

# **Grasslands European habitats in the CE and SE Portugal continental. Dynamics, management and conservation.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mediterranean natural and semi-natural grasslands are amongst the protected habitats in Europe, contributing to the cultural landscape, often associated with traditional extensive livestock grazing. They are normally ecosystems with high species diversity and their importance in the biodiversity conservation is widely recognised. Land-use changes, such as abandonment or grazing intensification, lead to major changes in floristic composition and diversity of many of these grasslands, many of them included in habitats of Directive 92/43/EC (Habitats Directive). The main objectives of this study are: 1) to identify grasslands that configure habitats of referred Directive; 2) to recognize land-use changes that modify ecological gradients; 3) assessing of dynamics between the different communities and habitats recognised. Vegetation sampling was carried out from 2008 to 2011 in grasslands, in CE and SE continental Portugal, following the phytosociological concepts. It was identified 12 syntaxa that configure habitats types of Habitats Directive. Characterization of their floristic diversity, ecology, management, conservation and dynamics were made. In addition, an approach to a dynamic-catenal model based in the identification of response patterns of communities to disturbance factors is presented.

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