

EGC 2016

13th Eurasian Grassland Conference (formerly the European Dry Grassland Meeting)
in Sighișoara, Romania, 20-24 September 2016

Management and Conservation of Semi-Natural Grasslands: from Theory to Practice



Second Call

The local organising committee is pleased to announce that the 2016 Eurasian Grassland Conference will take place from **20 – 24 September 2016** in the historic town of Sighișoara in central Romania. This is the 13th annual meeting of the EDGG, which aims to promote exchange and collaboration between those interested in all aspects of grassland research and conservation across Eurasia. The conference is intended to bring together latest research, and to link this to practical management and policy contributing to the sustainability of semi-natural grasslands.

The conference will include the following sessions:

- **Semi-natural grasslands and environmental policy and socio-economy**
- **Landscape scale processes and historical evolution of semi-natural grasslands**
- **Ecology and biodiversity of semi-natural grasslands**
- **Management, conservation and restoration of semi-natural grasslands**

as well as two optional pre-conference workshops and two field trips in local biodiversity hotspots. All other topics related to semi-natural grasslands are also welcome. A special issue of an ISI listed journal related to the conference is planned, to which all contributors to the conference will be invited to submit papers.

**We invite you to register and submit abstracts for talks and poster
via the website www.edgg.org/conference_2016.html
Registration deadline 31 May 2016**



Preliminary Programme

Tuesday 20th September - Registration and optional technical workshops

Parallel optional technical workshops (14.30 - 18.30)

- Scientific writing workshop (Tutor: Prof. Jürgen Dengler)
- Policy workshop (organized by EFNCP): "Reflecting ecology in policy: as simple as possible but no simpler"

Wednesday, 21st September - Talks and Posters

Keynote talk: Prof. Jörn Fischer, Leuphana University of Lüneburg
Integration by Place, Case and Process: Transdisciplinary Sustainability Science in Transylvania

Session I: Semi-natural grasslands and environmental policy and socio-economics

Session II: Landscape scale processes and historical evolution of semi-natural grasslands

Evening tour of Sighișoara

Thursday, 22nd September - Mid Conference Excursion

High Nature Value grasslands in the hilly Târnava Mare landscape near Sighișoara (continental biogeographical region).
Grassland party in village of Viscri

Friday, 23rd September - Talks and Posters

Keynote talk: László Rákosy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Session III Ecology and biodiversity of semi-natural grasslands

Session IV Management, conservation and restoration of semi-natural grasslands

General Assembly of the EDGG including Young Investigator Prizes (YIPs)

Saturday, 24th September – Optional Post-Conference Excursion

Mountain hay meadows in the Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda) area including optional grassland-related activities such as meadow scything.

Workshops

For the first time, the EDGG will organize technical workshops during its conference. Both technical workshops are optional and places will be limited to 20. You can apply to participate in the workshops during registration: if the workshop is already full, you will be placed on a waiting list and informed if further places become available. The two workshops will run in parallel on Tuesday afternoon 14.30-18.30, including a coffee break.

1. Scientific writing

This workshop will be run by Dr. Jürgen Dengler (University of Bayreuth, Germany), and will focus on writing clear, precise and engaging scientific texts in English for publication in high impact factor international journals.

2. Reflecting ecology in policy

This workshop will be facilitated by experts in agri-environmental policy. The objective is to jointly analyse several biodiversity-related measures in the Common Agricultural Policy to assess whether they correspond to available scientific knowledge, and debate how policies can be simple (i.e. applicable to real farming conditions) but ecologically meaningful. Results-based agri-environment schemes will be presented as one of the most recent developments in targeted conservation measures.

Selected participants will be asked to bring an example of an agri-environment (or other RDP) measure from the country/region in which they work for analysis and debate during the workshop. We therefore invite you to suggest a suitable measure during (or after) the online registration that you could present at the workshop.

Tutors: Jabier Ruiz Mirazo (European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism, EFNCP), Caitriona Maher (EFNCP) and Clunie Keenleyside (Institute for European Environmental Policy, IEEP).

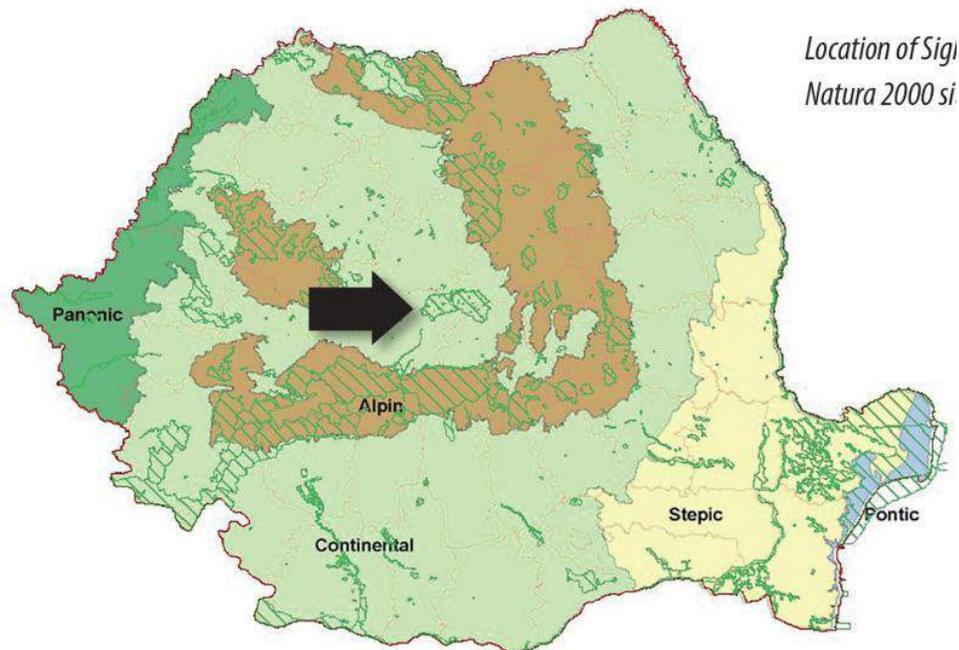
Description of the area



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.

Târnava Mare SCI lies within the Saxon Villages, a region famous for its historic fortified churches. The landscape is hilly rather than mountainous but shares many features with the adjacent Carpathian Mountains. Much of this countryside is remote, with

scattered villages supporting traditional farming communities that have preserved farmland biodiversity and patterns of rural life mostly lost elsewhere in Europe.



Location of Tarnava Mare area in central Romania, with biogeographical regions marked

Marl and sandy sediments dominate the geology, giving rise to rolling hills and steep-sided valleys, with unstable slopes that slump and erode. As well as the extensive grasslands, with unenclosed arable land in the valleys, the region retains substantial stands of ancient deciduous woodland and wood pasture. The farming practices of the Saxon farmers, who originally arrived in the 12th century from Flanders and Luxembourg, and management subsequent to the departure of most Saxon farmers to Germany in the 1990s, have diversified the vegetation in space and time, with episodes of succession from sometime arable fields to grassland and then to scrub and woods, producing ecological heterogeneity, edge effects and gradients.

The countryside of the Saxon Villages has some 1200 species of flowering plants, a third of the Romanian total, and about the same number of Lepidoptera; also brown bears and wolves, large carnivores usually associated with the mountains and, for example, two birds of major international conservation interest, Lesser-spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*).

The long history and continuation of traditional, non-intensive management – mixed farming, little or no fertilizer input and low livestock densities – has allowed biodiversity to survive, especially in hay-meadows on the higher or steeper slopes, in one of the most extensive tracts left in Europe of High Nature Value (HNV) permanent grassland. This is no rural museum but a living landscape, and the pastures and meadows remain the motor of the rural economy, yielding meat, milk and cheese, and a range of products such as honey, wild fruits for jam, and medicinal plants. The diversity of grasses and forbs in the sward, including orchids and especially 20–30 or more leguminous species, provides quality feed for farm animals and several of the plant species are crop relatives. Especially species-rich

are areas of dry steppic grassland on south-facing slopes and hummocks, and damp grassland in some valley bottoms with relict montane plant communities. A characteristic topographical feature is groups of steep-sided hummocks or *movile*, with 'gamma' diversity between and within hummocks often varying over just a few metres – including steppic, Mediterranean, mesic grassland, woodland-edge or even montane floristic elements.



Colchicum autumnalis



Gentianopsis ciliata



Gentiana pneumonanthe

Many of the species, for example several orchids, *Prunus tenella* and *Salvia nutans*, are Red-listed in Romania, and four (*Adenophora lilifolia*, *Crambe tataria*, *Echium maculatum* and *Iris aphylla*) are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. *Cephalaria radiata*, which should still be flowering in September, and *Salvia transsylvanica* are endemic to Transylvania. This farmed landscape is fragile and the vegetation and biodiversity are under threat from both agricultural intensification and land abandonment. The work of conservationists in the region has had to focus not only on scientific research but also the need to address the needs of farming families and communities at a time of profound economic and social change, building on their past achievements while employing innovative techniques and solutions to sustain the ancient links between landscape and livelihood.

Fundatia ADEPT has published several documents on the area.

Further reading

The Historic Countryside of the Saxon Villages of Southeast Transylvania by John Akeroyd will be available for purchase at the conference, or if wanted beforehand by mail order please contact Nat Page (nat@fundatia-adept.org).

Guides to indicator dry grassland flower and butterfly species may be downloaded from the ADEPT website, at www.fundatia-adept.org/?content=publications.

A full list of relevant publications will be made available at the conference.

Field excursions

The mid-Conference field excursion will visit a selection of sites in the Târnava Mare landscape, with an emphasis on the pastures and positive and negative aspects of sheep-grazing. The sites visited will include a cluster of topographically impressive and floristically rich *movile* near Apold, just south of Sighisoara, and a traditional sheepfold or *stâna* on hills near Viscri to demonstrate aspects of pastoral farming and practical management of pastures and adjacent hay-meadows.

Plants will 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. There will be a chance to visit one or more fortified churches and we shall all join in a traditional village meal at the end of the excursion.



Village of Viscri (Deutschveisskirch), grassland party location, and its famous white church

The post-Conference field excursion will visit the Mercurea Ciuc (Csikszereda) farmed landscape in the Hungarian-speaking area to the east, the emphasis here being on species-rich mountain hay-meadows that are still the mainstay of the highland rural economy. This excursion will demonstrate another type of subsistence farming, and will also be an opportunity to observe traditional upland farming and even to participate in scything!



Travel tips

Sighișoara can be reached by train or by car, and is within reach of four international airports: Bucharest (4 hours by car from Sighișoara), Cluj (3 hours), Sibiu (2 hours) or Târgu Mureș (1 hour).

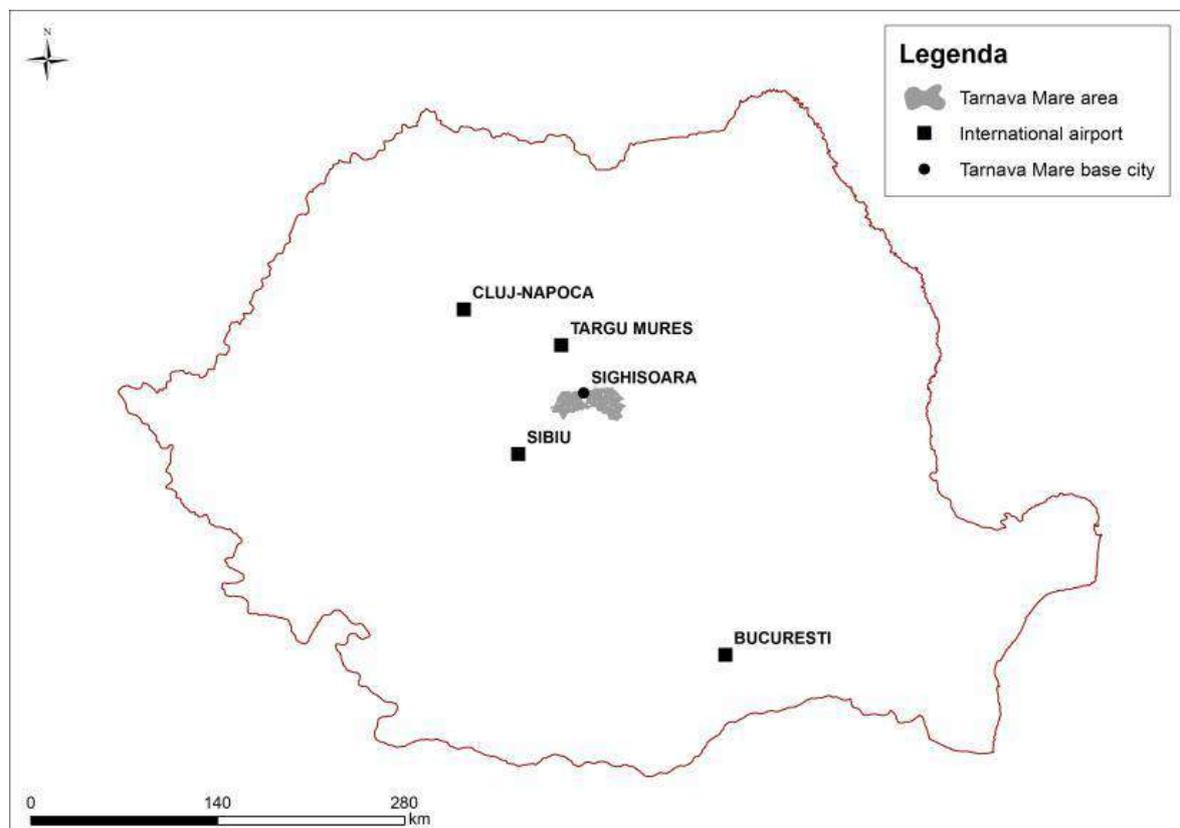
Useful links:

<https://wizzair.com/en-GB/FlightSearch> - Wizz Air flies to Targu Mures, Sibiu, Cluj and Bucharest

<https://www.blueairweb.com/first-page> - Blue Air flies to Bucharest, Sibiu and Cluj

<http://www.cfrcalatori.ro> – Romanian railway website

http://www.bahn.de/p_en/view/index.shtml - Most trains are also searchable on the German railway website, which has a better English interface.



Registration

We invite you to register and submit abstracts for talks and poster via the website www.edgg.org/conference_2016.html Deadline for early registration 31 May 2016

The basic registration fee for early registration (until 31 May 2016) is

- €90 for student IAVS members*
- €110 for students (including PhD students) who are not IAVS members*
- €120 for other IAVS members*
- €140 for non-students and non-IAVS members

NOTE: after 31 May 2016, the registration fee will increase by €30 for each category

* please submit evidence of IAVS membership and/or your enrolment at a university by emailing confirmation of matriculation to liliana@fundatia-adept.org

Basic registration fee includes:

- Welcome drinks and an buffet of local produce on Tuesday evening
- Access to the conference on Wednesday and Friday
- Lunch and coffee breaks on Wednesday and Friday
- Fieldtrip in the surroundings of Sighisoara with lunch at a shepherd's hut and Grassland Party on Thursday

Basic registration fee does NOT include the following, which can be booked separately:

- Travel to Sighisoara
- Accommodation
- Pre-conference workshops
- The post-conference excursion
- Evening meal on Wednesday and Friday

Optional extras

- **Pre-conference workshops on Tuesday afternoon** (14.30-18.30), including a coffee break. The two workshops will run in parallel, and places are limited to 20 for each workshop. Once these places have been filled, participants will be placed on a waiting list and informed if further places become available
 - €30 for the science policy workshop
 - €30 for the scientific writing workshop
- **Post-conference field trip** to the mountain hay meadows in the Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda) area, including lunch and refreshments: €30
- **Wednesday evening meal** (including a welcome drink) at Central Park Hotel restaurant <http://www.hotelcentralpark.ro/restaurant>: €20
- **Friday evening meal** (including a welcome drink) at Hotel Sighisoara restaurant http://sighisoarahotels.ro/?page_id=624 on Friday: €20
- **Accommodation:** We have reserved a number of rooms in several local hotels at special conference rates. If you would like to book a room, please

select this option during the registration process. Breakfast is included in the price. **Please note that there is a limited number of rooms available in each hotel. We will get back to you and confirm your booking once we receive your registration form.**

Recommended hotels:

[Hotel Central Park](#): single €50 Euro/room/night, double €60 Euro/room/night
[Hotel Rex Sighisoara](#) - single €30 Euro/room/night, double €35 Euro/room/night
[Casa Saseasca](#) – single €25 Euro/room/night, double € 30 Euro/room/night

Cancellation and repayment:

- 100% - for cancellations sent in writing until 1 June,
- 80% for cancellations sent in writing until 1 September,
- no refund for cancellations after 1 September.

To qualify for early registration, payment should be made by bank transfer **at the latest by 31 May**: you will be provided with the bank details during the online registration process and on your online invoice (after successful login) under www.edgg.org/conference_2016.html.

We are unfortunately not able to accept payment of the registration fee at the conference: this must be paid in advance by bank transfer. A registration is considered definite, once the payment is done and the proof of payment is sent to liliana@fundatia-adept.org.

Fees and grants

We hope to offer a limited number of travel grants. To qualify, active participation at the conference (oral presentation or poster) is required and priority will be given to young scientists with financial constraints. Grants can be applied during registration, including a short motivation letter. Applicants for IAVS travel grants must be IAVS members.

Young Investigator Prizes

As in previous years, prizes will be awarded to young scientists for excellent presentation of their research (orally or in poster form). For these purposes, young scientists (less than 35 years old) will be asked during registration if they wish to participate in the contest.

Visas

In case you need a visa, please contact Nat Page (address given below).

Contacts

Main contact for all questions:

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Organisers

The Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) was established in August 2008 as the European Dry Grassland Group. Recently it expanded its ecological and geographical scope to cover all types of semi-natural grasslands of the whole Palearctic realm. The EDGG is an official group of the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS, www.iavs.org). Its basic aims are to compile and to distribute information on research in and conservation of natural and semi-natural grasslands beyond national borders, and to stimulate active cooperation among scientists, practitioners and all who work with or are interested in grasslands.

Fundatia ADEPT: ADEPT's objective is support and preservation of the High Nature Value landscapes of Romania, and of the small-scale farming communities that have created them. ADEPT works to improve design and implementation of EU and national support measures for these farmed landscapes and farming systems, helps farmers gain access to support and improve markets for their products. ADEPT trains farmers, farmer associations, producer groups and tourist associations to support development of sustainable sources of income. ADEPT won the top EU prize for communicating the CAP to farmers, at the CAP@50 competition in Brussels, 2012 and 2013, as well as the top EU Natura 2000 prize for the European project bringing most benefits to local communities in a protected area.

Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Biology and Geology, Cluj-Napoca: BBU is the oldest, the largest, and in many ways, the most prestigious university in Romania. Its approximately 40,000 students learn either in Romanian, Hungarian, German or English. The linguistic and cultural diversity are defining elements of BBU, which distinguishes not only among Romanian universities, but also within the European context. BBU has 21 faculties. The Faculty of Biology and Geology has 10 B.Sc. and 11 M.Sc. programs. It has an excellent Botanical Garden with a Botanical Museum and a Herbarium, and a Zoological Museum with a Vivarium as well.

Supporters

International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS)

European Forum for Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)

Floristisch-soziologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (FlorSoz)

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