

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (88) 10

### OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

### ON THE PROTECTION OF SAPROXYLIC ORGANISMS AND THEIR BIOTOPES

*(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 which lists a number of saproxylic insects, 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, as well as to its Recommendation No. R (86) 10 concerning the Charter on invertebrates;

Referring to its Recommendation No. R (88) 11 on ancient natural and semi-natural woodlands;

Referring to the study on saproxylic invertebrates and their conservation commissioned by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and published in the Nature and Environment series;

Considering that the diversity of wildlife is essential to the maintenance of the biological balance of ecosystems and that here invertebrates play a determinant part which is often underestimated and requires thorough study;

Recognising that saproxylic organisms are a fundamental part of the European natural heritage for their scientific, educational, cultural, recreational, aesthetic and intrinsic value;

Noting that in Europe a large number of saproxylic organisms have become extinct and that many others risk becoming so if their decline continues;

Noting that the alarming situation of saproxylic organisms is attributable primarily to the loss or deterioration of their habitat, in particular as a result of the disappearance or intensive exploitation of natural forests;

Considering that saproxylic organisms are excellent bioindicators of the natural conditions of the most interesting and most characteristic European forests,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

1. give particular consideration to forests known to possess a well-differentiated fauna or flora of saproxylic organisms when deciding protection priorities in natural woodlands;
2. bearing in mind their essential role for the conservation of saproxylic organisms, protect all ancient natural forests;
3. consider the desirability of making a survey of saproxylic organisms when assessing the quality of forests for nature conservation purposes, particularly where the intention is to re-establish natural forest conditions within a protected area;

4. manage protected forests according to local conditions and in such a way as to maintain their saproxylic fauna and flora, for instance by:
  - the avoidance of the removal of firewood, fallen timber and dead trees wherever possible;
  - the avoidance of undue human interference in protected natural and ancient forests which are important for the conservation of saproxylic invertebrates;
  - the enlargement of the protected area when it contains only small enclaves of ancient trees;
  - the delimitation of adequate areas where wood and fallen trees can be left untouched in forests where these practices may not seem desirable for the whole forest;
5. appeal to the co-operation and skills of forest managers; provide them with information on the positive role of saproxylic organisms in forest dynamics and the consideration of old trees and dead wood as important elements within the forest ecosystem rather than sources of disease, particularly in cases where the old trees are deciduous species within commercial conifer forests or vice versa;
6. take steps to encourage the in-depth study of the ecology of poorly known, threatened saproxylic species, so that further management practices appropriate for promoting the survival of these species can be identified;
7. take steps to re-establish threatened saproxylic species in parts of Europe from which they have disappeared;
8. encourage and promote education of the public visiting forests on the interest of saproxylic organisms and the importance of not disturbing fallen timber and dead trees;
9. consider, for integration in the European network of biogenetic reserves, the forests referred to in the above-mentioned study, in view of their potential international importance because of the saproxylic organisms which they shelter;
10. ensure, in states where the maintenance of moribund and dead trees would be in conflict with legal requirements for access to land by the public, that selected sites can be exempted from such legal requirements, so that trees can be allowed to die naturally of old age.