

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

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RECOMMENDATION No. R (85) 17

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON THE TRAINING OF HUNTERS<sup>1</sup>

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 September 1985  
at the 388th 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 resolutions of the European Ministerial Conferences on the Environment concerning the protection of wildlife;

Having regard to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats;

Recognising that wildlife must be preserved for present and future generations for its scientific, aesthetic, cultural and educational value;

Considering that hunting may be regarded as an important element in the management of wildlife provided that it respects the ecological needs of species and the requirements of biological equilibria;

Noting however that certain methods and forms of behaviour may have harmful effects on some species;

Conscious of the need to ensure the training of hunters and to make them more aware of their responsibilities towards the natural heritage,

Recommends the governments of member states:

1. to consider the desirability, where it is not already the case, of subjecting the issue of a game licence to the passing of an examination consisting of a theoretical and a practical test;
2. to take into account, when drawing up the syllabus for such an examination, the suggestions appended to this recommendation;
3. to co-operate with the relevant associations and other bodies in promoting educational action to encourage hunters to perfect their knowledge of fauna in general and of its habitats and of wildlife management;
4. to commend to the relevant associations and other bodies the task of adhering to and setting up a code of conduct for hunters, on the basis of the suggestions found in Appendix II.

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1. When this recommendation was adopted, the Representative of Greece, in application of Article 10.2.c of the Rules of Procedure for the meetings of the Ministers' Deputies, reserved the right of his Government to comply with it or not.

**Suggestions for the hunters' examination syllabus**

**A. Theoretical test**

**I. *Knowledge of fauna and habits*: identification and characteristics of game species and protected species**

- description
- habitat
- signs of presence
- behaviour
- diet
- breeding
- population dynamics
- population management
- disease
- impact of the species on the environment
- specific arrangements
- main biotopes and capacity of various environments
- impact of agriculture and forestry
- role of predators
- introduction and reintroduction of species
- stocking and release of animals

**II. *Knowledge of national and international provisions and legislation governing hunting and nature conservation***

- elementary knowledge of international law
- knowledge of national legislation
- exercise of hunting rights
- restrictions on hunting
- hunting permit
- hunting grounds (use, rental)
- hunting seasons
- hunting plans
- control of game populations
- organisation and supervision of hunting
- authorised means, methods, firearms and ammunition
- compensation for damage caused by game and hunters
- insurance
- offences, control
- care of game
- protected species

**III. *Management of game and habitats, hunting methods and practice***

Elements required for compiling management plans : population density, population structure (age, sex), quantitative increase, state of population

- population measurement
- improvement of environmental conditions and capacity
- knowledge of firearms, ammunition and other authorised hunting equipment
- safety rules
- hunting dogs
- treatment of dead game

#### IV. *Ethics*

Hunters' behaviour towards :

- fauna and its environment
- live and dead game
- themselves
- other users of nature
- other hunters
- other people's property

#### B. **Practical test**

Recognition of game species  
Handling guns  
Shooting  
Reflexes  
Actual hunt : behaviour in the field  
Application of safety rules

#### *Remark*

A probationary period may be envisaged before final award of the permit.

#### *Appendix to Recommendation No. R (85) 17*

#### **Suggestions for a code of conduct for hunters**

The purpose of this code is to foster hunting ethics as an essential complement to any legal system, however good it may be. The hunter bears responsibility for a natural heritage that must be passed on to future generations and must not only comply with hunting laws and regulations but also abide by the rules governing the ecological balance. He must be aware of his obligations and responsibilities towards nature in general and game in particular, as well as towards other persons and property. A high standard of conduct will help the hunter to earn the respect of others. Hunting, now a leisure activity, once served to meet material needs ; in present-day Europe it inevitably entails an element of management. This shift towards a game-management role for hunters has already begun and should be encouraged.

#### **Rules of conduct**

##### I. *Respect the restrictions on your hunting rights : they are dictated primarily by the ecological requirements of species and their habitats*

1. Hunt only those species for which hunting is permitted ; shooting an animal of a protected species is unworthy of a hunter.
2. Do not associate the pleasure of hunting with the number of kills. "The best hunter is not the one with most kills to his credit."
3. Respect closed seasons and abide by authorised methods and hunting boundaries.

##### II. *Treat all game with respect*

1. Refrain from any practice contrary to the spirit and ethics of hunting.
2. Do not use methods of non-selective or mass capture.
3. Do not hunt when game numbers or animals' ability to survive are diminished by natural conditions or where these result in exceptional concentrations facilitating kills in excess of normal hunting practice. Help all wildlife to survive in difficult circumstances.

4. Identify the animal before shooting.
5. Shoot only at normal distances and in normal shooting conditions.
6. Do not shoot close to the boundaries of protected areas, which are indispensable to sound game management.
7. Avoid inflicting unnecessary suffering on game and do not abandon wounded or dead game; organise a systematic search.
8. Make the best possible use of the game you have killed.
9. Do not hunt for gain.

### III. *Seek to be a competent and responsible hunter*

1. Know all you can about the ecology of species.
2. Know the laws and regulations governing hunting and the conservation of wildlife.
3. Participate in group action designed not only to defend the interests of hunters but also to improve the quality of wildlife.
4. Maintain contacts with the authorities and associations responsible for hunting and nature conservation.
5. Talk with environment officials and members of the farming and forestry community to impress upon them the requirements of conservation of the environment and wildlife.
6. Take part in scientific wildlife studies.
7. Further the education and behaviour of young hunters by precept and example.

### IV. *Be aware of your responsibilities towards the natural heritage shared by all of humanity*

1. Pay particular attention to migrating species and to the particular needs of such species passing through or wintering in your country.
2. Take care that traditional ways of hunting in each country make all due allowance for the conservation of migratory species.
3. Assist scientific research into migratory bird species, in particular by answering enquiries about numbers and kills and by returning rings found on birds shot or found dead.

### V. *You are responsible for your own actions: strictly observe security rules*

1. *When not hunting*
  - leave your gun unloaded, if possible dismantled and placed out of reach of children and other adults; the same precautions apply to ammunition;
  - when driving keep your gun dismantled or in its case;
  - make sure your gun is in good working order.
2. *While hunting*
  - use the most suitable weapons and ammunition so that shooting is done properly;
  - make sure that your gun barrel is not blocked;
  - obey instructions from the leader of the hunting party;
  - do not close the breech unless the barrels are pointed at the ground;
  - never carry a gun in a horizontal position;
  - open and unload your gun before negotiating obstacles;
  - unload your gun and leave the breech open when moving from one place to another during the hunt;
  - locate your neighbours and everyone taking part in the hunt as well as people out walking and make sure that they know where you are;
  - never shoot into a bush nor in the direction of another person even if he seems to be out of range; always make sure of the final destination of your projectile;
  - beware of ricochets (on icy or stony ground, etc.).

VI. *Show concern for others*

1. Avoid damaging farms or woodland (trampling over crops, disturbing domestic animals, leaving gates open, etc.);
2. Preserve public property (signs, sign-posts, telephone wires, power lines);
3. Be courteous and helpful to others in the vicinity;
4. Do not pollute; pick up your spent cartridges;
5. Help prevent game damaging crops;
6. See to it that any compensation for which you are liable for such damage is paid promptly.

VII. *Be a good manager*

A. *Protect and manage game populations*

1. Limit kills so as to maintain an optimum density of the various populations and to permit their regeneration.
2. Maintain a healthy, balanced and diversified game population that is adapted to local conditions.
3. Carefully monitor the development of game quality and quantity.
4. Recognise the essential role of predators.
5. Immediately report disease to the competent authorities.
6. Maintain or replenish game stocks from local strains, taking care to avoid genetic and health risks.
7. Prompt representative organisations to negotiate the establishment of hunting plans with the local authorities, setting kill quotas based on sound rules of management.
8. Avoid the practice of releasing game immediately before or during a hunt.
9. Support measures to combat poaching.

B. *Protect and manage hunting grounds*

1. Help maintain the diversity of habitats, which is the very foundation of nature's richness and the guarantee of hunting's future, by conserving existing habitats and restoring them where necessary.
2. Strive to prevent the destruction of wetlands essential for water game and migrating fauna.
3. Equip hunting areas so that they can meet the needs of game throughout the year.
4. Avoid all unnecessary disturbance during the mating season.
5. Conduct joint activities with the farming and forestry community in order to limit harmful practices (chemical treatment, levelling of embankments and hedges, filling in of pools and ditches, burning off stubble, etc.).