

Procedures for updating the standard European vegetation classification



Approved by voting at the Business Meeting of the IAVS Working Group European Vegetation Survey in Bilbao on 14 September 2017. Paragraph 2.4 was added, and paragraph 3.1 was modified based on an electronic vote of the EVCC members on 13 March 2023.

1. *The baseline classification system*

Maintenance and updating of the standard phytosociological classification of European vegetation is a responsibility of the IAVS Working Group European Vegetation Survey (hereafter 'EVS'). The classification system published by Mucina et al. (2016, *Applied Vegetation Science* 19, Suppl. 1: 3–264; hereafter 'EuroVegChecklist') is accepted by EVS as the baseline of the standard European vegetation classification.

2. *The European Vegetation Classification Committee and Specialist Groups*

2.1. The Steering Committee of EVS establishes the European Vegetation Classification Committee (hereafter 'EVCC'), which has the following tasks:

- (a) receiving proposals for changes of specific parts of EuroVegChecklist;
- (b) reviewing these proposals by international expert groups;
- (c) deciding about acceptance or rejection of the proposals;
- (d) online publishing of the proposals and decisions about them;
- (e) online publishing of the numbered updated versions of EuroVegChecklist with accepted changes included.

2.2. The members of the EVCC are appointed based on the decision of the Steering Committee of EVS for a period of 8 years, which can be extended for another period of the same length. The EVCC involves experts whose expertise collectively covers most European vegetation types and most European regions. The EVCC activities are coordinated by a Secretary and a Deputy Secretary. The candidates for Secretary and Deputy Secretary can be proposed by the EVS Steering Committee or members of the EVCC. They are elected based on the voting of the EVCC members in an election organized by the EVS Steering Committee. The Secretary and Deputy Secretary serve for a period of four years, which can be extended to another period of four years.

2.3. EVCC establishes a Specialist Group for each proposal received. Each Specialist Group consists of at least three members of the EVCC whose expertise is close to the topic of the proposal. Any member of the EVCC may become a member of the Specialist Group for a specific proposal except for the author or co-authors of the proposal or of the publication in which the proposal was made or in which the syntaxonomic or nomenclature solution that led to the proposal was published.

2.4. Evaluation by a Specialist Group can be skipped if a proposal fulfils the following criteria: (1) It is based on a publication in an international peer-reviewed journal. (2) The proposal (and the publication it is based on) is co-authored by at least three members of the EVCC. (3) The syntaxonomic revision supporting the proposal covers the vegetation units concerned in their entire European range. (4) The author team includes regional experts from most European biogeographical regions, in which the vegetation units concerned occur. If these criteria are matched, the proposal is automatically recommended and can be put to vote after giving the other EVCC members the possibility to comment on it.

3. EuroVegChecklist update workflow

3.1. Any communication related to the proposals for modification of EuroVegChecklist is done in English via e-mail. Voting is done either electronically or during an online meeting of the EVCC (with the possibility to vote in advance or through a proxy if a member cannot participate in the meeting).

3.2. Any vegetation scientist can send a proposal for modification of a specific part of EuroVegChecklist to the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) of the EVCC. The proposals should be typically based on published scientific papers. If such papers are written in language than English, the proposal should summarize or translate those points from the paper that are essential for the proposal. Proposals based on unpublished materials can be accepted especially in cases of corrections of errors or in unambiguous cases when syntaxon names have to be changed to match the rules of the International Code of Phytosociological Nomenclature.

3.3. The Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) does a first formal check of the proposal. Proposals which are obviously not in accordance with the requirements of the previous paragraph are sent back to the authors without further evaluation.

3.4. The Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) assigns the proposal to one member of the EVCC, who acts as a Coordinating Editor for the particular proposal. At the same time, the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) informs all the members of the EVCC about the proposal, makes the proposal text available to them, and informs them who is the Coordinating Editor for this proposal.

3.5. Any member of the EVCC can express his/her interest to work in the Specialist Group for a particular proposal in an e-mail to the Coordinating Editor in a period of ten days after receiving the information about the proposal. Based on these expressions of interest, the Coordinating Editor invites at least two additional members to become members of the Specialist Group. A Specialist Group should include members from at least two different countries.

3.6. Each proposal is evaluated by a Specialist Group led by the Coordinating Editor. If necessary, the Coordinating Editor can also ask experts that are not members of the EVCC for their opinion about the proposal. Proposal evaluation should not take longer than two months.

3.7. If information contained in the proposal is insufficient for proper evaluation, the Coordinating Editor can ask the author of the proposal to provide additional information within two months.

3.8. Based on the discussion within the Specialist Group, the Coordinating Editor prepares a recommendation about the proposal, which can be 'Accept' or 'Reject'. Rejection is recommended also if the author of the original proposal failed to provide additional information requested by the Coordinating Editor. The recommendation must be accompanied by a text explaining the reasons for taking a particular decision.

3.9. The recommendation of the Specialist Group, the explanatory text and additional information from the author of the proposal (if any) are sent to the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) of the EVCC, who posts the original proposal, the recommendation of the Specialist Group and the explanatory text to a website where all members of the EVCC can post their opinion about the proposal and the recommendation.

3.10. Once a year, the EVCC members are asked by the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) to vote about the recommendations posted on the website at least two months prior to the voting. The voting will be open for one month. At the beginning of the voting period, the online-discussion about the proposals and recommendations is closed.

3.11. A proposal is accepted if the recommendation of the Specialist Group was 'Accept' and the majority of the received votes from the EVCC members is for acceptance of the recommendation.

3.12. If the recommendation of the Specialist Group was ‘Reject’, but this recommendation is rejected by at least 60% of the received votes from the EVCC members, a new Specialist Group with a new Coordinating Editor is established, which prepares a new recommendation with a new explanatory text, and the vote is repeated.

3.13. In all other cases, the proposal is rejected. However, the proposed changes may be re-submitted as a new proposal when new data have been published or new arguments found in support of the case.

4. Publication of the EuroVegChecklist updates

Any modification proposal and decision about it is published by the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary) of the EVCC in the interactive online version of EuroVegChecklist (www.synbiosys.alterra.nl/evc/). At regular intervals of a few years, as necessary, updated versions of EuroVegChecklist that include the accepted modifications are published on www.synbiosys.alterra.nl/evc/. These versions are numbered and dated.