

E3.2a Mediterranean short moist grassland of lowlands

Summary

This habitat comprises short species-rich grassy swards, traditionally sustained by heavy grazing, on clay soils which, in the Mediterranean climate, experience seasonal waterlogging with distinctive surface cracking in the dry summer. Shifts in farming practice and the spread of human settlements appear to have had only local effects on the extent and quality of the habitat which is somewhat protected by the uncongenial terrain.

Synthesis

There is insufficient information to calculate average trends for Europe, but the widespread distribution, and reported slight declines in area are arguments for an assessment Least Concern (LC).

Overall Category & Criteria			
EU 28		EU 28+	
Red List Category	Red List Criteria	Red List Category	Red List Criteria
Least Concern	-	Least Concern	-

Sub-habitat types that may require further examination

No sub-habitats have been distinguished for further assessment.

Habitat Type

Code and name

E3.2a Mediterranean short moist grassland of lowlands



Dense grassland rich legumes on clayey deep soils expanding when waterlogged under seasonal rains (vertic character) in the humid thermo-mediterranean areas of southern Spain, in Alcalá de los Gazules, Cádiz. The red colour is given by *Hedysarum coronarium* (Photo: Antonio Galán de Mera).



Hedysarum coronarium from short moist grassland (*Hedysaro coronarii-Phalaridetum coerulescentis*) on vertisol between la Barca de Vejer and Medina Sidonia, in the Cádiz province, south Spain (Photo: Alfredo Asensi and Blanca Díez-Garretas)

Habitat description

These humid meadows occur in the Mediterranean region on clayey soils, often vertisols which experience a strong oscillatory regime in the water table level, with sharp seasonal dry-wet cycles. Winter flood is followed by summer drought and the swelling clay expands and contracts until it splits apart in narrow cracks, the typical appearance in summer. Historically, they have been intensively grazed.

The habitat can be considered a western vicariant of habitat E3.3 Submediterranean moist grassland.

Indicators of good quality:

- A medium to short grassy sward with associated herbs irregularly scattered, sometimes forming an open cover over the cracked soil surface
- High species richness with even distribution and abundance
- Absence of species related to intense grazing
- No visible anthropogenic disturbances due to intensive trampling

Characteristic species:

Vascular plants: *Achillea ageratum*, *Agrostis stolonifera* var. *gaditana*, *Festuca asperifolia*, *Centaurea jacea* subsp. *approximata*, *Cirsium rosulatum*, *Deschampsia cespitosa* subsp. *subtriflora*, *Deschampsia media*, *Festuca arundinacea* subsp. *atlantigena*, *Gaudinia fragilios* var. *verticicola*, *Gentianella hispanica*, *Hordeum bulbosum*, *Jasonia tuberosa*, *Leucanthemum aligulatum*, *Phalaris coerulescens*, *Plantago serpentina*, *Prunella hyssopifolia*, *Sanguisorba lateriflora*, *Senecio carpetanus*, *Seseli elatum*, *Trifolium lappaceum*

Classification

This habitat may be equivalent to, or broader than, or narrower than the habitats or ecosystems in the following typologies.

EUNIS:

E3.2 Mediterranean short humid grassland

EuroVegChecklist:

Deschampsion mediae Br.-Bl. et al. 1952 nom. conserv. propos.

Gaudinio fragilis-Hordeion bulbosi Galán de Mera et al. 1997

Annex 1:

- (a vicariant habitat has been described under 6540 for south-eastern Europe)

Emerald:

-

MAES-2:

Grassland

IUCN:

4.4 Temperate Grassland

Does the habitat type present an outstanding example of typical characteristics of one or more biogeographic regions?

Yes

Regions

Mediterranean

Justification

The distribution is strongly related to the distinctive Mediterranean climate.

Geographic occurrence and trends

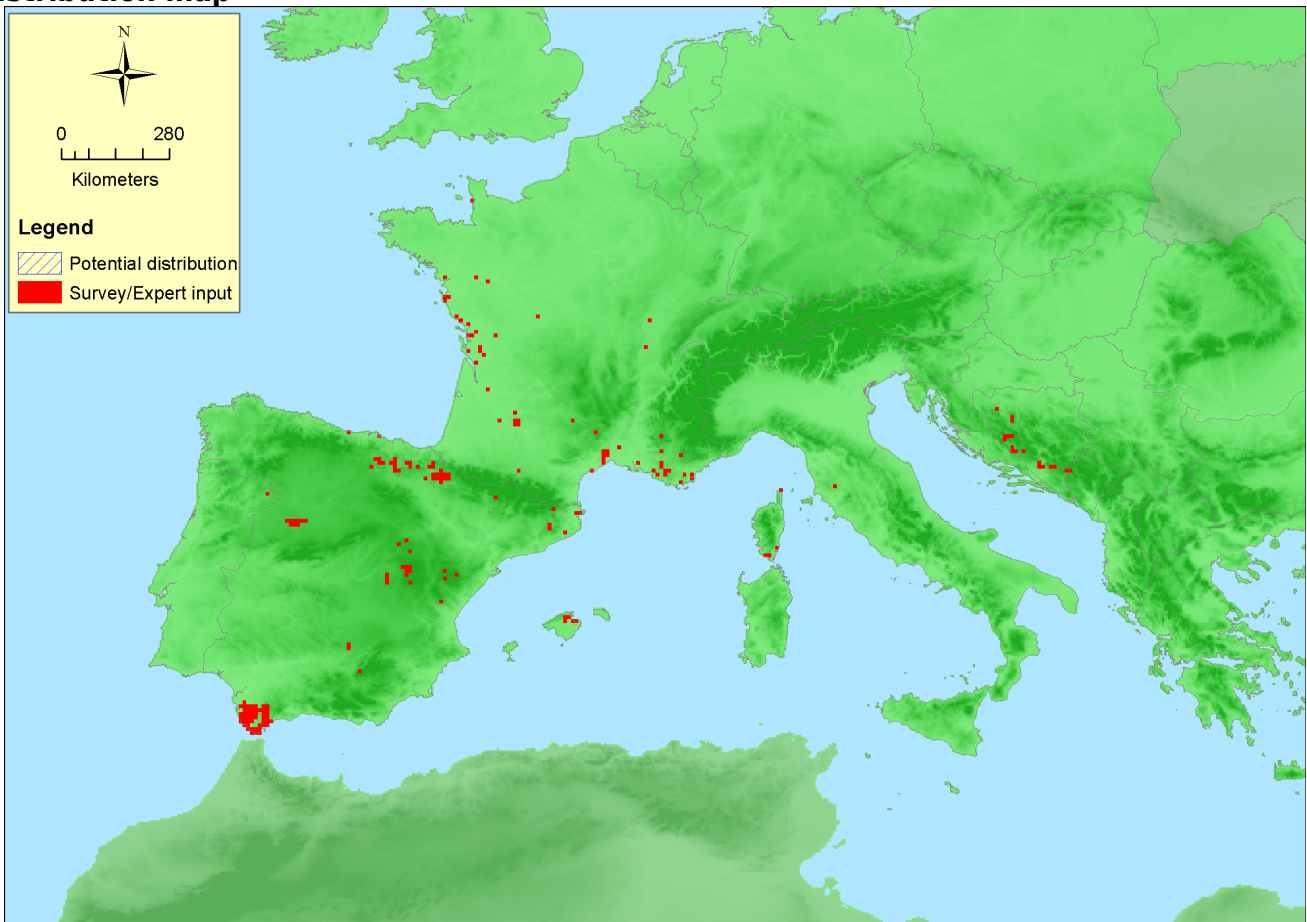
EU 28	Present or Presence Uncertain	Current area of habitat	Recent trend in quantity (last 50 yrs)	Recent trend in quality (last 50 yrs)
France	France mainland: Present	unknown Km ²	Decreasing	Decreasing

EU 28	Present or Presence Uncertain	Current area of habitat	Recent trend in quantity (last 50 yrs)	Recent trend in quality (last 50 yrs)
<i>Italy</i>	Italy mainland: Present	unknown Km ²	Decreasing	Decreasing
<i>Spain</i>	Spain mainland: Present	134 Km ²	Decreasing	Decreasing

Extent of Occurrence, Area of Occupancy and habitat area

	Extent of Occurrence (EOO)	Area of Occupancy (AOO)	Current estimated Total Area	Comment
<i>EU 28</i>	1159900 Km ²	183	>134 Km ²	Data from Spain only
<i>EU 28+</i>	1530400 Km ²	201	>134 Km ²	

Distribution map



The map is complete for Spain, but with data gaps in Portugal and France. Data: NAT, EVA.

How much of the current distribution of the habitat type lies within the EU 28?

Uncertain, but probably >95%.

Trends in quantity

Figures are lacking but the estimate is of a slight decrease in extent in recent historical time which is expected to continue into the future.

- Average current trend in quantity (extent)
 EU 28: Decreasing
 EU 28+: Unknown

- Does the habitat type have a small natural range following regression?

No

Justification

There may have been a reduction in extent but the overall range is probably largely unchanged.

- Does the habitat have a small natural range by reason of its intrinsically restricted area?

No

Justification

The habitat is widespread through the western Mediterranean basin.

Trends in quality

There has been a slight decrease in abiotic and/or biotic quality across some of this habitat in the recent past, continuing now and expected to continue into the future.

- Average current trend in quality

EU 28: Decreasing

EU 28+: Unknown

Pressures and threats

The threats of development of settlements and associated infrastructures, together with shifts in farming practice, have had only small or localized impacts on the quantity and quality of this habitat which is somewhat protected by its association with wet situations and uncongenial soils.

List of pressures and threats

Agriculture

Modification of cultivation practices

Grassland removal for arable land

Urbanisation, residential and commercial development

Urbanised areas, human habitation

Natural System modifications

Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions

Conservation and management

Most important is the continuation of traditional mowing and grazing regimes.

List of conservation and management needs

Measures related to agriculture and open habitats

Maintaining grasslands and other open habitats

Conservation status

Annex I:

No equivalent type

When severely damaged, does the habitat retain the capacity to recover its typical character and functionality?

Restoration depends greatly on the feasibility of restoring the distinctive hydrological conditions.

Effort required

10 years
Through intervention

Red List Assessment

Criterion A: Reduction in quantity

Criterion A	A1	A2a	A2b	A3
EU 28	slight decrease %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	slight decrease %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

There is insufficient data to calculate average trends in Europe, but slight decreases have been reported from Spain, Portugal and France, and decreases from Italy. Such data do not seem to meet the thresholds for Vulnerable or Near Threatened.

Criterion B: Restricted geographic distribution

Criterion B	B1				B2				B3
	EOO	a	b	c	AOO	a	b	c	
EU 28	>50000 Km ²	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	>50	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	unknown
EU 28+	>50000 Km ²	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	>50	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	unknown

EOO, AOO and number of locations exceed the thresholds for criteria B1 B2 and B3.

Criterion C and D: Reduction in abiotic and/or biotic quality

Criteria C/D	C/D1		C/D2		C/D3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

Criterion C	C1		C2		C3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

Criterion D	D1		D2		D3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%

There is insufficient data to make any kind of calculation, but the few indicated trends in quality are 'not severe' and 'slight to moderate'. The conclusion is Data Deficient, but a Least Concern average value is likely.

Criterion E: Quantitative analysis to evaluate risk of habitat collapse

Criterion E	Probability of collapse
EU 28	unknown
EU 28+	unknown

There is no quantitative analysis available that estimates the probability of collapse of this habitat type.

Overall assessment "Balance sheet" for EU 28 and EU 28+

	A1	A2a	A2b	A3	B1	B2	B3	C/D1	C/D2	C/D3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E
EU28	LC	DD	DD	DD	LC	LC	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD
EU28+	LC	DD	DD	DD	LC	LC	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD

Overall Category & Criteria			
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Confidence in the assessment

Low (mainly based on uncertain or indirect information, inferred and suspected data values, and/or limited expert knowledge)

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