

sPlot Letter No. 1, 16 January 2014

Dear members of the sPlot Consortium,

Ten months after the initial **sPlot Workshop in Leipzig (Global Plant Trait-Environment Relationships)**, we would like to update you on the development of our joint project since then. We include in this mailing all actual members of the **sPlot Consortium** (i.e. the participants of the Workshop and those who joined upon invitation of the sPlot Steering Committee) and the putative members of the sPlot Consortium (i.e. custodians and deputy custodians of databases that have agreed to contribute data).

Among the relevant facts to report are:

* Since June 2013, **Dr. Jürgen Dengler, is serving as sPlot Coordinator** (employed by iDiv Leipzig, but based at University of Bayreuth; see http://www.idiv-biodiversity.de/sdiv/postdoc-fellowships/workshop-postdocs/vcard_item_900389/detail)

* In July 2013, the **sPlot Governance and Data Property Rules** have been approved (http://www.idiv-biodiversity.de/sdiv/workshops/workshops-2013/splot/materials/content_56450/sPlot-Rules_approved.pdf)

* We have so far **contacted about 60 representative vegetation-plot databases** around the world directly and many more via the European Vegetation Archive (EVA; <http://euroveg.org/eva-database>) whether they are willing to contribute data to sPlot. Accordingly, we have already **achieved agreements with 27, mostly big databases**, covering hundreds of thousands of relevés.

* In particular, we arranged with **EVA (European Vegetation Archive)** that European data will exclusively be contributed to sPlot from this aggregated and standardised mega-database of databases (from those national and regional databases in EVA that gave their consent), which will save us enormous amounts of work. For the Americas, a similar agreement with **BIEN3 (Botanical Information and Ecology Network)** is in preparation.

* In autumn 2013, we launched the **sPlot homepage**, where you find more information on all topics touched on in this article (but note that some information on software solutions are not up to date any more, see next bullet point): <http://www.idiv-biodiversity.de/sdiv/workshops/workshops-2013/splot>

In the second half of 2013 we had tried hard together with the Biodiversity Informatics Unit (BDU) of the University of Jena to develop a proper database for sPlot under their database management system Bexis++. However, this development proved to be far more challenging and time-consuming than anticipated. At the same time, the software development of the prototype of Turboveg 3 (TV3) by Stephan Hennekens for the European Vegetation Archive (EVA) made impressive advances so that this programme now seems to be suitable for handling the sPlot data with only limited additional tools needed, while the majority of sPlot data will come from TV3 anyway. For these reasons, we decided at the end of 2013 to implement sPlot under TV3. A concrete roadmap for the implementing this under TV3 has been developed with Stephan Hennekens last week.

In conclusion, we can state that there will be some delay compared to our original plans. Therefore, conducting the second sPlot Workshop in March 2014 as originally planned is not feasible any more, but we are optimistic that after a postponement of half a year, we can organise the second workshop in Leipzig (i.e. approx. September/October 2014) and already before that we will have relevant datasets available for pre-analyses.

We hope that you understand this delay and look forward to your continued support. We will contact those databases that have agreed to contribute data step by step when we are ready to include data,

which will be in several weeks to months from now. If you have questions meanwhile, do not hesitate to contact us.

With kind regards,

Jürgen Dengler (sPlot Coordinator) & Helge Bruelheide (Chair of the sPlot Steering Committee)

P.S.: If databases that agreed to contribute wish to update their information (e.g. number of plot observations available for sPlot or contact data of the custodian) or add a deputy custodian (who then also will receive our future mails), please let Jürgen know.