

Important Plant Areas Project - Romania

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Summary

It is recognized that in the ongoing "Environmental for Europe" process, plant conservation is a key component of the biodiversity conservation strategy. According to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (2002) the conservation of this vital part of the world's biological diversity is strongly promoted. In this respect the Important Plant Areas (IPA-s) programme, which was also implemented in Romania, represents a way to achieve in our country, some of the targets of the GSPC. The 279 IPA-s identified during this project are a significant background for the development of Natura 2000 Network in Romania. The project was also a good opportunity to up-date our information on Romanian flora (SĂVULESCU, 1952) according to the international requirements (TUTIN *et al.* 1964-1980).

Introduction

The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation marks a new start for safeguarding wild plants, offering a clear set of targets for protecting our native flora. In order to achieve two important targets of this Strategy (understanding and documenting plant diversity & conserving plant diversity) a special programme which aims the identification and protection of a network of the best sites for plant conservation across Europe and the rest of the world was developed by the PLANTLIFE INTERNATIONAL and PLANTA EUROPA under the name Important Plant Areas (PALMER, SMART, 2001).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands has provided funding to carry out inventories of Important Plant Areas in 7 Central and Eastern European countries, including Romania.

The aim of the Important Plant Areas (IPA-s) project in Romania was to identify the best sites for plant conservation, in order to become a part of the European network of IPA-s.

Method

The IPA-s identification was based on three consistent criteria: Criterion A – The site holds significant population of one or more species that are of global or European conservation concern; Criterion B – The site has an exceptionally rich flora in a European context in relation to its biogeographic zones; Criterion C – The site is an outstanding example of a habitat type of global or European plant conservation and botanical importance.

The identified IPA-s were preliminary checked-out on the field (2002-2004) and their selection was made almost using 2 & 3 criteria.

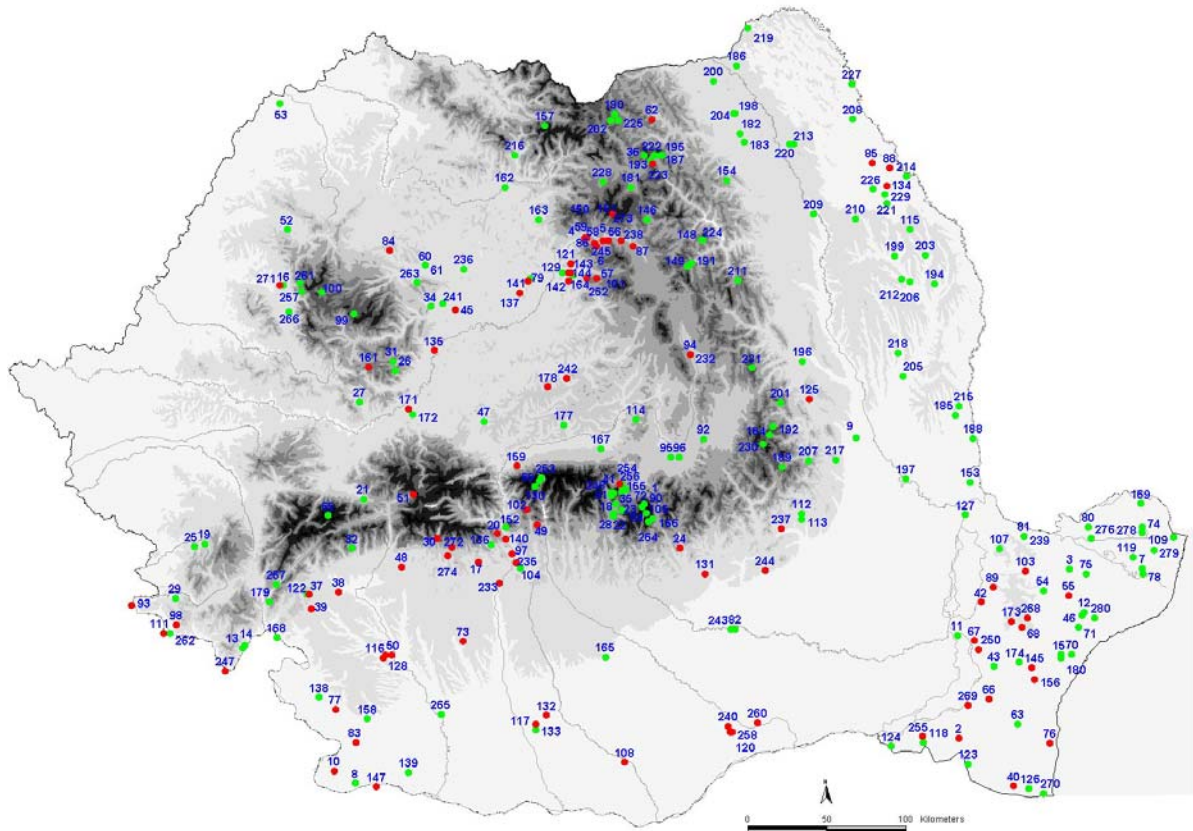


Figure 1. IPA-s distribution in Romania (in green the IPA-s located in the existing protected areas and in red the IPA-s located outside the existing protected areas)



Figure 2. Globally and European threatened plants (criterion Ai & Aii)



Figure 3. Nearendemic and threatened plants (criterion Aiv)

Results

The information on Romanian flora and habitat types was up-date in accordance with the international legislation concerning threat, need of protection and conservation.

The information on plants and habitats was made available for decision making staff, scientists, master students, by a publication in Romanian language "The Guide for identification of IPA-s in Romania".

279 IPA-s were identified up to now in Romania (330.000 ha) (Fig. 1). They are represented by the most significant sites, according to the proposed criteria. This IPA-s are sometimes parts of the large existing protected areas as Biosphere Reserves, National Parks, sometimes overlaps the small protected areas as the Natural Reserves are and sometimes are located in non protected areas with high botanical value, which required a protection statute. The identified IPA-s contain: 80 % of the globally and European threatened taxa, still present in Romania (Ai & Aii criteria); 87 % of the endemic and nearendemic taxa, nationally threatened, not covered by Ai or Aii criteria (Aiii & Aiv criteria); 99 % of the globally and European threatened habitats, still present in Romania (Ci & Cii criteria); 19 new habitat types, very characteristic for Romania, exceptionally riche in protected plants (Romanian Red List), which were not included up to now under protection at international level (B criterion). They contain significant populations of Criterion A species (*Campanula romanica* – 45% of national population, *Centaurea jankae* – 60% of national population, *Agropyron cristatum* ssp. *brandzae* – 30% of national population, *Alyssum caliacrae* – 90% of national population, *Centaurea gracilentia* – 25% of national population, *Minuartia bilykiana* – 25% of national population, *Potentilla emilii-popii* – 10% of national population s.o.), but contain also between 15-30 species from Romanian Red List/site (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).

Two of this new habitat types are very significant, heaving a very large occurrence especially in the Dobrogea region of Romania.

They belong to **Dry grasslands habitat type (E1) – Calcareous dry steppic grasslands:**

- **Dry pontic grasslands with xerophyllous species** as *Stipa ucrainica*, *S. lessingiana*, *S. capillata*, *Festuca valesiaca*, *Taraxacum serotinum*, *Centaurea orientalis*, *Convolvulus cantabrica*, *Dichanthium ischaemum*, *Agropyron cristatum* ssp. *pectinatum*, *Teucrium polium* ssp. *capitatum*, *Paeonia tenuifolia*, *Galium moldavicum*, *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* s.o.
- **Dobrogea's dry stoned grasslands** from *Thymion zigioides* with *Thymus zygioides*, *Agropyron cristatum* ssp. *brandzae*, *Pimpinella tragium* ssp. *lithophila*, *Koeleria lobata*, *Dianthus nardiformis*, *D. pseudarmeria*, *Festuca callieri*, *Centaurea jankae*, *Artemisia lerchiana* s.o.

The species selected under A criterion which were not included in the identified IPA-s, are especially fungi, lichens and bryophytes but also vascular plants with a very restricted location. In the Romanian Flora (50 years old) this vascular plants were nominated in 1 or 2 locations, but during the field activity from the last 3 years, they were not found again.

Conclusions

279 IPA-s were identified up to now in Romania, scientifically documented by a preliminary check-out on the field.

The information on threatened species and habitats from Romania was up-dated, according to the international legislation.

A centralized database (information & images) was developed, available for different categories of users, involved in the biodiversity conservation process.

These results complete the framework, required by the achievement of Target 5 in the CBD Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) in Romania.

The IPA-s identification and the IPA-network development needs to be understood as an ongoing process.

References

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