



- GrassPlot Newsletter No. 6 -

12 February 2019

Dear members of the GrassPlot Consortium,

Unusually short after Newsletter No. 5 you are already receiving a new one. This is because of the start of the elections for the Governing Board for the period 2019-2021. Below we present the nine candidates and inform you about the voting procedure. Please make use of your democratic rights to determine the team that best represents your interest.

While the election is the most important item in this Newsletter, there are other topics of interest, including the start of a new opt-in paper and the call for participation in a GrassPlot-organized session at the IAVS Symposium in Bremen.

We say good-bye and thank you to you as at least some of us will not be in the next Governing Board,

The outgoing GrassPlot Governing Board

(*Jürgen Dengler* [juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de], *Idoia Biurrun* [idoia.biurrun@ehu.es], *Timo Conradi* [timo.conradi@uni-bayreuth.de], *Iwona Dembicz* [iwodem@op.pl], *Riccardo Guarino* [guarinotro@hotmail.com], *Alireza Naqinezhad* [a.naqinezhad@umz.ac.ir])

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Start of the elections to the GrassPlot Governing Board 2019–2021

Until the deadline (8 February), 14 GrassPlot members have been nominated as candidates, five of which declined or did not answer. This leaves us with nine actual candidates who are presented below.

According to our Bylaws, **each member**, which can be a personal member or a dataset, **has seven votes**. Depending on the size and various other parameters, votes of datasets can

weighted by a factor of one, two or three. We assume that for each dataset primarily the main contact person will vote and we will consider only then the vote of other persons if the main contact person did not vote and the other person explicitly states for which dataset and deputizing for whom he or she is voting. If someone is main contact person for several datasets, he or she can vote for each of them – normally we will assume that all votes are identical unless you give specific instructions for which dataset you give which vote.

Your votes will be collected confidentially by Itziar Garcia-Mijangos (itziar.garcia@ehu.es), who is not a candidate herself. Please **send your votes until 26 February 2019** in an e-mail with the subject line "GrassPlot voting". In the mail, please specify for which datasets you are voting (if you don't do this, Itziar will assume that it is for all datasets combined for which you are the main contact person). Valid votes should contain a **maximum of seven names of the ten candidates**. Here are the candidates in alphabetical order:

Idoia Biurrun

I am Associate Professor in the University of the Basque Country in Bilbao, Spain. I am member of EDGG since 2012 and organized the 7th EDGG Field Workshop in Navarre, Spain, in 2014. I have also participated in all the FWs held from 2015 to 2018. Since 2016 I have collaborated in the re-start of the formerly named "Database Species-Area Relationships in Palaeartic Grasslands", currently GrassPlot or "Database of Scale-Dependent Phytodiversity Patterns in Palaeartic Grasslands". I am member of the GrassPlot Governing Board since its foundation in the initial GrassPlot Workshop in Bayreuth, Germany (March 2017). Currently I am Deputy Custodian and manager of the database, and my main duties are the correspondence with potential and actual data owners, data entry and management of the database. I expect that during the next two years we will receive many new data from underrepresented regions. This gap filling will increase the opportunities for new project ideas, and new projects and publications will in turn attract more data to GrassPlot, which will also attract more and more interesting projects. I would like to help in this further development as I have done until now and this way contribute to the progress of Science.



Sabina Burrascano

I am an assistant professor at the Environmental Biology Department of Sapienza University of Rome.

My research focuses on species diversity in response to environmental and human factors in semi-natural grasslands and forests. I mainly study vascular plants, but I also work on multi-taxonomic data.

Notwithstanding my interest for forests, I kept studying semi-natural grasslands throughout my career. I mainly investigate changes in semi-natural grassland biodiversity and ecosystem services in response to environmental and management drivers.

I am involved in the preparation of GrassPlot compositional data, and I am collecting data along the Apennines using the GrassPlot protocol in order to contribute them in the very next future.

Being built by small size organisms while extending over wide areas, grassland key patterns and processes encompass strikingly different spatial



scales. In this view, GrassPlot has a huge potential towards a proper assessment of multiple facets of grassland biodiversity in relation to drivers operating at different scales.

I will put effort and promote the finalization of GrassPlot compositional data to allow research on beta-diversity across different spatial scales. Assessing the grain and extent at which grassland biodiversity varies will raise awareness on specific conservation issues and inform effective management and conservation measures.

Iwona Dembicz

I am a research associate at the Polish Academy of Sciences. In parallel I am finishing my PhD thesis at the University of Warsaw. My scientific interests include ecology and biodiversity patterns of grassland ecosystems and the impact of habitat fragmentation on grasslands. Moreover, I am active in the fields of nature conservation and ecological restoration.

I supported the idea of GrassPlot even before the database was officially started in 2017. I have contributed to GrassPlot several datasets (from Ukraine, Poland, Tajikistan, Belarus and one nested-plot from Armenia). Moreover, I participated in seven EDGG Research Expeditions/Field Workshops. I am acquainted with the database structure, as I handled it while the long database report was prepared. I also contributed to the manuscript on species-area relationships.

I think that GrassPlot gives exceptional opportunities to answer many still unresolved ecological questions and it should still grow. My plans for the future include gathering of new data in the field as well as encouraging other researchers to join the consortium. Besides, I would like to perform analyses using data from GrassPlot and prepare publications. I submitted a Post-doc proposal, which (hopefully) give me the opportunity to focus on such analyses in the near future.



Jürgen Dengler

I am Professor of Vegetation Ecology at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Switzerland, with additional affiliations at the University of Bayreuth and the German Centre of Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv). I am the founder of both GrassPlot and of its mother organisation EDGG and I have “invented” the EDGG Field Workshops back in 2009, whose data now constitute the “backbone” of GrassPlot. I am serving as Chief Editor of *Phytocoenologia*, Deputy Chief Editor of *Palaearctic Grasslands*, Editorial Board member of *Applied Vegetation Science* and have authored more than 250 scientific publications.

I am very happy to see that GrassPlot is “starting through” less than two years after the initial workshop in Bayreuth. The database paper in *Phytocoenologia* came out last autumn, the first macroecological paper based on GrassPlot was submitted to *Journal of Biogeography* a few weeks ago and the second is already far developed, and a third is announced in this issue.

In the second term-of-duty I would, if elected, try my best to keep the fantastic collaborative spirit in GrassPlot alive so that we can collect many



more high quality dataset, and, even more importantly, translate them into influential ecological papers. One step into this direction is the sCALE workshop at iDiv, for which I am applying and which would bring leading theoretical ecologists and analysts worldwide together with our unique database.

In short: still many things to do and I would like to contribute to keep the ball rolling...

Riccardo Guarino

I live and work in the Mediterranean Region, dry grasslands and dwarf scrublands being my favourite vegetation types. I like to explore the effects of climate and land-use driven changes on the structure, dynamics, composition and functioning of vegetation. The GrassPlot aims and the EDGG sampling protocols are a great way to cultivate my scientific interests.

I have organized the fourth EDGG field expedition in Sicily, I have attended three more expeditions and I hope I'll keep on giving my contribution to the growth of the GrassPlot database until forces and budgets allow.

I have been a member of the outgoing GrassPlot Governing Board and I gratefully acknowledge my nomination for a second round. I'll do my best to help in standardizing the taxonomic nomenclature (I co-authored the second edition of the Flora of Italy and its comprehensive data-bases), classifying vegetation plots, participating to the discussion on the environmental drivers and explanatory variables at different spatial scales.



Behlül Güler

I am Behlül and I finished my PhD on 2016. I am now in Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Turkey. My research focus is vegetation ecology. I am trained with species knowledge of vascular plants mainly in Mediterranean grasslands. I am interested in species diversity and underlying mechanisms from fine to large scale. During my PhD I had a chance to work on the topic of species richness - area relationships as a part of my PhD thesis in close cooperation with Prof. Dr. Jürgen Dengler for 8.5 months in Bayreuth (under supervision of Prof. Dr. Anke Jentsch). I intended to be a nominate for GrassPlot consortium because it is one of my core research area and I am planning be more active as a GrassPlot member in the future period. I provided multi-scale data from my region (İzmir, Turkey) and plan to contribute more. I believe that I will take a part of GrassPlot management works and future scientific plan.



Jutta Kapfer

I'm a vegetation ecologist, with a PhD from the University of Bergen (2011). Since my PhD studies, my main research interests have been alpine and arctic vegetation ecology, focusing on climate and land-use change effects in space and time. Since 11 years, I've been actively involved in developing resurvey methods for studying change using historical vegetation data. I'm also interested in vegetation monitoring and mapping, biogeography, and biodiversity.

I've been a GrassPlot member since 2017, and this was the first year I and my colleagues contributed data. Today, I'm (co-)responsible for three datasets from Norway, which I've prepared and shared for potential use in analyses and possible future publications.

My vision for GrassPlot is to increase the geographic range of data available to the database, especially from countries currently under-represented in the dataset. With a starting point in Arctic Scandinavia, I'd see myself being active in networking by seeking contact with other groups and by communicating the GrassPlot network, its activities and outcomes to a wider audience (e.g., at international conferences and meetings). I'd encourage and contribute to data analyses to answer questions raised by the network or society at large, e.g. regarding climate change, habitat fragmentation, biodiversity, grassland management.



Alireza Naqinezhad

I am Alireza Naqinezhad, a professor of Vegetation Ecology and Phytodiversity in University of Mazandaran, Iran. My main interests are vegetation and phytodiversity of forest and grasslands (dry/wet) particularly in mountain and alpine areas. I am a member of Sponsorship Committee of IAVS since 2014 and was appointed as a founding and governing board of GrassPlot in 2017. Since 2010 when I contributed in the 2th EDGG field expedition in Ukraine, I was strongly motivated to promote similar nested-designed ecological and biodiversity studies in the steppic regions of Central Asia and Middle East. For which, Iran and other neighbor areas with their unique plant diversity, environmental complexity and phytogeographical variations can be considered as one of the best routes for expanding of GrassPlot toward the unexplored regions. As a governing board, I plan to promote the GrassPlot into scientific communities particularly in those regions that it has been received less consideration!



Remegiusz Pielech

I am a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Agriculture in Kraków, Poland. My studies are focused on the ecology of riparian and mountain ecosystems as well as on the spatial patterns of biodiversity. Together with my collaborators, we contributed to the GrassPlot two datasets from SW Poland. One of these datasets consists of series of nested-plots and followed a standardized EDGG sampling protocol. We used this methodology to monitor changes in the vegetation of previously abandoned mountain meadows after grazing recovery. I also worked with other GrassPlot members on the classification of the plots into main vegetation types.



During the forthcoming years, the GrassPlot consortium could benefit from increasing the efficiency of our growing database. For that reason, I would like to offer my assistance in some technical issues. For example, conversion single table database into a relational database could reduce the effort and time needed to respond to any possible future data requests. In addition, basic statistics related to both the dataset and species richness could be presented to a broad audience via the database-driven webpage. Such a webpage could also present our database in the form of a geoportal (interactive map with GIS functionalities).

Manuela Winkler

My name is Manuela Winkler, I am an ecologist focusing on alpine plant biodiversity and the effects of climate change on alpine ecosystems. Since 2013 I have been responsible for data analyses in the long-term monitoring programme GLORIA (Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments). So far, I coordinated the provision and preparation of datasets of ten GLORIA regions (of two of which I am a co-data owner) with a total number of almost 50,000 (sub)plots for the GrassPlot database. For the next two years I envision an expansion of the GrassPlot database both in space and time by including datasets beyond the Palearctic realm and with repeated surveys. As a member of the international GLORIA co-ordination I am ideally placed to promote the inclusion of further GLORIA sites on six continents many of which already have repeated surveys.



New opt-in paper

We are pleased that shortly after the start of opt-in paper #04B, we can start another one. It is paper #16 led by Sabina Burrascano and entitled "Components of beta-diversity across different sampling grains in Eurasian grasslands". (Don't get confused by the high number: we simply followed the numbering of paper ideas in Newsletter #1. We hope that somewhen papers #03 and #05 to #15 will also be started by the original proponents or someone else).

In the attached pdf you find a detailed description of the project and in the attached Excel file an overview which datasets are planned to be used and for which fraction of the data they account. There is also a detailed description what the opt-in procedure means. **Opt-in declarations** can be sent to Sabina (with cc: to Jürgen Dengler, as Custodian) **until 26 February 2019**. After that the Governing Board together with Sabina will decide who will be added to the preliminary author list based on GrassPlot Bylaws.

Since this is the first opt-in paper in which we will apply the 2% threshold from our Bylaws (in the two past opt-in papers, #04A and #04B, the first author was very generous and allowed one opt-in author per dataset irrespective of the size), we would like to explain, who can apply for opt-in authorship based on the attached table of the 682 (– 744) datasets used:

- Green (11 EDGG Field Workshops): any participant of any of these can apply; 11 of them will be selected by the Governing Board based on extent of involvement in FWs and extent of opt-ins to previous papers.
- Yellow (available datasets $\geq 2\%$): one person (custodian or other owner) per dataset can apply.
- White (available datasets $< 2\%$): owners of several smaller datasets that together make up more than 2% can apply.

- Orange (not yet available datasets $\geq 2\%$): one person (custodian or other owner) per dataset can apply, provided the compositional data are submitted before the deadline.
- Persons who are already listed as Core authors in the proposal do not have to opt in.

If you opt in, please indicate on behalf of which dataset(s) you are doing this. Any GrassPlot member who would not be eligible according to the criteria given before, can still apply for co-authorship, but then it is up to the discretion of the first author whether or not to accept such an offer. Usually it only has a chance if you provide good arguments why your competences would be useful for the analyses and the paper.

GrassPlot and EDGG session at IAVS Symposium in Bremen

We are glad to announce that on the **62nd Annual Symposium of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) in Bremen**, 14-19 July 2019, there will be a **Special Session** organized by Alessandro Chiarucci, Iwona Dembicz and Jürgen Dengler on behalf of GrassPlot with the title **“Species-area relationships and other scaling laws in plant biodiversity”**. There is a good place for GrassPlot presentations but also for similar studies from other habitats and other continents. Our mother organization, EDGG, is organizing another Special Session that should be interesting for many of you: **“Patterns, drivers, and conservation opportunities of grassland biodiversity”**. We hope to see many of you there! For further details, see: <http://iavs.org/2019-Annual-Symposium/Home.aspx>

GrassPlot website

The GrassPlot website, hitherto hosted at the **Ecoinformatics Portal Bayreuth** (<https://bit.ly/2qKTQt2>), will soon move to the brand-new **EDGG website** (www.edgg.org) together with the other regional grassland databases related to EDGG. The Ecoinformatics Portal Bayreuth will remain live for some time, but we will not update it anymore.

EDGG and EDGG events 2019

Most of you are probably aware that GrassPlot is organized by the **Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG)**, the network of about 1400 researchers and practitioners from about 70 countries dealing with ecology and conservation of any type of natural and semi-natural grasslands in the Palaearctic Biogeographic realm. Since we realized that some of you are not yet members of EDGG, we would like to inform you that membership is free of charge and can be obtained simply via e-mail to Idoia Biurrun (idoia.biurrun@ehu.es) who is not only Deputy Custodian and database manager of GrassPlot but also membership administrator of EDGG.

Benefits of the **free EDGG membership** include:

- Receiving 4-6 issues of our electronic journal “Palaearctic Grasslands” per year (e.g. [recent issue](#) published yesterday)
- Possibility to publish own articles and announcements in “Palaearctic Grasslands”
- Invitation to the numerous Special Issues/Special Features in international journals that are organized by EDGG
- Invitation to the Eurasian Grassland Conferences, e.g. 2019 in Graz (see <https://edgg.org/egc2019>)
- Invitation to the EDGG Field Workshops during which the core data of GrassPlot are sampled in exciting grassland regions, in 2019 e.g. in Switzerland and Armenia (see <https://edgg.org/fieldworkshop2019>)

All this and much more you can explore on the brand-new EDGG website at: www.edgg.org