tuexenia* is attractive in general because the journal is included in the Web of Science and the Scopus database, all articles are open access and in full colour, and no APCs are required, it is particularly attractive to submit to EDGG's Grassland Special Feature in *Tuexenia*. The articles in the Special Feature are, on average, cited more often than regular Tuexenia articles. Based on the Web of Science data of 18 January 2026, the articles in the EDGG Special Feature 2024 were cited on average 2.0 times, while the other *Tuexenia* articles were cited only 0.6 times; for the Special Features 2021, the ratio was 5.5 vs. 5.1, and for the one in 2020, 8.0 vs. 3.4. Therefore, if grassland-related articles from EDGG members are submitted to the Special Feature and not as regular articles, this benefits both the authors and *Tuexenia* (through a higher Journal Impact Factor and Scopus CiteScore).

We have initiated contributions for the next EDGG Special Feature in *Tuexenia* 46 (2026) and thus call for contributions on grassland-related topics, including species taxonomy and biology, ecology, biodiversity, syntaxonomy, conservation and management of any type of grassland vegetation in Europe (Boch et al. 2025c). Although submissions should focus on vegetation or plant related aspects, we encourage interdisciplinary approaches incorporating zoological or pedological topics. The scope of *Tuexenia* has been broadened: beyond contributions from grasslands in the nemoral biome, we particularly welcome also grassland studies from the arctic, boreal, steppic and mediterranean biomes in Europe, as reflected in *Tuexenia*'s subtitle "A European Journal of Vegetation Science". We would appreciate receiving an announcement of your manuscript, including a working title, list of authors, and targeted submission date as soon as possible, preferably no later than the end of March 2026. To maximise your chance of inclusion in the Special Feature of 2026, we recommend submitting your manuscript following the *Tuexenia* author guidelines, by email to Steffen Boch no later than May 2026 (see Boch et al. 2025c).

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***Ophrys scolopax*, Setubal, Portugal. Photo: P. Chmielewski.**

Announcements

Twin Special Issue "History of Vegetation Science" Call for abstracts

This Special Issue, dedicated to the history of vegetation science, consists of two parts that are published simultaneously in two journals of the IAVS, the mother organisation of EDGG, the *Journal of Vegetation Science* (JVS, Journal Impact Factor = 2.7) and in *Vegetation Classification and Survey* (VCS, Journal Impact Factor = 3.0). Manuscripts on topics related to the development of vegetation typologies and vegetation surveys and underlying methods will be considered for publication in VCS, while those focused on the history of hypothesis-driven approaches, numerical methods, etc., will be directed to JVS.

Guest Editors:

- Sandra Mesquita, Independent Researcher, Portugal, mesquita.s@gmail.com
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Receiving Editors:

- **JVS**: Valério Pillar, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, vpillar@ufrgs.br
- **VCS**: Wolfgang Willner, Universität Wien, wolfgang.willner@univie.ac.at

Top: Vegetation profile from Guinea. López, E. (1946). Ensayo geobotánico de la Guinea continental española. Madrid: Dirección General de Marruecos y Colonias. Bottom left: Detail of Berghaus, H. (1851). Physikalischer Atlas, vol. V, plate No.1. Bottom right: Photo by E. Boldt-Christas published in Proceedings of the Seventh International Botanical Congress, Stockholm, 12-20 July 1950, with the caption "Section Phytogeography. In the front row, from the left: W. Lüdi, J. Braun-Blanquet, R. Tüxen, W. Koch, C. Troll, G.E. Du Rietz."

Outline

International journals devoted to plant science have long published articles on botanical history, and there are even publications dedicated to the subject. However, papers on the history of vegetation science are rare and usually present global reviews of its evolution, focusing mostly on the 20th century. As a result, knowledge of how vegetation science developed is scarce, despite the wealth of historical documentation accumulated in research centres dedicated to the subject.

We now call for manuscripts that address this knowledge gap, focusing on all aspects of the history of vegetation science and of the individuals involved in it. Topics include the evolution of research topics, concepts, methods, and forms of representation, exploration, biography, iconography, and bibliography. We aim to encourage the study of the documentary collections that vegetation scientists have amassed over time, the material evidence of their work, and the methodologies developed for the study and documentation of their object of study.

We aim to assemble a series of high-quality papers that offer insight into the history of vegetation science, contributing to a better understanding of its current state and pointing to future developments. The call for papers encompasses, though not restrictively, the following topics:

- Evolution of research topics and methods in all aspects of vegetation science, including plant community ecology and related topics in macroecology, biogeography, vegetation classification, numerical methods, and vegetation modelling.
- The scientific legacy of individuals or groups of scientists who have significantly contributed to the development of vegetation science on a regional, national, or global scale. Personal views on the historical evolution of vegetation science by an eyewitness are also welcome.
- Exploration expeditions, carried out to study plant communities and plant ecology.
- Evolution of representation in vegetation science: ecological mapping, data visualisation and infographics, vegetation in iconography and art.

Within these topics, JVS publishes Research Articles, Review Articles (Syntheses), Methodological Articles, Forum Articles, and Reports. Exceptionally, memoirs and biographical notes can also be presented, if focused on the ideas and long-standing impacts of the publications rather than on personal life events. Manuscripts in VCS can be one of the following types: Research Papers, VCS Methods, Review and Synthesis, Forum Papers, and Reports.

Procedure

- Interested authors should **submit a preliminary abstract** in the format of the target journal (JVS for non-classification topics, VCS for classification topics) at https://forms.gle/ndQy3N4HeVeRxJ558 by **31 March 2026**.
- The Guest Editors will evaluate the proposed abstracts and inform authors whether their contributions are invited, conditionally invited, or declined. The Guest Editors, together with the Chief Editors of the two journals, will also assess the choice for the target journal and suggest a change if needed. Only invited contributions can be submitted.
- **Invited manuscripts should be submitted by 31 December 2026**, via the corresponding journal platform.
- The manuscripts will undergo regular peer review, with one of the Guest Editors serving as the handling editor, and their acceptance will depend on the peer review results.
- Accepted papers will be published without delay, not waiting for the last paper of the respective Special Feature.
- Once the last paper of the JVS Special Feature and the VCS Special Collection are published, the Guest Editor teams will write, for each of the two journals, a synthesising editorial.

Sandra Mesquita, Portugal
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(Chair of the Guest Editors)

Apply Now – IAVS Asian Region Small Grant Scheme for Early-Career Researchers

The **Asian Regional Section** of the **International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS–Asian RS)** is pleased to announce the launch of a **new small grant scheme** designed to support early-career researchers across Asia in advancing their careers and contributing to high-quality vegetation science.

We kindly invite you to apply and/or share this opportunity within your networks.

About the Grant

This special small grant initiative aims to:

- Support innovative and scientifically robust vegetation science research across Asia.
- Provide opportunities for MSc/PhD students and early-career researchers to conduct fieldwork and data-driven studies.
- Strengthen scientific collaboration and build research capacity, especially in underfunded regions.
- Increase the visibility and impact of Asian vegetation scientists within IAVS.

Priority Areas

Projects should primarily involve first-hand field data collection within Asian ecosystems. Priority will be given to:

- Field surveys and vegetation plot sampling
- Laboratory or analytical work using fresh field-collected material

Application deadline: 31 March 2026

For further information about the Eligibility Criteria, Evaluation Criteria, Required Application Documents and to access application form please visit the webpage.

We warmly encourage you to **apply or help us spread the word** to colleagues, students, and research networks throughout the region. Your participation is essential to support stronger, more connected vegetation science across Asia.

Alireza Naqinezhad, University of Derby-UK
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On behalf of the IAVS Asian Regional Section

Brayo pamiricae-Stipetum glareosae **in Murgab, East Pamir, Tajikistan. Photo: A. Nowak.**

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Vegetation of open habitats in the Turku Archipelago (Finland): the GrassPlot dataset FI_A sampled during the 21st EDGG Field Workshop

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Abstract: The 21st Field Workshop of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) was conducted from 28 June to 6 July 2025 in the Turku Archipelago, Finland, and was the first Field Workshop ever held in Northern Europe. The research expedition aimed to survey the diversity of semi-natural pastures and meadows, rocky dry grasslands, sandy grasslands, coastal habitats, wooded pastures, heathlands, and wetlands in the region, focusing on vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens. In total, we sampled 170 nested-plot series from 1 cm^2 to 10 m^2, and for a subset of 38 plots extended sampling to a seventh grain size of 100 m^2 (full "EDGG Biodiversity Plots"). Mean species richness ranged from 2.9 species in 1 cm^2 to 51.6 species in 100 m^2, with bryophytes and lichens contributing increasingly higher fractions at larger grain sizes. Plots were preliminarily assigned to 14 vegetation classes, namely the *Cakiletea maritimae, Calluno-Ulicetea, Festuco-Brometea, Honckenyo-Elymetea, Juncetea maritimi, Koelerio-Corynephoretea, Molinio-Arrhenatheretea, Nardetea strictae, Oxycocco-Sphagnetea, Phragmito-Magnocaricetea, Polygono-Poetea, Scheuchzerio-Caricetea, Sedo-Scleranthetea*, and *Trifolio-Geranietea*. The collected plots can serve as a baseline for long-term monitoring; the final dataset will be integrated into GrassPlot (ID: FI_A), EVA and sPlot.

Keywords: biodiversity; bryophyte; coastal vegetation; Finland; grassland; lichen; nested plot; semi-natural; syntaxonomy; Turku Archipelago; vascular plant; vegetation-plot database.

Nomenclature: Euro+Med (2025) for vascular plants, Hodgetts et al. (2020) for bryophytes, www.indexfungorum.org for lichens; Mucina et al. (2016) for syntaxa.

Abbreviations: EDGG = Eurasian Dry Grassland Group.

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Introduction

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) has organized annual Field Workshops (research expeditions) since 2009 with the goal of comprehensively documenting and analysing plant diversity of grasslands and other open habitats throughout the Palaearctic biogeographic realm. A key focus of these expeditions is the collection of high-quality original data from underrepresented countries and vegetation types (Dengler et al. 2016a). Central to the Field Workshops is the objective to record biodiversity of various taxa and specifically vegetation using the standardized EDGG methodology. This standardised approach uses multi-scale (0.0001-100 m² nested plots) and multi-taxon, sampling to systematically collect biodiversity and composition data of vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens, complemented by optional recording of invertebrates (Dengler et al. 2016b; Dengler et al. 2021). The Field Workshops take place in different regions one or two times a year. By 2025, EDGG has organized 20 of these events, resulting in numerous publications (Bergauer et al. 2022; Cancellieri et al. 2024; Khodosovtsev et al. 2024; Vynokurov et al. 2024b; Guarino et al. 2025; Klopsch et al. 2025).

The 21st Field Workshop in Finland was the second Field Workshop held in 2025 (Vynokurov et al. 2024a), and the first ever conducted in Northern Europe (Miskova et al. 2025). It aimed at collecting a representative dataset of all natural and semi-natural habitat types of the Turku Archipelago. The focus during the workshop was on three distinct regional zones defined by environmental conditions (Inner, Intermediate, and Outer Turku Archipelago), representing a high diversity of habitats, including coastal meadows, heathlands, rocky grasslands, forest edges, as well as wooded pastures and meadows. In addition to collecting grassland data from a region new to the EDGG, a main goal of the 21st Field Workshop was to contribute to the development of a long-term monitoring system for open habitats in the Turku Archipelago, in collaboration with the local organizers. This effort will create a valuable reference for tracking environmental changes and understanding habitat dynamics in that region over time.

In this report, we describe the sampling of the 21st Field Workshop and the resulting GrassPlot dataset FI_A. At the same time, we provide some first insights into the floristic composition of the vegetation and diversity patterns.

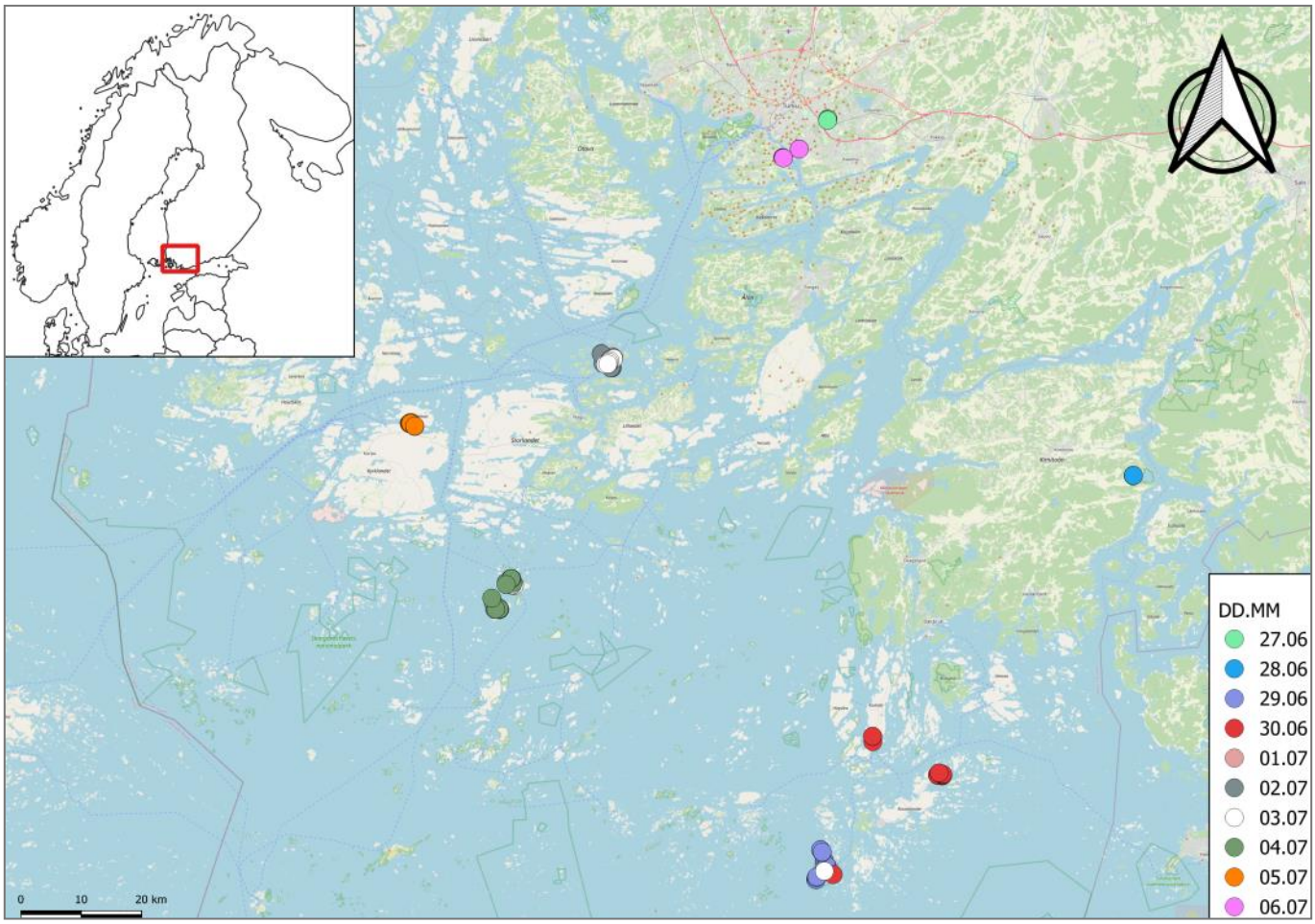

Figure 1. Map of the study region, sampling localities investigated during the 21st EDGG Field Workshop. Base map: ©2026 Google, country border, extracted from OpenStreetMap (openstreetmap.org).

Study area

The 21st Field Workshop took place in the Turku Archipelago in the Archipelago Sea (Baltic Sea), off southwestern Finland (Fig. 1; von Numers, 2011). The Turku Archipelago covers a shallow non-tidal area and includes more than 22,000 islands, ranging in size from a few square meters to inhabited islands spanning tens of square kilometres (Granö et al. 1999). The Archipelago Sea Area is designated as a biosphere reserve and includes several Natura 2000 sites (Skärgårdshavets Biosfärområde – Saaristomeren biosfäärialue). Its southern part forms the Archipelago Sea National Park, which contains both traditionally managed cultural landscapes (semi-natural grasslands, wooded pastures) and strictly protected areas with low human impact (forests, seashores; Heinonen, 2016). This mosaic structure creates a wide range of environmental conditions and habitats across the islands.

The study area extended from 59.80° to 60.24° northern latitude and from 21.62° to 22.84° eastern longitude, with elevations ranging from 0 to 63 m a.s.l. The climate is maritime, thus relatively mild, although the early part of the growing season often exhibits continental characteristics, including low precipitation and higher insolation compared to the mainland. The average length of the growing season is about 180 days, with a mean annual precipitation of 500 mm and an average ice-cover duration of 70 days (Atlas of Finland 1993). The mean annual temperature is ca. 7 °C (Karger et al. 2017). The islands emerged from the sea after the last glaciation, around 12,000 years ago (Aikio 2020). Since prehistoric times, the culture and economy of the people in the Archipelago Sea depended on both terrestrial and marine resources (Leppäkoski et al. 1999). All large islands with nutrient-rich soils have been inhabited and used for agriculture since the Middle Ages. Beyond the medieval settlements, expansion of farming and a population boom 100–200 years ago led to increased human activity, also on smaller islands in the outer archipelago, creating many of the traditional landscapes still visible today, while the traditional land use often has ceased (Leppäkoski et al. 1999).

Today, the grassland network of the Archipelago Sea is among the ecologically most significant ones in Finland (Raatikainen et al. 2017). The region supports a diverse mosaic of open habitats whose structure and composition are profoundly shaped by historical and contemporary anthropogenic disturbance regimes, particularly traditional agricultural practices such as grazing and mowing (Leppäkoski et al. 1999). Typical semi-natural communities include heaths, calcareous sub-thermophilous meadows, acidic herb-rich dry meadows, mesic meadows, and wooded meadows (Table 1, Fig. 2). Moreover, natural open habitats, such as rocky outcrops, brackish salt marshes, mires and coastal shorelines are also widespread, offering a mosaic of diverse site conditions.

Methods

To enable sampling of a sufficient number of plots for statistical comparisons among the various habitat types as well as a sufficient for vegetation classification, we modified the normal EDGG Field Workshop methodology (Dengler et al. 2016b, 2021). In addition to some traditional "EDGG Biodiversity Plots" (with seven grain sizes up to 100 m^2 and two nested subseries in opposite corners of the largest plot), we mainly sampled "Half Biodiversity Plots" with only six grain sizes (up to 10 m^2) and no replication. In total, we collected 170 10 m^2 plots, of which 38 were complete "EDGG Biodiversity Plots", i.e. still more than in most previous Field Workshops (Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of the sites studied during the 21st EDGG Field Workshop.

Location	"Half Biodiversity Plots"	"Biodiversity Plots"	10 m^2 plots (total)
Berghamn	18	6	30
Boskär	5	5	15
Hailuoto	3	0	3
Hiittinen	8	2	12
Kasnäs	3	1	5
Kemio	2	0	2
Örö	18	4	26
Östra Långholm	3	1	5
Seili	26	14	54
Turku (mainland)	2	2	6
Vattkast	6	3	12
Total	**94**	**38**	**170**

Table 2. Overview of the vegetation classes studied during the 21st EDGG Field Workshop.

Vegetation class	10 m^2 plots
Cakiletea maritimae	1
Calluno-Ulicetea	8
Festuco-Brometea	13
Honckenyo-Elymetea	3
Juncetea maritimi	14
Koelerio-Corynephoretea	35
Molinio-Arrhenatheretea	39
Nardetea strictae	5
Oxycocco-Sphagnetea	1
Phragmito-Magnocaricetea	1
Polygono-Poetea	3
Scheuchzerio-Caricetea	4
Sedo-Scleranthetea	32
Trifolio-Geranietea	11
Total	**170**

The plots were sampled at 10 locations (nine islands and the mainland in Turku) selected to represent different geological conditions and the gradient from the mainland through the Inner and Intermediate to the Outer Turku Archipelago (Table 1). Within each island, we tried, within the available time, to capture the different open habitat types present (Fig. 2) and, if the same main habitat type occurred in multiple patches, to collect multiple plots separated spatially. According to our preliminary expert-based assignment, we sampled plots from 13 vegetation classes, with wet to mesic grasslands (*Molinio-Arrhenatheretea*), dry sandy grasslands (Koelerio-Corynephoretea), and rocky outcrop communities (*Sedo-Scleranthetea*) being most represented (Table 2).

In each subplot of any size, we recorded the presence of all vascular plants as well as terricolous bryophytes and lichens with the shoot-presence method (Dengler 2008), while at 10 m^2 their cover was additionally estimated in percent (Dengler & Dembicz 2023). Critical specimens were collected and identified in the laboratory also with the use of stereomicroscopes and compound microscopes. In each 10 m^2 plot, we also measured the standard set of structural and environmental variables of EDGG (Dengler et al. 2016b).

Moreover, from each 10 m^2 plot, a mixed soil sample of the upper 10 cm was taken in five random points inside each plot, air-dried and later analysed in the lab for standard soil parameters. This was done by sieving to the fine-soil fraction after additional air-drying and, the following parameters were measured in the lab: pH (in H_2O, electrometrically), electrical conductivity (µS/cm, electrometrically), organic C content (mass %, determined by combustion in a furnace at 550 °C for 90 minutes) and soil texture (by granulometry).

Figure 2. Different open habitat types sampled during the Field Workshop. A – Shoreline community with *Crambe maritima* on gravel, B and C – Meso-xeric grasslands, D – Heathland, E – Rocky grasslands, F – Wooded meadow. Photos: A–C – D. Vynokurov, D–F – J. Dengler.

Initial results and discussion

Floristic composition

According to preliminary results, 438 vascular plant, 108 bryophytes and 51 lichen taxa were recorded across all vegetation plots. After the completion of the identification of critical taxa, the numbers might slightly change. Currently, the digitisation of the field data is finished, and all entries are being checked for accuracy and completeness. While the identification has already been completed for critical lichens, that of collected bryophytes and critical vascular plant species (*Festuca spp*.) by specialists is ongoing. The most frequent vascular plants in the habitats of the region (based on the 170 10-m² plots) were *Agrostis capillaris* (recorded in 56% of the plots), *Galium verum* (49%), *Rumex acetosella* (38%), *Festuca rubra* (38%), *Stellaria graminea* (37%), *Trifolium repens* (36%), *Rumex acetosa* (33%), Achillea millefolium (32%), *Veronica chamaedrys* (32%), *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (27%), *Potentilla argentea* (27%), *Avenella flexuosa* (27%), *Poa angustifolia* (26%), *Helictotrichon pubescens* (25%), *Veronica officinalis* (25%), and *Plantago lanceolata* (25%). Among bryophytes, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* (37%), *Brachythecium albicans* (31%), *Ceratodon purpureus* (28%) and Pleurozium schreberi (28%) were most commonly recorded. Finally, among lichens, *Cladonia furcata* (31%) reached the highest frequency.

Biodiversity

Species richness values for the various taxonomic groups (complete vegetation, vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens) are presented in Table 3. Mean total species richness exhibited a strong positive relationship with sampling area, increasing from a mean of 2.9 species in the smallest grain size (1 cm^2) to 51.6 species in the largest grain size (100 m^2). However, a comparative analysis with previous EDGG Field Workshops revealed generally lower mean richness values in the current study, particularly pronounced at the larger sampling scales. The lower mean richness values observed in this study compared to previous EDGG Field Workshops should be interpreted considering habitat composition and sampling scope. By including a broader range of habitat types—particularly those that are inherently species-poor such as wet grasslands, coastal habitats, and heathlands - the workshop captured a larger environmental gradient than previous workshops, which have focused on more homogeneous and high-diversity dry grasslands or subalpine to alpine habitats. For example, at the grain size of 10 m^2, mean species richness was 30.7 for the complete vegetation (20.7 for vascular plants). These values are much lower than those reported from the Field Workshops in Armenia (50.7 and 46.8; Vynokurov et al. 2024a), Austria: (41.5 and 34.1; Magnes et al. 2020), Siberia: (48.5 and 43.9; Polyakova et al. 2016), Bulgaria: (38.5 and 34.1; Dembicz et al. 2021), and Romania (60.5 and 57.2; Turtureanu et al. 2014). However, they are higher than the values reported from the Field Workshop in Southern Ukraine: 28.1 and 24.3; Moysiyenko et al. 2022). The relatively low vascular and total species richness can be attributed to the fact that we did not only collect dry grasslands as in most of the previous Field Workshops, but also habitats known to be poor in vascular plants, such as *Cakiletea maritimae, Calluno-Ulicetea* and *Honckenyo-Elymetea*. If we compare just within the same class, the mean vascular plant species richness of the stands in the Turku Archipelago is close to the Palaearctic average according to the GrassPlot Diversity Explorer (v.2.10; GrasslandDiversityExplorer; see Biurrun et al. 2021), e.g. *Festuco-Brometea* (ca. 34 species in the Turku Archipelago vs. 34.6 species as Palaearctic mean) and *Molinio-Arrhenatheretea* (ca. 29 species vs. 30.3 species).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the scale-dependent richness patterns across all sampled plots from the 21st EDGG Field Workshop in the Turku Archipelago.

Area (m^2)	*n*	All species			Vascular plants			Bryophytes			Lichens		
		mean	min	max	mean	min	max	mean	min	max	mean	min	max
0.0001	170	2.9	0	7	1.9	0	7	0.9	0	4	0.2	0	5
0.001	170	4.6	0	13	2.9	0	10	1.3	0	7	0.4	0	5
0.01	170	7.8	0	20	5.1	0	18	2.0	0	12	0.7	0	8
0.1	170	12.7	1	30	8.4	0	27	2.9	0	13	1.4	0	10
1	170	19.8	1	41	13.2	0	38	4.4	0	13	2.2	0	13
10	170	30.8	3	67	20.8	0	52	6.3	0	18	3.7	0	18
100	38	51.6	9	92	35.3	8	72	10.8	1	28	5.5	0	24

Mean bryophyte and lichen richness also increased with area, rising from 0.8 and 0.2 species in 1 cm^2 size to 10.7 and 5.4 species in 100 m^2, respectively (Table 3). In comparison with the aforementioned previous EDGG Field Workshops, the present one generally recorded a higher mean richness of bryophytes and lichens, particularly for bryophytes at larger grain sizes. For lichens, the present workshop showed the highest mean richness among all compared EDGG Field Workshops at the smaller grain sizes; for example, at 0.1 m^2 it reached 1.4 species (Armenia: 0.3, Austria: 0.8, Switzerland (inneralpine dry grasslands): 0.5, Siberia: 0.6, Bulgaria: 0.4, Romania: 0.2, South Ukraine: 1.0). At larger grain sizes, however, some previous Field Workshops reported higher lichen richness than recorded here.

Mean species richness of vascular plants in 10 m^2 varied strongly and significantly among the vegetation classes (ANOVA: $p < 0.001$; Fig. 3). It ranged from 3.0 in our sole plot of the *Cakiletea maritimae* to 41.2 ± 5.9 SD in the *Nardetea strictae* (Fig. 3). The highest vascular plant species richness was recorded in a *Festuco-Brometea* stand on Berghamn, with 52 species in 10 m^2, while the lowest was observed in two rocky grassland plots on Boskär and Seili, where no vascular plant species were recorded in 10 m^2 but numerous bryophytes and lichens.

Soil data

The mean soil depth of only 18 cm demonstrates that the islands are essentially rocky, with only limited soil development above the almost superficial bedrock (Table 4). The soil data reveal a predominantly acidic environment, with a mean pH of 4.36, ranging from extremely acidic (2.53) to near-neutral (6.90) (Table 4). The cover of particle sizes on the soil surface varied greatly among plots, with some completely covered by fine soil, but others (almost) completely by either gravel or rock (Table 4). The variation in electrical conductivity, reaching up to 1022 µS/cm (Table 4), highlights the significant influence of the Baltic Sea's brackish water on coastal vegetation communities.

Conclusions and outlook

Already the preliminary results of the 21st Field Workshop in the Turku Archipelago make an important contribution to the documentation and understanding of biodiversity across the levels of vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens in this region. High-quality ecological data were collected across a diverse mosaic of open habitats, including coastal meadows, heathlands, rocky grasslands, and wooded pastures. After the completion of the species identification, data cleaning and validation, this dataset can and will serve for multiple purposes. First, these precisely georeferenced plots can serve as a starting point for a long-term monitoring system for open habitats in the Archipelago, which is already planned by local collaborators. Second, we plan to use the 10 m2 plots for a regional typological-syntaxonomic study to document and classify the vegetation types of the Turku Archipelago and place them in the European syntaxonomic classification system (Mucina et al. 2016) as well as in the EUNIS habitat typology, which is based on syntaxonomic units (Chytrý et al. 2020). Owing to the lack of phytosociological tradition, both systems are hitherto poorly developed in Fennoscandia. Third, beyond syntaxonomy, the high-quality data on three taxonomic groups, combined with comprehensive soil parameters, enable a wide range of further scientific investigations.

Table 4. Summary of data recorded in the field and the results of the soil data analysis across all sampled plots from the 21st EDGG Field Workshop in the Archipelago Sea. Soil depth, cover of stones and rocks, gravel and fine soil are based on field observations. Organic matter, pH and electrical conductivity are based on the analysis of the fine soil of the uppermost 10 cm in the lab.

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Mean soil depth (cm)	0	>60	18	18
Cover of stones and rocks (%)	0	100	11	20
Cover of gravel (%)	0	90	4	15
Cover of fine soil (%)	0	100	84	25
Organic matter (%)	0.4	32.9	8.2	7.8
pH (H_2O)	2.53	6.90	4.36	0.77
EC (µS/cm)	25	1022	255	203

The detailed and extensive records of lichens and bryophytes, in particular, provide opportunities to investigate ecological patterns such as species-area relationships, diversity-environment relationships, or community assembly processes, in taxa for which data are typically limited. Finally, once completed, the vegetation data will be integrated into the GrassPlot database (Dengler et al. 2018; Biurrun et al. 2019) as dataset FI_A and subsequently to the European Vegetation Archive (EVA; Chytrý et al. 2016) and the global vegetation plot database "sPlot" (Bruelheide et al. 2019). This will ensure broad accessibility and usability for regional, European, and global vegetation research and contribute to fill the problematic data gap of EVA and sPlot in Fennoscandia.

Author contributions

All co-authors helped with the field sampling and/or species identification. N.S. drafted the report and the map, J.D. coordinated shaping it into a scientific article, while all authors checked, improved and approved the manuscript.

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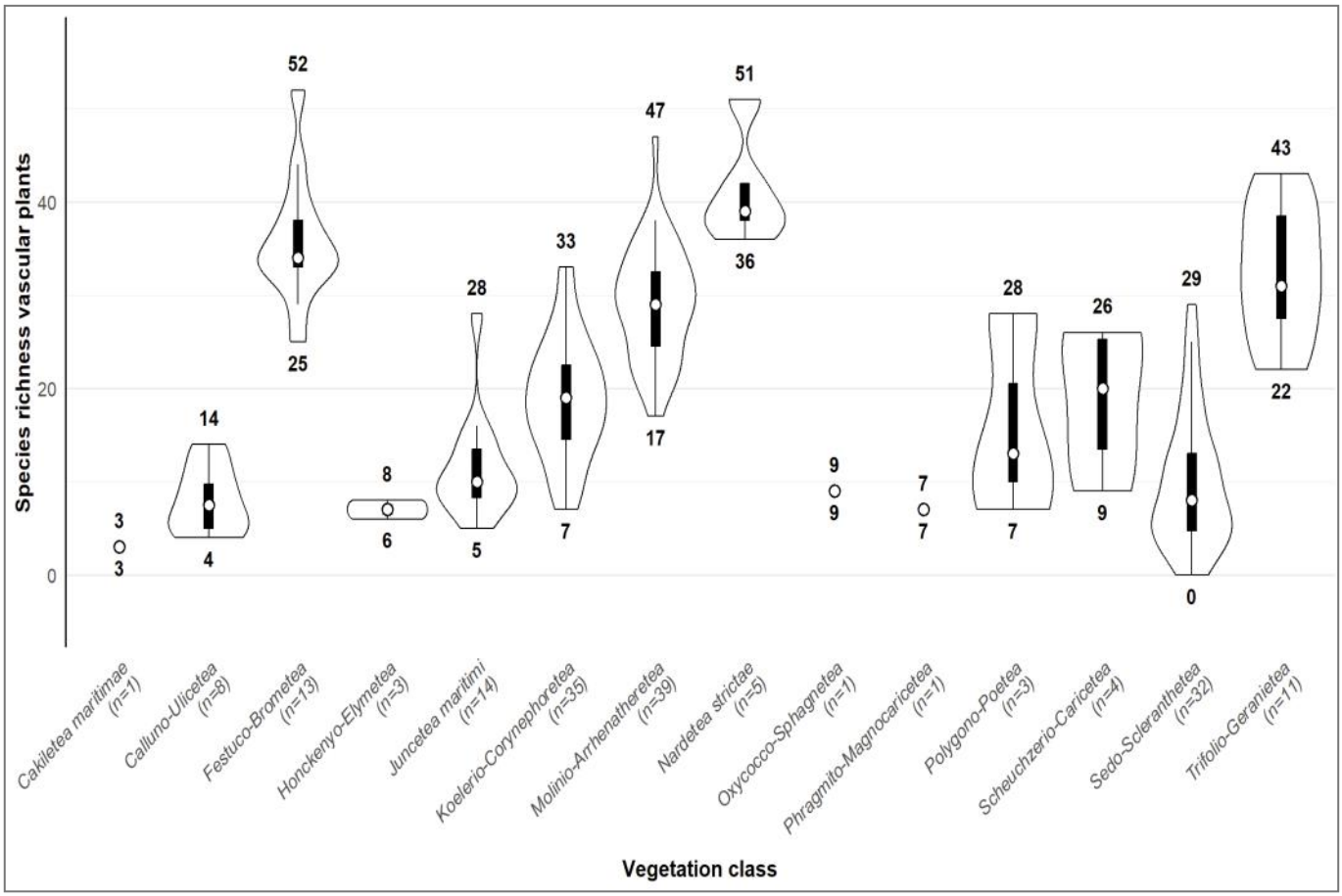

Figure 3. Vascular plant species richness in the 170 10-m^2 plots compared across the vegetation classes (preliminary assignment) in the Turku Archipelago. Violin plots complemented by boxplots in the centre indicate the distribution of species richness in each class. Values above and below the violin plot represent the maximum and minimum species richness, respectively. The mean species richness differed highly significantly among vegetation classes (ANOVA, $p < 0.001$).

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Photo Competition

Best Shots on "Grassland geometries"

Here are the three winners of the EDGG Photo Competition dedicated to "Grassland geometries". The Jury for the Photo Competition was composed of Edy Fantinato, Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa, Jim Martin and Jalil Noroozi.

1st place:

Floral filigree, a close-up view of the intricate, lace-like geometry of *Scabiosa columbaria*, in the grasslands in the Iron Gate Natural Park, Romania.

Roxana Nicoară , Bucharest, Romania, roxanaion85@gmail.com

Reviews from the Jury:

"The intricate geometrical detail on this Scabiosa columbaria seed head is stunning."

"This close-up view of a scabious' head perfectly depicts the wonderful and intricate geometries of plants."

"A mesmerising display of natural geometry, this intricate structure unfolds in perfectly repeating radial patterns, revealing the mathematical precision within organic forms."

2nd place:

***Sempervivum grandiflorum*.**

Gianmaria Bonari, Siena, Italy, gianmaria.bonari@unisi.it

Reviews from the Jury:

"The radiant corolla of Sempervivum is a perfect and unusual example of flower geometry"

"Sempervivum grandiflorum displays its beauty through precise natural geometry, its star-like symmetry unfolding in perfectly balanced proportions."

3rd place:

Radial symmetry in a *Carduus nutans* flower head, Dobrogea, Romania.

Roxana Nicoară , Bucharest, Romania, roxanaion85@gmail.com

Reviews from the Jury:

"There is a hypnotic swirl to this beautiful lilac Carduus flower head."

"A striking example of natural geometry, this vibrant form radiates with concentric symmetry, its precise circular patterns echoing the elegance of mathematical design."

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Photo Story

Impressions from the 20th EDGG Field Workshop (28 May to 6 June 2025) in the dry grasslands of the Maritime, Cottian and Ligurian Alps, Italy

Photos and text by Noa Terracina[1], Ute Becker[2], Asun Berastegi[3], Luana Bertolotti[4], Denys Vynokurov[1,5], Jürgen Dengler[6], Thomas Becker[7], Lilly Bergmann[7], Idoia Biurrun[8], Emely Fries[7], Simone Gea[9], Maryna Golivets[10], Riccardo Guarino[11], Michele Lonati[9], Giacomo Marengo[9], Ginevra Nota[9] & Davide Barberis[12]

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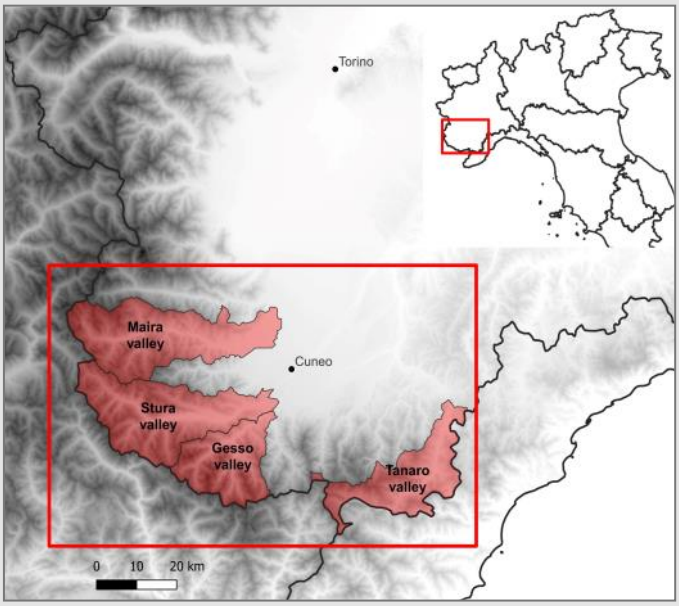
The 20th Field Workshop of the European Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) took place in the southwestern part of the Italian Alps between May and June 2025. The working area of the expedition included the impressive mountains and valleys of the Maritime and Cottian Alps (Maira Valley, Stura Valley, Gesso Valley) and the Ligurian Alps (Tanaro Valley).

This sampling campaign is part of a series started during the 11th EDGG Field Workshop in 2018 aiming to study xerophytic grasslands in the Alps. The sampling areas were previously selected by local experts, who played a very important role in our expedition. This time 17 participants took part in the sampling, including local experts, researchers who have regularly participated in other expeditions, and people who were participating in an EDGG expedition for the first time.

Enjoy some memories from this beautiful Field Workshop in the valleys of the southwesternmost Italian Alps!



Location of the study area in the southwestern Alps, Italy.

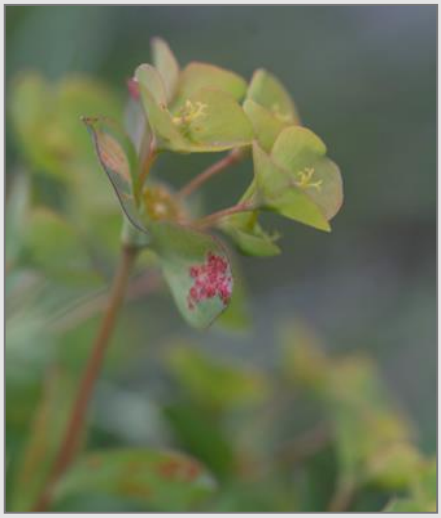
The participants of the 20th EDGG Field Workshop in the Maritime, Cotian and Ligurian Alps.

Day 1 - 28th May 2025

After having found each other in a parking lot outside Torino, we were ready to start. Upwards through the mountains we drove to the first sampling sites. Along the way, our wonderful local organizers arranged a lunch stop to try the typical Bra sausage and we had then enough energy for the first plot! Colle San Bernardo, not far away from our Hotel in Ormea, was perfect to start with a nice view of the valleys on the border between the Italian regions of Piemonte and Liguria.

Ready to search for a good spot and get acquainted with the precise EDGG method… And for the most also with some new plants!

The experienced field work coordinator Denys reminded us how to set a Biodiversity plot. But who can recall how long the diagonal of a Biodiversity Plot is again? 16.16 cm? 14.14 cm? 14.47 cm?



At the Colle San Bernardo we got to see the only occurrence of *Euphorbia ligustica* in the region of Piemonte.

Day 2 - 29th May 2025

We got to know the Ligurian Alps and our first valley: where the river Tanaro flows through. From the small village of Upega we discovered nice shrublands of *Genista cinerea*. While in the afternoon we moved to the southernmost area visited during our expedition: In the municipality of Alto, we sampled some almost Mediterranean grasslands.

The beautiful landscape of the Tanaro Valley made us eager to start. How many different green shades could we see? And how many plant species do they belong to?

We only had to decide how to divide the group and start sampling!

Enjoying the landscape was part of the field workshop experience. A nice lunch break with nice colleagues is very important to restore some energy to sample even more plots.

The evening activity we like the most… Identifying plant species! Until the hotel owners kicked us out because it was too late at night… But what can we do, we could identify the whole night.

Day 3 - 30th May 2025

We left our hotel in Ormea and headed to the sampling area in the higher Tanaro Valley, Ligurian Alps. In the evening, we moved to our second hotel in Borgo San Dalmazzo, not far away from the city of Cuneo.

This day we made three nested plots (100 m^2) and eight normal plots (10 m^2). Sometimes there is debate about whether it is better to sample nested plots or normal plots. It depends on the time available, the number of people involved, and, above all, the diversity of grassland types and locations we want to cover.

Sometimes, in places that seemed abandoned, people came out to meet us, interested in the presence of a group of grassland researchers.

Utensils that are probably no longer useful but bear witness to ways of life not so distant in time.

This corner of the plot must be very important.

But it is also important to be aware of photographers from time to time.

In the Rocca d'Orse sampling area, there was a significant presence of shrubs, notably *Genista cinerea* subsp. *cinerea*.

The Primula Hotel at Borgo San Dalmazzo, our comfortable accommodation for most of the expedition. It is not easy to find a good location where you can work on identifying plants and filling out forms. But an accommodation with a plant name is always a good start.

Day 4 - 31th May 2025

After spending the first night in Borgo San Dalmazzo, we headed to the Gesso Valley. Thus, we began our first day of study in the Maritime Alps. The morning sampling area was near the village of Andonno, where we found very interesting meso-xeric grasslands and rocky grasslands on limestone. In the afternoon, we split into two groups. One visited the area of S. Anna di Valdieri, where releves of *Sedo-Scleranthetea* communities on siliceous rock were sampled. The second group visited other areas near the village of Valdieri (Rocca San Giovanni), one of the most important villages in the Gesso Valley.

Near the village of Andonno in the relevé number AML031 *Sedum album, S. rupestre, Teucrium botrys* and *Satureja montana* were common. The herb layer covered 55%, while the cryptogam cover, mainly bryophytes, was 30%.

In Andonno, grassland plants had been used to fill these curious dolls.

We learnt that Occitan culture and language are preserved in this area of the Alps.

Enjoy. It is also part of the expedition…

… And smile, because the expedition helps.

Even in a rocky place and even if it rains, it can be comfortable to take relevés if you have good colleagues.

The whitish colour of *Sempervivum arachnoideum* is easy to recognise already at some distance.

On the way in search of *Sedo-Scleranthetea*, some of us could enjoy forest fringe communities, probably belonging to the *Trifolio-Geranietea* class.

Among the species that characterised these forest fringe communities, *Silene flos-jovis* stood out. Other species were *Campanula trachelium* and *Geranium robertianum*.

Day 5 - 1st June 2025

The new month began with the exploration of the upper Gesso Valley. In the morning, sampling focused on rocky grasslands and *Festuco-Brometea* grasslands with *Stipa spp*. on calcareous substrates above the village of Entracque. In the afternoon, a long van trip took us to the highest grasslands of the workshop (over 1800 m a.s.l.), where we had the opportunity to observe some Western Alpine endemics, which are very abundant in these valleys.

Botanists at work among their beloved Poaceae, enjoying panoramic views of the valley.

A shared pause in the grasslands: lunch break at the "Centro Uomini e Lupi" (Men and Wolves Center) in Entracque, a facility for the care of injured wolves.

In the higher slope of the Gesso Valley the beautiful *Festuca paniculata* is the star of the afternoon.

The endemics *Pinguicula arvetii* and *Viola valderia*, along the path to reach the afternoon plots.

The weather could change quickly in the high-altitude plots, even between the start and end of a Biodiversity Plot survey, while the group was enjoying the flowering of *Genista*. Better to always come well-equipped… or hide in a tunnel.

The park ranger Ivan Pace told us about the rich plant biodiversity in the Maritime Alps Natural Park. After dinner, we got a glimpse of it while identifying the day's collected species.

Day 6 - 2nd June 2025

The following day, the group moved to the adjacent valley to the north, focusing on its innermost sector, the upper Stura Valley. Here, we were able to sample interesting *Sedo-Scleranthetea* communities and Stipa-dominated grasslands above the villages of Vinadio and Aisone.

Early in the morning, some of us were already fully absorbed in plant observation, while others ventured uphill towards the rockier plots.

After quiet moments overlooking the valley, we were ready to take on even the steepest plots.

In the village of Vinadio we enjoyed our lunch on a species-poor lawn.

Afternoon field surveys in the grasslands surrounding the Aisone Caves Nature Reserve.

Documentation of our work is one of the most important aspects.

After enjoying *Stipa pennata* grasslands and orchids, a moment to recharge before the evening species identification session.

Day 7 - 3rd June 2025

Moving northward across the boundary between the Maritime and the Cottian Alps, we conducted field sampling in the lower Stura and Grana valleys. This transition allowed us to admire small alpine villages, striking flowering displays and steep rocky habitats characteristic of this sector of the Alps.

No hill is too steep for our vegetation surveys.

Top down and bottom up - everything is possible here in Demonte.

"The mountains in bloom are our garden! Do not plunder them! Collect with moderation." As botanists, we do our best to comply, although proper identification sometimes calls for slightly less moderation.

But with the fragrant *Anthirrinum latifolium* collecting is not needed, smelling is enough.

Flowering mood of *Anthericum liliago*.

For our lunch break we met at the fairytale-like village of Colletto in the Stura Valley.

Day 8 - 4th June 2025

Everybody was looking forward to that day as we were supposed to visit great grasslands and rocky outcrops with a lot of endemic species in the well known touristic area of the Maira Valley. Indeed, the plants and landscape were great, but not the weather. After the heavy rain in the morning only half of the group continued to sample despite being wet from head to foot.

Not the best conditions for working…

... means good conditions for the plants. Rain refreshes *Scleranthus perennis* and the whole *Sedo-Scleranthetea* community in Valle Maira.

But sometimes enough is enough…

... and it is better to go.

It is the right moment to have a nice warm drink in the bar and check up on what to do.

And sometimes it is also ok to split and take care of every-one's needs.

The afternoon weather was more favorable. Indeed happy plants made happy botanists!

On that day we could also use the precious help of the local expert Alberto Selvaggi.

Day 9 - 5th June 2025

The second day in the Maira Valley was reserved for the lower parts. Weather conditions improved and we had a great last full sampling day. The evening was exploited until the last minute identifying and pressing the last plants, which couldn't be recognised in the field.

Last day, nice grasslands: Girls just wanna have fun!

From the small village of Ussolo we had a nice view of the valley.

On the way we saw a lot of beautiful grasslands with *Helianthemum apenninum* and *H. canum* aggr. …

….Finally Denys chose the steepest area to sample it.

After ten days we were so trained that one person could almost do a biodiversity plot on their own.

One last evening together, plants and pizza… What do we want more!

Day 10 - 6th June 2025

Even on the departing day we couldn't help but stop to visit nice dry grasslands. On our way back to Torino we sampled a riparian grassland at the river Gesso near Cuneo. Even a habitat under a bridge can hide some treasures for us.

Is Denys so happy for the just sampled nice riparian habitat or for the end of this Field Workshop?.....

Last but not least: material division. Who is taking the precious soil samples back? And the critical plant samples to identify?

Selected species from the 20th EDGG Field Workshop

Capra ibex.

On the left, *Saturnia pyri*. On the right, *Cerambyx cerdo*.

From left to right: *Dianthus inodorus*, *Ononis natrix* and *Stachys recta*.

Recent Publications of our Members

In this section, the contents of which will also be made available via our homepage, we want to facilitate an overview of **grassland-related publications** throughout Eurasia and to improve their accessibility. You are invited to send lists of such papers from the last three years following the format below to Rocco Labadessa, rocco.labadessa@gmail.com. We will include your e-mail address so that readers can request a pdf.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Bartha, S., Házi, J., Purger, D., Zimmermann, Z., Szabó, G., Guller, Zs. E., **Csathó, A. I.** & Csete, S. 2025. Fine-Scale Spatiotemporal Variability of Plant Species Composition in Old-Field Succession—The Cycling Heterogeneity Hypothesis Revisited. *Land* 14: e2381. doi.org/10.3390/land14122381

Boch, S., **Dembicz, I.**, Guarino, R., Skornik, S. & **Dengler, J.** 2025. Grassland ecology and conservation in Europe: Editorial to the 18th EDGG Special Feature in Tuexenia. *Tuexenia* 45: 355−362. doi.org/10.14471/2025.45.015

Genucchi, K., Widmer, S., Billeter, R. & **Dengler, J.** 2025. No negative impact of Erigeron annuus on native plant diversity: a case study from Northern Switzerland. *Tuexenia* 45: 429−444. doi.org/10.14471/2025.45.013

Seiler, H., Milojevic, V., Vanselow, R., Babbi, M., Deák, B., Duringer, J.M., Süveges, K., Valkó, O. & **Dengler, J.** 2025. Environmental conditions and plant diversity show little effect on mycotoxin occurrence in European grasslands used for horse husbandry. *Tuexenia* 45: 363−386. doi.org/10.14471/2025.45.010

Vegetation Change in grasslands

Widmer, S., Riedel, S., Babbi, M.; Herzog, F., Wohlgemuth, T., Kessler, M. & **Dengler, J.** 2026. A century of change: Many losers vs. few winners among Swiss grassland plants. *Biological Conservation* 315: e111679. doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2025.111679

Methodology, classification, databases

Dengler, J. & **Dembicz, I.** 2025. Proposals (45–47) to conserve the name *Diantho deltoidis-Armerietum elongatae* Krausch ex Pötsch 1962 as a nomen conservandum and to reject two nomina dubia in the class *Koelerio-Corynephoretea*. Vegetation *Classification and Survey* 6: 247−252. doi.org/10.3897/VCS.177197

Dembicz, I., Kozub, Ł., Adamska, A., Pędziwiatr, A., Jonczak, J., Topolska, K., **Dengler, J.** 2025. Dry grasslands of the Lesser Polish Upland: syntaxonomy, biodiversity and conservation. *Tuexenia* 45: 445−479. doi.org/10.14471/2025.45.014

Guarino, R., Becker, T., **Dembicz, I.**, Dolnik, C., Kozub, Ł. & **Dengler, J.** 2025. Dry grasslands of Sicily: Multi-taxon diversity and classification challenges. *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 6: 301−327. doi.org/10.3897/VCS.175402

Willner, W., Biurrun, I. & **Dengler, J.** 2026. The art of synoptic tables. *Vegetation Classification and Survey* 7: 1−8. doi.org/10.3897/VCS.184722

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Snowy grasslands in the Velykyi Burluk-Steppe, Kharkiv Region, Ukraine. Photo: V. Ronkin.

Forthcoming Events

59th Congress of the Italian Society of Vegetation Science
4-5 June 2026, Palermo, Italy
Details: scienzadellavegetazione.it

68th IAVS Annual Symposium
22-26 June 2026, Gijón, Spain
Details: gijon2026.iavs-meetings.org/

22nd EDGG Field Workshop
24-30 May 2026, North-Eastern Poland
Details: see pp. 6-12

23rd EDGG Field Workshop
14-18 July 2026, Pirin Mountains, Bulgaria
Details: see pp. 13-22

21st Eurasian Grassland Conference
19-23 July 2026, Sofia, Bulgaria
Details: see pp. 13-22

34th European Vegetation Survey meeting
7-11 September 2026, Clermont-Ferrand, France
Details: euroveg.org/

Nordic OIKOS–GfÖ conference 2026
14-17 September 2026, Odense, Denmark
Details: nordicsocietyoikos.glueup.com

Sheep grazing in xerothermic grasslands, Owczary, Poland. Photo: K. Wieczorek.

EDGG on the web:
http://www.edgg.org

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG), founded in 2008, is a working group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) and member of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP). On 23 November 2025, it had 1550 members from 67 countries.

The **Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG)** is a network of researchers and conservationists interested in any type of Palaearctic natural and semi-natural grasslands. It is an official Working Group of IAVS (http://www.iavs.org) but one can join our group without being an IAVS member. We live from the activities of our members. Everybody can join the EDGG without any fee or other obligation.

The EDGG covers all aspects related to grasslands, in particular: plants - animals - fungi - microbia - soils - taxonomy - phylogeography - ecophysiology - population biology - species' interactions - vegetation ecology - syntaxonomy - landscape ecology - biodiversity - land use history - agriculture - nature conservation - restoration - environmental legislation - environmental education.

EDGG Executive Committee and responsibilities of its members

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Red-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*) sitting in a grassland next to a pond, NE Poland. Photo: J. Dengler.