

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

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RECOMMENDATION No. R (88) 11

### OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

### ON ANCIENT NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL WOODLANDS

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988  
at the 418th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats of 19 September 1979, and in particular to Article 4 thereof on the protection of habitats;

Having regard to its Resolution (76) 17 on the European network of biogenetic reserves;

Referring to its Recommendation No. R (88) 10 on the protection of saproxylic organisms and their biotopes;

Considering that ancient natural and semi-natural woodlands, that is those which, by reason of their age and of their state, are as close as possible to the natural condition (hereinafter referred to as ancient woodlands), are a fundamental part of the European natural heritage for their scientific, educational, cultural, recreational, aesthetic and intrinsic value;

Considering that a high proportion of the ancient woodlands of Europe are disappearing or are losing their natural features as a result of airborne pollution, intensive commercial exploitation or for other reasons;

Considering that ancient woodlands contain a specific flora and fauna rich in threatened species;

Considering that the conservation of natural ecological processes requires the protection of large wooded areas;

Considering that ancient woodlands play a fundamental ecological role in the water cycle, the control of erosion and the survival of a large number of species,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

1. embark without delay on programmes aimed at conserving as many remaining ancient woodlands as possible, and for this purpose:

*a.* undertake the management of a representative proportion of the most natural ancient woodlands in such a way as to limit the impact of human activities, to enable natural ecological processes to be maintained;

*b.* designate the most important ancient woodlands in their territories for inclusion in the European network of biogenetic reserves;

*c.* encourage further research on ancient woodlands, especially in the Mediterranean countries, to enable the development of an improved understanding of natural self-regulation mechanisms and the more effective management of forests;

2. restrict as far as possible the substitution of ancient woodlands by stands of fast-growing tree species, and adopt only those planting and exploitation techniques appropriate to ecological conditions, in accordance with the requirements of nature and landscape conservation ;
3. adopt forestry-management policies which include, where appropriate, encouraging the return to conditions closer to the natural state, respecting areas of ancient woodland and preserving over-mature, fallen and dying trees ;
4. where reafforestation is necessary, it should wherever practicable be undertaken using indigenous tree species.