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**THE EURASIAN DRY GRASSLAND GROUP (EDGG) 13<sup>th</sup> EURASIAN GRASSLAND CONFERENCE REPORT:  
MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF SEMI-NATURAL GRASSLANDS- FROM THEORY TO  
PRACTICE  
(20-24 September 2016, Sighișoara, Romania)**

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In this report made is review of what is the Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) and since when exists? Listed are the main activities of the EDGG. Given is review of so far realized 13 conferences, with special emphasis on the last realized 13<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference “Management and conservation of semi-natural grasslands: from theory to practice”, held on 20-24 September 2016 in Sighișoara, Romania.

## INTRODUCTION

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG, formerly known as European Dry Grassland Group) is an official working group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) and was founded in 2008. The EDGG is a network of currently 1141 members from 64 countries (26 July 2016), interested in Palaearctic natural and semi-natural grasslands from any point of view, including fauna, flora, vegetation, ecology biodiversity, conservation, land use and management.

The main activities of the EDGG are:

- 1) The facilitation of international communication between researchers, site managers, policy and decision-makers;
- 2) Coordination of scientific and policy-related actions in grassland research, conservation and restoration in the whole Palaearctic;
- 3) Promotion of the development of databases for grassland classification, best-practice in conservation and restoration;
- 4) Organisation of annual events, such as the Eurasian Grassland Conferences (EGCs) and Field Workshops (formerly known as EDGG Research Expeditions); and
- 5) Dissemination of research results in Special Features of peer-reviewed international journals such as *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, *Biodiversity and Conservation* (Habel et al. 2013, Török et al. 2016), *Applied Vegetation Science*, *Plant Biosystems*, *Tuexenia* and *Hacquetia*.

The EDGG has undergone a number of fundamental changes during 2015. First of all, whilst they are still the EDGG, “EDGG” now stands for ‘Eurasian Dry Grassland Group’, in place of the previous ‘European Dry Grassland Group’. This reflects a broadening in their geographical scope that has been evident for a considerable time, with active contributions from North Africa, the Near East and Central Asia. The grassland biome extends eastwards far beyond the borders of Europe, and their interest and activities certainly do not end at the European border. The scope of the EDGG has also been modified to cover all Palaearctic natural and seminatural grasslands, without the previous restrictions to dry grasslands and to Europe. This change reflected in the sub-title they have added to the name of the organization, “Eurasian Dry Grassland Group – Grassland Research and Conservation”.

## CONFERENCES

So far have been realized 13 conferences:

- 2004: 1<sup>st</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting: Dry grasslands as biodiversity hotspots (Lüneburg, Germany)
- 2005: 2<sup>nd</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting: Observation scales in dry grasslands (Münster, Germany)
- 2007: 4<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting: Restoration and spontaneous establishment of dry and semi-dry grasslands at traditional and urban-industrial sites (Freising-Weihenstephan, Germany)
- 2008: 5<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting: Dry grasslands in a changing environment (Kiel, Germany)
- 2009: 6<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting: Dry grasslands – species interaction and distribution (Halle (Saale), Germany)
- 2010: 7<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting Succession, restoration and management of dry grasslands (Smolenice, Slovak Republic)
- 2011: 8<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting Dry grassland of Europe: biodiversity, classification, conservation and management (Uman', Ukraine)
- 2012: 9<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting Dry Grasslands of Europe: Grazing and Ecosystem Services (Prespa, Greece)
- 2013: 10<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting When theory meets practice: Conservation and restoration of grasslands was held in Poland 24-31 May, Zamosc
- 2014: 11<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting "Steppes and Semi-natural dry grasslands: ecology, transformation and restoration" was held in Russia, Tula, 5-15 June
- 2015: 12<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting "Population biology and community ecology of dry grasslands and dry grassland species" was held in Germany, Mainz, 23-26 May
- 2016: 13<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference “Management and conservation of semi-natural grasslands: from theory to practice” 20-24 September 2016 in Sighișoara, Romania

Until now, we have taken participation at three conferences of EDGG:

Čušterevska, R., Matevski V., Kostadinovski. M., Čarni. A., 2010, Main characteristics and spreading of the plant community ass. *Erysimo-Trifolietum* Micevski 1977 in the Republic of Macedonia, 7<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting in Smolenice (Slovakia)

Vassilev, K., Ačić, S., Čušterevska, R., Pedashenko, H., Todorova, S., Apostolova, I., Bergmeier, E., Boch, S., Čarni, A., Ganeva, A., Kostadinovski, M., Matevski, V., Pirini, C., Sopotlieva, D., Stefanović Dajić, Z., Stoyanov, J., Tsiripidis, I., Dengler, J. 2012. What do we know about diversity of dry grasslands on Central Balkan Peninsula?, 11<sup>th</sup> European Dry Grassland Meeting in Prespa, Book of Abstracts, 79-80. Prespa (Greece).

Čušterevska, R., Matevski V., Kostadinovski. M., Čarni. A., 2016, Grassland vegetation on the national park Galičica (SW Macedonia), 13<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Grassland Conference “Management and conservation of semi-natural grasslands: from theory to practice” 20-24 September 2016 in Sighișoara, Romania

2.1.2016: 13th Eurasian Grassland Conference “Management and conservation of semi-natural grasslands: from theory to practice” 20-24 September 2016 in Sighișoara, Romania

The main aims at the 13<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the EDGG (formerly known as European Dry Grassland Meetings, EDGM), were to promote exchange and collaboration between those interested in all aspects of grassland research and conservation across Eurasia. The conference intended to bring together latest research, and to link this to practical management and policy contributing to the sustainability of semi-natural grasslands. For the first time, three optional pre-conference workshops were realized:

- Scientific writing for peer-reviewed international journals
- Reflecting ecology in policy
- Establishing and maintaining national grassland databases and using their data for broad-scale vegetation classification and other research

At this conference took part 85 participants.

#### Conference location

Romania contains five biogeographical regions – Continental, Pannonian, Alpine, Pontic and Steppic – and as such supports a wealth of grassland species.

The region of Transylvania within the arc of the Carpathians is known for its low intensity agriculture and species-rich semi-natural grasslands.

The town of Sighișoara is renowned as a UNESCO World Heritage site, but it is also at the edge of the Sighișoara- Târnava Mare Natura 2000 area. This Site of Community Interest contains large areas of the priority habitat types 6210\* Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) with important orchid sites, and 6240\* Sub-pannonic steppic grasslands.

#### Field excursion

The mid-Conference field excursion was visit a selection of sites in the Târnava Mare landscape, with an emphasis on the pastures and positive and negative aspects of sheep-grazing on hills near Viscri were have been demonstrated aspects of pastoral farming and practical management of pastures and adjacent hay-meadows. Plants were still be in flower, notably long-flowering species such as *Prunella* spp. and *Scabiosa ochroleuca*, lilac sheets of *Colchicum autumnale* in mesic grassland, and *Aster amellus*, *Carlina acaulis* and *Gentianopsis ciliata* in drier grassland. We have chance to visit few fortified churches and we join in a traditional village meal at the end of the excursion.



**Figure 1:** Traditional Roman house (photo R. Čušterevska, 19.09.2016)



**Figure 2:** Poster presentation - R. Čušterevska



**Figure 3:** Driving with drawn wagons



**Figure 4:** Traditional village dinner



**Figure 5:** Oral presentation, conference room in SighiŐoara



**Figure 6:** Field excursion in Apold



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