

F7.1 Western Mediterranean spiny heath

Summary

This rare scrub, dominated by often spiny cushion plants, is confined to rocky cliff tops in parts of the western Mediterranean, from southern Portugal to the Balearic and Thyrrenian islands. Shallow rocky soils on steep slopes, constant winds and salt spray limit further succession and the threats are confined to recreation and tourist infrastructure.

Synthesis

The assessment results on the basis of the main criteria (A1,B1,C/D1) lead to the Least Concern category, due to the topographic self-defensive position of this habitat. However, if degraded, the recovery is difficult because the habitat is a low resiliency type adapted to high stressing conditions.

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 relevant sub-habitats have been recognized.

Habitat Type

Code and name

F7.1 Western Mediterranean spiny heath



Launaea cervicornis, island of Mallorca, Spain (Photo: Javier Loidi).



Centaurea horrida, coastal rocky cliffs, Capo Caccia, Alghero, Sardinia, Italy (Photo: Gianluigi Bacchetta).

Habitat description

Rare, extremely local and isolated, cushion-forming scrubs, often with spiny species, located in the clifftops of rocky coastal stretches, dispersed along the coasts of south Portugal, Northeast Spain and southern France, the Balearic and Thyrrenian Islands (Corsica, Sardinia, Malta and Pantellaria) up to the southern Italian Peninsula (Gulf of Taranto). It is submitted to the constant wind actions and to the salinity transported by the spray reaching particularly during the strong wind episodes. The rocky shallow soils and the steep slopes prevent from further development of vegetation, being considered this habitat as a permanent community of coastal clifftops in the Mediterranean area. These clifftop scrubs are characterized by irregular cover at their optimal phases, depending on the slope and the soil depth. Most

of the stands of this habitat are quite inaccessible and the threats seem so be low.

Indicators of quality:

- no signals of human activity: trampling, building, trash, etc.
- presence and abundance of narrow-endemic species

Characteristic species:

Vascular plants: *Anthyllis fulgurans*, *Anthyllis hermanniae* subsp. *hystrix*, *Armeria ruscinonensis*, *Astragalus balearicus*, *Astragalus massiliensis*, *Centaurea balearica*, *Centaurea horrida*, *Euphorbia pithyusa*, *Genista acanthoclada* subsp. *sardoa*, *Genista corsica*, *Genista morisii*, *Helichrysum italicum*, *Helichrysum saxatile* subsp. *errerae*, *Launaea cervicornis*, *Matthiola pulchella*, *Plantago subulatum*, *Sarcopoterium spinosum*, *Teucrium subspinosum*, *Thymelaea hirsuta*.

Classification

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

EUNIS:

F7.1 West Mediterranean coastal garrigue

EuroVegChecklist (alliances):

Anthyllion hermanniae Klein 1972,

Hypericion balearici O. Bolòs & R. Molinier 1958

Launaeion cervicornis (O. Bolòs & Vigo ex Y. Gil & Llorens 1995) Rivas-Martínez, Fernández-González & 1999

Rosmarinion officinalis Br.-Bl. ex Molinier 1934

Annex 1:

5320 Low formations of *Euphorbia* close to cliffs;

5410 West Mediterranean clifftop phrygas (*Astragalo-Plantaginetum subulatae*);

5430 Endemic phrygas of the *Euphorbio-Verbascion* p.p. (only the western subtypes)

Emerald:

F5.517 Coastal *Helichrysum* garrigues

F7 Spiny Mediterranean heaths (phrygana, hedgehog-heaths and related coastal cliff vegetation)

MAES-2:

Heathland and shrub

IUCN:

3.8 Mediterranean-type shrubby vegetation

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

Yes

Regions

Mediterranean

Justification

This habitat type is exclusively restricted to some coastal areas in the western Mediterranean.

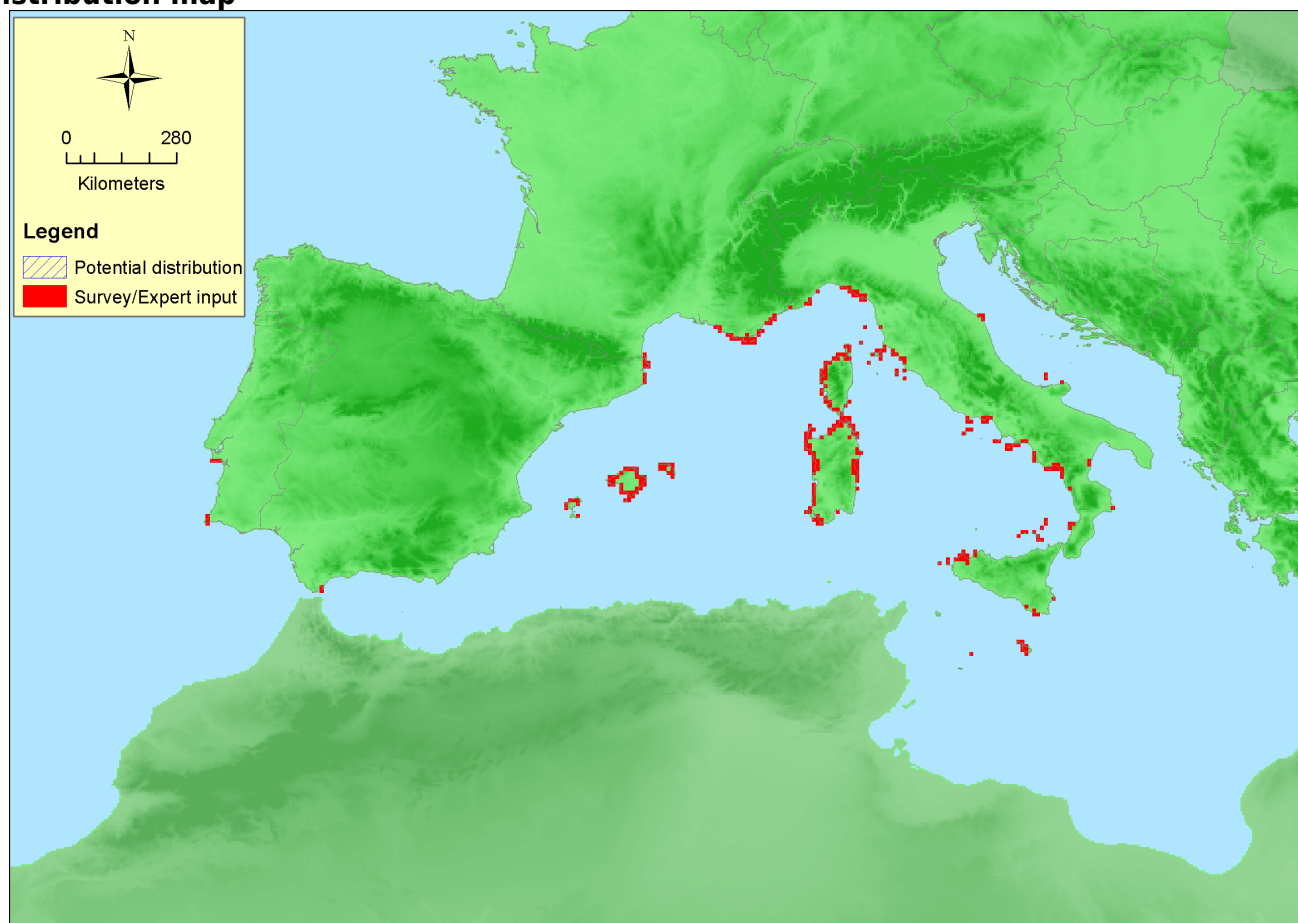
Geographic occurrence and trends

EU 28	Present or Presence Uncertain	Current area of habitat	Recent trend in quantity (last 50 yrs)	Recent trend in quality (last 50 yrs)
<i>France</i>	Corsica: Present France mainland: Present	19 Km ²	Stable	Stable
<i>Italy</i>	Sardinia: Present Sicily: Present	146 Km ²	Stable	Stable
<i>Malta</i>	Present	71 Km ²	Stable	Stable
<i>Portugal</i>	Portugal mainland: Present	4.3 Km ²	Decreasing	Decreasing
<i>Spain</i>	Balearic Islands: Present Spain mainland: Present	6.4 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>	>50000 Km ²	>50	241 Km ²	
<i>EU 28+</i>	>50000 Km ²	>50	241 Km ²	

Distribution map



The map likely provides the complete distribution of the habitat, with maybe some data gaps in Sicily and the southern Italian Peninsula. Data sources: Art17, EVA.

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

Possibly this habitat is also present in northwestern Africa; we can estimate that 60% of its current distribution is inside the EU28

Trends in quantity

There is a slight decrease due to various constructions in the coastal areas.

- Average current trend in quantity (extent)

EU 28: Decreasing

EU 28+: Decreasing

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

No

Justification

The extant distribution range has not suffered a strong reduction.

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

No

Justification

The natural area of this habitat is geographically broad but it is located to special topographic positions (cliffs), usually occupying small surfaces.

Trends in quality

A slight decrease can be reported due to human visitors influence

- Average current trend in quality

EU 28: Decreasing

EU 28+: Decreasing

Pressures and threats

This habitat is subjected to low pressures / threats due to the inaccessible sites where it is established and only some dispersed housing, as well as some walking and climbing activity could affect it.

List of pressures and threats

Transportation and service corridors

Paths, tracks, cycling tracks

Urbanisation, residential and commercial development

Dispersed habitation

Human intrusions and disturbances

Mountaineering & rock climbing

Conservation and management

Preventing from building in the coastal strip as well as ordering the leisure activities of walking and climbing

List of conservation and management needs

Measures related to spatial planning

Establish protected areas/sites

Measures related to urban areas, industry, energy and transport

Urban and industrial waste management

Conservation status

Annex I:

5320: MED U1

5410: MED U1

5430: MED U1

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

The reconstruction of this habitat after severe damage seems to be very difficult at least in a relatively short period of time

Effort required

50+ years	200+ years
Through intervention	Naturally

Red List Assessment

Criterion A: Reduction in quantity

Criterion A	A1	A2a	A2b	A3
EU 28	-1 %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	-1 %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

The reduction in quantity is very slight due to the inaccessible topographic conditions of the habitat.

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

The geographical extent is large and the number of sites reported is high

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	2 %	25 %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	2 %	25 %	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 %

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 %

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%

The reduction in quality has been moderate and in many sites inexistent

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	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD
EU28+	LC	DD	DD	DD	LC	LC	LC	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD

Overall Category & Criteria			
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Confidence in the assessment

Medium (evenly split between quantitative data/literature and uncertain data sources and assured expert knowledge)

Assessors

J. Loidi

Contributors

Description: J. Loidi

Territorial Data: O. Argagnon, S. Bagella, J. Capelo, G. Giusso Del Galdo, J. Loidi, C. Marcenò, S. Sciandrello

Working Group Heathland & Scrub: M. Aronsson, F. Bioret, C. Bita-Nicolae, J. Capelo, A. Čarni, P.

Dimopoulos, J. Janssen, J. Loidi

Reviewers

P. Dimopoulos

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