Report on the activities of the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) to the IAVS Council (2021)

The Working Group

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) deals with flora, fauna, vegetation, ecology and conservation of any type of natural and semi-natural grassland in the Palaearctic biogeographic realm. On 30 April 2021, we had 1,347 members from 64 countries.

Governance

In spring 2021, the new EDGG Executive Committee (EC) for the period 2021–2023 has been elected, consisting of eight members. They are with their responsibilities:

- Alla Aleksanyan, Armenia, alla.alexanyan@gmail.com: Editor of Website; Deputy Conference Coordinator
- Didem Ambarli, Turkey, didem.ambarli@gmail.com: Conference Coordinator; Deputy Editor of Website; Deputy Coordinator for Special Features
- Idoia Biurrun, Spain, idoia.biurrun@ehu.es: Membership Administrator; Deputy Treasurer and Representative to IAVS; Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*; Deputy Field Workshop Coordinator
- Iwona Dembicz, Poland, i.dembicz@gmail.com: Field Workshop Coordinator
- Jürgen Dengler, Switzerland, dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com: Secretary-General; Treasurer and Representative to IAVS; Special Feature Coordinator; Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*
- Anna Kuzemko, Ukraine, anyameadow.ak@gmail.com: Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*; Social Media Administrator
- Rocco Labadessa, Italy, rocco.labadessa@gmail.com: Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*; Deputy Editor of Website
- Stephen Venn, Finland, stephen.venn@helsinki.fi: Social Media Administrator; Deputy Conference Coordinator

Péter Török, who had served in the EC for many years, had decided not to run for a seat again due to other time-consuming tasks that came with his progressing scientific career. We thank him for his great service and dedication.

EDGG events

The Covid-19 pandemic took a toll also from EDGG. We had to cancel the *Eurasian Grassland Conference* (EGC) in Tolosa, Spain, originally planned in September 2020 and then in September 2021, already twice. We now hope that we can conduct it in September 2022. All subsequent EGCs will also be postponed by two years.

Instead, in winter 2020/21 we conducted for the first time an online series of keynote talks on grassland topics by internationally renowned specialists, called *TalkGrassland!*, which was very well attended. It will be continued in winter 2021/22.

Moreover, we try to turn the pandemic to something positive by organising the first *Asian Grassland Conference* in February 2022 as an online event (likely 22–24 February). We have established the Organising Committee (Didem Ambarli, Alla Aleksanyan, Stephen Venn, Jürgen Dengler, Frank Yonghong Li) and a very international Scientific Committee and are now starting with the detailed planning. We hope that this event will attract many researchers from Asia, help to gain new EDGG and IAVS members from this continent and possibly lead to the foundation of one or two IAVS Regional Sections. To raise the attractiveness, we plan two Special Features in international journals.
To allow a professional organisation and free participation, we hope that IAVS could support this event financially (while having saved the IAVS Travel Grants to EDGG events in 2020 and 2021).

Also the regular EDGG Field Workshops (FWs) have been cancelled in 2020 and 2021. The planned Field Workshop to study Ukrainian steppes along a large latitudinal transect is now postponed to May 2022, and the three subsequently planned FWs are also postponed by two years. Instead of the regular FWs, some active EDGG members have organised ad hoc FWs, in which mostly participants from the respective country and few from abroad participated. Jürgen Dengler organised one in September 2020 to study the various alpine habitats of the Swiss Alps, while Ivan Moysiyenko, Denys Vynokurov & Dariya Shyriaieva organised one to the steppes and coastal habitats of Southern Ukraine in May/June 2021. One more such ad hoc FW for a smaller group will be organised by Jürgen Dengler in September 2021, again to the alpine habitats of Switzerland but in different regions.

**Palaearctic Grasslands**

EDGG’s diamond open access journal, *Palaearctic Grasslands* (PG), has developed well. It is a novel type of journal, combining a newsletter/bulletin for EDGG members, a photo magazine with excellent photographs (e.g. in Photo Stories and Photo Competitions) and a peer-reviewed scientific journal. During the reporting period, three PG issues with together 146 pages have been published and are freely available from: [https://edgg.org/publications/pg-journal](https://edgg.org/publications/pg-journal). While until spring 2021, Anna Kuzemko as Chief Editor with Idoia Biurrun and Jürgen Dengler as Deputy Chief Editors managed PG, we have now broadened the editorship with four Chief Editors (Idoia Biurrun, Jürgen Dengler, Anna Kuzemko, Rocco Labadessa), among which Rocco has taken over the typesetting form Anna. Palaearctic Grasslands is now also included in IAVS’ vegsciblog and both the Chief Editors and authors regularly post there. Among all the positive things, we have to note that after several years of struggling, first with FASEB and now with MCI, the DOIs of our articles are still not working. This is really misfortunate and disappointing.

**EDGG-edited publications**

EDGG continues its tradition of edited Special Features in international journals. Two such Special Features have been completed in the last year:

- In *Tuexenia* 40, Steffen Boch and co-editors published a Special Feature under the title “Traditional land use, management and biodiversity of European semi-natural grasslands” and comprising nine contributions.

- In *Hacquetia* 20(1), Orsolya Valkó and co-editors published a Special Feature under the title “Conservation, restoration and biodiversity of Palaearctic grasslands” and comprising seven contributions.

Currently, three EDGG-edited Special Features are in preparation:

- In *Vegetation Classification and Survey*, Jürgen Dengler and co-editors are preparing a Special feature on “Classification of grasslands and other open vegetation types in the Palaearctic”.

- In *Tuexenia*, Steffen Boch and co-editors are preparing a new Special Feature in the long series of EDGG-edited paper collections.

- In *Hacquetia*, Orsolya Valkó and co-editors are preparing a new Special Feature in the long series of EDGG-edited paper collections.

**EDGG website**

The attractive EDGG website ([https://edgg.org/](https://edgg.org/)) is constantly being updated. Recent additions include that now all past Field Workshops are presented with photos and basic information. A completely new section of the website refers to grassland vegetation-plot databases. This is mainly
about EDGG’s own database GrassPlot (see below), the connected online tool GrassPlot Diversity Explorer to query mean, min and max richness of any grassland type in any region of the Palaearctic across eight different standard grain sizes (https://edgg.org/index.php/databases/GrasslandDiversityExplorer), but also about five regional/national collaborative grassland databases associated with EDGG.

**GrassPlot, the EDGG database**

The database is constantly growing, with now 225 datasets from 49 countries, comprising 202,579 plots and 6,664 nested-plot series. In spring 2021, a new Governing Board has been elected, consisting of Jürgen Dengler (Custodian), Idoia Biurrun (Deputy Custodian and database manager), Sabina Burrascano, Iwona Dembicz, Riccardo Guarino, Denys Vynokurov and Remigiusz Pielech (members).

Three new papers based on the GrassPlot database have been published during the reporting period:


Currently, eight further paper projects are in preparation.

**IAVS-supported EDGG projects**

By end of 2020, IAVS generously granted EDGG financial support for three projects:

- Preparation of the bryophyte and lichen data of the EDGG Field Workshops in Navarre and Serbia.
- Preparation of the species composition data in the GrassPlot database.
- Analysis of the soil samples from the EDGG Field Workshops in Switzerland.

Delays due to health problems, pregnancy and/or Covid-19 associated issues prevented these projects to be finished so far, but we expect this for the next few months.

Jürgen Dengler (dr.juergen.dengler@gmail.com) on behalf of the EDGG Executive Committee