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Guest Editors

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Biological diversity is hardly threatened at global level and this is causing an increasing and constantly loss of wild plant diversity. This biodiversity crisis, mainly due to human actions (e.g. fragmentation of habitats, invasive alien species, pollution, climate change), leads to drastic increase of species extinction rate. Aiming to halt the continuing loss of plant diversity, international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) and the European Strategy for Plant Conservation (ESPC) have been underwritten.

Understanding, documenting and developing conservation strategies are key issues that need to be urgently faced. In particular, conservation studies represent a crucial issue in the Mediterranean context, which represents a key area for the conservation of plant due to high rates of overall and regional endemism and the elevated species richness. Nowadays, this diversity is subjected to both natural and anthropogenic factors, particularly in insular contexts where endemic plants therefore deserve particular attention.

Convention on Biological Diversity defined *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation as two distinct approaches to the protection of wild species. *In situ* conservation is needed to ensure the survival of species as a key element of biodiversity and it is particularly required for species considered of priority importance because they are endangered. It is considered the most appropriate way of preserve biodiversity, while *ex situ* conservation approaches should be applied as critical components of an integrated conservation programme.

In this special issue of Plant Sociology, we assembled selected papers issued from the "X International Meeting Biodiversity Conservation and Management: Conservation studies on Mediterranean threatened flora and vegetation" that was held in Villacidro (Sardinia, Italy) and organised by the Centre for the Conservation of Biodiversity (CCB) and *Hortus Botanicus Karalitanus* (HBK) of the University of Cagliari on June 13-18, 2016; it ended with a post-congress excursion in Sulcis-Iglesiente biogeographic sector, carried out on 18th June.



Participants pose for group photo during the field trip of the "X International Meeting Biodiversity Conservation and Management", Villacidro (Sardinia, Italy). (Picture by M. Porceddu).

The congress saw the participation of students and researchers from different countries of the Mediterranean area, such as Spain, Italy, Lebanon, France and Egypt. The selected papers covered the following main topics:

- General aspects of European and national legislation related to the flora/vegetation conservation;
- Evaluation of plant and habitat conservation status: international procedures;
- Monitoring and conservation actions (*in situ* and *ex situ*) on threatened flora and habitat;
- Concrete conservation actions: plant reintroduction, reinforcement and translocations, habitat restoration and rehabilitation;
- Study cases of conservation and management of flora and habitats diversity.

Specifically, papers on conservation and management of the flora and habitats diversity in the Mediterranean area, phytosociology as plant synecology and towards an ecological characterization of Mediterranean landscapes and related themes were selected for this special issue.

The organization of the International Meeting was possible thanks to the hard work of the local Organizing and Scientific Committees; the conference organizers thank the SISV, Forestas Agency, Cagliari Province, the AUSER Association and all the other scientific associations for their significant support.