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## **PROTECTION OF TREES – MONUMENTS OF NATURE IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

### *OCHRONA DRZEW - POMNIKÓW PRZYRODY W WYBRANYCH KRAJACH EUROPEJSKICH*

**Słowa kluczowe: drzewo – pomnik przyrody, ochrona przyrody w Europie, formy ochrony przyrody**

*Key word: tree – monument of nature, nature protection in Europe, forms of nature conservation*

**Abstract.** This paper presents an analysis of the ways for protecting trees-monuments of nature in the selected countries in Europe. Currently the speciality of these natural monuments is considered in terms of tree age or appearance, but the most commonly used are dimensional criteria. The issue of venerable trees protection is taken in many countries and is embodied in the law of environmental protection and nature conservation, and in some also focused on the actions of society. Attention is paid primarily to the legal aspects of the protection of trees - monuments of nature, methods of data collection activities and protective care for the trees covered by this type of protection. There is highlighted the importance of public action to protect unique trees as objects of special natural and social environment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trees – monuments of nature are natural features, which have a role in conservation of nature and document biodiversity of environment. In the same time they can be elements which give evidence of past times, landscape forming processes (e.g. roadside tree avenues), and history – as widely understood monuments. From nature conservation aspect, trees as natural monuments can be considered as „umbrella” species which create suitable conditions and habitats for other live forms such as microorganisms, fungi, plant and animal species. It is thought that one tree can give living opportunities to 100-1000 other species [Grzywacz 2001].

Tree avenues being manmade line composition with a certain re-planting timescale and landscape linkages form an example of anthropogenic habitats with

their spatial layout designed and created by humans. Protection of avenues and single trees can be a substantial element of sustainable development principle and holds great value for present and future generations.

Many monument trees are components of green areas of countryside parks, courtyards and residential grounds. In the previous centuries it was regarded as important that design projects of parks and gardens took consideration of previously existing woodlands and took care of old grown trees. There are examples for that such as Izabella Czartoryska's Park in Puławy. Elder trees in such cases form the monumental core of such parks and deserve special attention. Among such trees it is often possible to distinguish trees much older than the park design itself [Majdecki 1993].

Natural monuments besides their significance for science influence the landscape aesthetics by increasing its diversity and so increase its attractiveness for recreational and tourist activities. Preservation of old trees above all is about preserving the natural features permanently linked to the landscape [Kasprzak 2005]. Specimens of them can be often linked to certain events from history or to personalities important for national culture. Examples for that in Poland are "Kościuszko" oak near Maciejowice, "Napoleon" oak tree in the Przytok forest district area, pendunculate oak "Bażyński" in Kadyny, "Queen Bona's" pine from Kampinos, "King's Oaks" in Białowieża, "Princess Ann's Lime Tree" in Kliniska [Pietrzak 2011].

In above considerations it is necessary to emphasise the role of monument trees in cultural and natural environment. These objects hold qualities which in many aspects allow the use of them for nature education. Often they are connected with certain historical events or outstanding personalities of our national culture. Preservation of old trees is above all preservation of natural features permanently connected to the landscape of the country, which is the expression of culture. Monument trees occur often in areas with a presence of old grown individual trees or whole tree stands which are grown beyond the phase of most intensive height and girth increment or reached the felling age as it is understood in forest management regulations. Because of that they are valuable educational objects.

Discussing the importance of monument trees it is necessary to outline that besides natural conservation value they hold cultural significance. Often such trees are creation of both nature and culture. Conservation and protection of these specimens as nature monuments, similarly to keeping certain customs and traditions is a necessity because being unrecognised it may become forgotten and obliterated which impoverishes the heritage of local communities and even the whole nations [Michałowski 1991].

It is considered that existence of old grown trees together with preserving of their natural surrounding can be a valuable resource allowing comparison of phenomena occurring in identical natural conditions but under varying level of human pressure. Groups of old grown trees often are the last remains of natural

flora and vegetation. They allow tracing of natural dynamics in tree populations and hence the whole local vegetation as a substantial element of natural environment [Danielewicz i in. 1996].

## **PROTECTION OF TREES – NATURE MONUMENTS AS SUBJECT OF INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS**

One of documents which concern the considered subject is the World Heritage Convention of 1972, ratified in Poland and put into force on 29.09.1976. According to this document a cultural heritage can consist of monuments or groups of buildings as well as historical or archaeological sites and works of man or combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view. The aim of The Convention is international protection of precious object of culture (cultural heritage) and nature (natural heritage).

In the understanding of The Convention natural monuments fall within the scope of natural heritage protection and are subject to special ways of protection as: [UNESCO 1972]

- natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view
- geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

States - parties of The Convention are charged with duties of identification, protection, conservation and passing on the natural and cultural heritage to future generations. In line with this document the President of Republic of Poland upon request from the minister appropriate for culture and national heritage (after gaining the opinion from the Council For Protection of Monuments) may issue a presidential ordinance declaring certain already listed object or culture park of outstanding value to culture a “historical monument” together with defining its boundaries. Minister appropriate for culture and national heritage may put request to world Heritage Committee to enlist a historical monument to World Heritage List with aim to place it under protection of The Convention [Kasprzak 2005].

Natural Monument is one of six categories of protected areas which are distinguished by IUCN due to the way of their management and utilisation [UNESCO 1972]

According to IUCN natural monument is an area with one or more characteristic natural features and/or feature of cultural importance of exceptional or outstanding value.

Categories of protection set by IUCN do not always match with definitions of areas adopted in Poland (Table 1). For example according to IUCN criteria 15 of Poland's national parks fall into IUCN category of that name (category II), as remaining ones are classified to category V as areas of protected landscape. Category III was proposed for protection of many places of religious worship (e.g. natural places referring to old legend of sacred groves). The naturalness aspect is considered in all categories of protection by IUCN (Table 1).

**Tab. 1.** IUCN Protected Areas Categories System

Category	Category name	Characteristics
Ia	Strict Nature Reserve	Strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphic features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.
Ib	Wilderness Area	Large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition
II	National Park	Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible, spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and visitor opportunities
III	Nature Monument	Areas set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, sub - marine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small protected areas and often have high visitor value.
IV	Habitat /Species Management Area	Areas aim to protect particular species or habitats and management reflects this priority. Many Category IV protected areas will need regular, active interventions to address the requirements of particular species or to maintain habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.
V	Protected Landscape/Seascape	A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant, ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources:	Areas which conserve ecosystems and habitats together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area

Source: IUCN 2017.

It is worth emphasising that nature monuments can be a trigger for protection and create opportunity for nature education in areas and places lacking other forms of protection resulting from human pressure and the importance of cultural features.

According to above classification „**nature monument**” is a protected area set aside mainly to protect unique natural features. The aims for establishment of this form of protection are above all:

- ✓ preservation and protection of continuity of natural features for their importance and uniqueness;
- ✓ elimination and prevention of threats to the given area and the objectives for which the area is under protection;
- ✓ protection of outstanding natural values together with cultural values and protection of biological diversity;
- ✓ creating conditions which enable conduction of scientific research, education, interpretation and public evaluation.

Area which constitutes a natural monument should be large enough to ensure protection of integrity of features with their direct surrounding and one or more features of unique importance e.g. waterfalls, caves, fossils with connected to them unique or representative vegetation and wildlife as well as cultural features like caves, archaeological sites and natural features being part of local cultural heritage. Attributes of 3<sup>rd</sup> category of protection cover the protection biodiversity of cultural values in places forming natural or semi-natural habitats with priorities for nature protection stated in their management plans.

Currently in the world the natural monuments are mainly trees exceptional for their age or appearance but most commonly dimensional criteria are used to determine the status.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Research consisted of review and analysis of available data concerning the protection of trees – natural monuments in selected European countries. The analysis was focused on legal acts concerning nature protection and publicly available lists and inventories of protected trees. Additionally there was a research done into data about protection of natural monuments gathered by nature, ecological and forest NGOs, who deal with this issues in given country.

### **PROTECTION OF TREES – NATURAL MONUMENTS IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

The problem of protection of ancient trees being natural monuments is in many countries considered in legal regulations for environment and nature protection and in some of them it is also oriented towards certain social activities. Below we show the outline of measures for protection of old grown trees in selected European countries.

In France there are 2648 objects classified as natural monuments of total area of 846000ha and additional 4793 objects listed with total area of 1680 ha [[www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr)].

Among them it is possible to distinguish:

- 253 individual trees and groups of at least three trees,
- 92 individual rocks,
- 85 features of non-living nature (caves, gorges, rock stacks etc),
- 16 woodlands

Natural monuments are objects protection of which from artistic, historic, scientific, legendary or aesthetic aspect is a public good. They are also individual natural features worth attention such as rocks, waterfalls, individual trees or their groups.

Natural monuments are established by the minister of environment with a decree or ordinance. Plans and projects for conservation for given objects are prepared by regional directorates for environmental issues and later consulted by departmental commissions (local government). Decisions to classify a specimen as natural monument are made by decree or ordinance of minister for environment after earlier local investigation (administration procedure, community consultations, and consultations with departmental commission) [[www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr)].

Proposals to declare a tree a natural monument can be put forward by ministry for environment, departmental commission for nature and landscape as well as by individual person, organisation or any other authority. Criteria for recognition of a tree as natural monument are: age, dimensions, crown form and stem form, species rarity in the country, botanical curiosity, and connection with legend or historical event. Such specimens are both cultural and natural heritage and deserve respect and protection.

In France there is an organisation ARBRES, which conducts searches for and classifies “unusual trees” and “trees deserving attention”. Such trees are labelled as „*Arbe remarquable de France*” [[www.arbres.org](http://www.arbres.org)]. Criteria used by this organisation to distinguish candidates for protection are age and dimensions of a tree, unusual form, exceptional natural features, species nativity, and presence as individual or a group or avenue.

In Sweden this form of protection was introduced in 1909. Many currently existing natural monuments had been established before the nature conservation act was approved in 1964.

In 2003 the number of all natural monuments in Sweden amounted for 1433 ([www.swedishepa.se](http://www.swedishepa.se)). The most common natural monuments in this country are grand oak trees. Interesting specimens could be found among others in Gamla Södertäljevägen in Segeltorp (Huddinge municipality), along Gamla Göta Landsvägwi Alby road and along Köping-Kolsva road, (new built road layout was adjusted to preserve old grown oak trees). The best known natural monument

of Sweden is Norra Kvill oak tree in Småland with perimeter of 13 m, and age estimated for 1000 years [www.swedishepa.se].

Information about natural monuments is gathered and kept by regional county offices. Also small areas where interesting natural phenomena are present can be declared natural monuments. In case of natural monument decision about what feature is under protection is made by local county office [www.swedishepa.se].

Recently there is a new internet website „Trädportalen” which presents inter alia grand oak trees, ash trees and other tree species of unique values to cultural landscape. Every citizen may propose a tree for legal protection. Equally interesting form for popularising trees exceptional for their natural features is Tree Portal (Länk till Trädportalen) established by ArtDatabanken and National Nature Protection Agency [www.tradportalen.se] as a national internet tool to notify and inform about trees which have natural, cultural and aesthetical values. It is considered essential that society interested in the subject would gain the knowledge about location of valuable trees and could monitor what happens to them. At the moment all interested may collaborate on this task. The Tree Portal has the purpose to increase sensitivity to protection of precious tree specimens of various species and allow appraisal of the current status of trees. The work with The Portal is important part of the programme for conservation of trees. The actions for trees requiring special protection is a result of collaboration between Nation Nature Protection Agency, ArtDatabanken and Swedish county offices. The Portal may be in future an important part for monitoring of natural environment [www.naturvardsverket.se].

In Slovakia the natural monument is one of seven categories of protected areas with possibility to establish national natural monuments (*narodna prirodna pamiatka*).

A natural monument can consist of a spot, linear or other small area ecosystem or its components of area up to 50 hectares which have scientific, cultural, ecological, and aesthetic or landscape forming importance. A unique natural monument which forms a part of the most significant natural heritage of the country can be declared national natural monument by the ministry for environment.

Slovakian law introduced graduated scale for regimes of nature protection, from grade one to five with increasing detailed scope of prohibitions and requirements concerning sites of nature conservation.

Natural monuments (of national and regional status) are given fourth or fifth grade of protection. In the fifth grade of protection, besides other prohibitions it is forbidden to: damage soil cover, build forestry roads, build ski tracks or sport facilities, change the water balance [www.wolf.sk]. The law allows setting a protective buffer zone around the object. Such zone is established with the same procedure as the protected area, has usually protection regime one grade lower than the core protected area itself. If there is no specially defined buffer zone, for natural monuments the law defines it as default 60 meters of radius from the boundaries of protected area [Radecki, 2010].

Slovakian law as well as the Czech one considers possibility for establishing private protected areas. According to law a proposal for private natural monument or reserve can be put forward to authorities on the basis of a detailed protection project (the same rules apply to nature reserves). If there is a need to define protective buffer zone the local environmental office can establish such zone on the same basis as for other protected areas. Condition is that all area of proposed buffer zone is within applicant's ownership or otherwise all owners of the land within this zone give a consent to establish it. If all conditions are met, the authority formally establishes protected area, assigns appropriate grade of protection regime and defines details of the protection. Marking the protected area on the ground is the duty of the owner [Radecki, 2010].

Protection of trees is also enforced through so called “care programmes”. There is possibility to prepare special programmes for protection in case of critical endangerment of natural monuments and establishing protected areas, nature reserves, and private protected areas. On the territory of Republic of Slovakia in 2014 there were 239 natural monuments and 60 national natural monuments.

In Czech Republic natural monument is one of six categories of areas under special protection (*zvolašte chráněných uzemi*). There are natural monuments of nationwide or sometimes supranational importance (*narodni přírodní památky*) and ones of regional importance (*přírodní památky*). In 2009 in Czech Republic there was 106 natural monuments of national importance (0.04% of country area) and 1199 regional natural monuments (0.025% of country area). Nature conservation authority may declare national natural monument a natural feature – geological formation, site of precious minerals or valuable or threatened species present in fragments of ecosystems of national or international ecological, scientific, aesthetical significance and features created besides natural processes by human activities [Radecki, 2010].

Prohibitions related to natural monuments consider changing or causing damage to them as well as any usage which can threat with damage of these features.

In Czech Republic groups of trees and avenues can be protected only as *pamatne stromy* (they cannot be declared natural monuments) or as *chránene stromy* in Slovakia, however in both countries this form of protection falls into special protection category [Radecki, 2010].

In Latvia natural monuments can be both living and non lining features of nature and are one of eight forms of nature protection in the country. Natural features considered as monuments can be: rock formations, trees (old trees, exotic trees), dendrology gardens, avenues, glacial boulders, rocks, springs, caves, waterfalls which posses cultural, historical, ecological or aesthetical value. In 2014 in Latvia there was 206 geological natural monuments, 89 dendrology gardens and 60 avenues [www.ypef.eu].

Dimensions which are condition taking trees under protection as natural monument are set in the regulation. Minimum required dimensions (perimeter in centimetres and height in metres) depend on the species of the tree. For example



for pendunculate oak the minimum perimeter at breast-height (1.3 m) is 500 cm and height 32 m, for small leaved lime they are 400 cm and 33 m, for Norway maple – 350 cm and 27 m, for Norway spruce 300 cm and 37 m. There are publicly available registers and maps showing trees under this form of protection [[www.dabasretumi.lv](http://www.dabasretumi.lv)].

Dimensional requirements for trees – natural monuments in this country were elaborated on the basis of data from tree inventory questionnaires. Data storage and processing, field inventories and development of the methodology for that has contributed to improved knowledge of natural heritage. There are many educational events and workshops which popularise the knowledge about Latvian natural monuments.

Natural monuments in Russia are the most popular form of nature protection on regional level. According to Russian Environmental Protection Law of 10.01.2002 special protection is given to objects enlisted on the World Heritage List, both cultural and natural, nature reserves including biosphere reserves, national parks, natural monuments, dendrological and botanical gardens, spas and health resorts and other natural complexes [[www.base.garant.ru](http://www.base.garant.ru)]. The document which regulates natural monuments is the Law of Natural Areas Under Special Protection of 14.03.1995. The main aim for establishment of natural monuments is the care to preserve their natural conditions.

Natural monuments can be either areas or individual natural features. Natural monuments as unique objects should represent outstanding natural, scientific and cultural value. They can be natural complexes and features of both living and non living nature.

The scope of features of both living and non living nature is wide. Natural monuments in Russia can consist of habitats of rare and threatened animal or plant species, unique land forms (gorges, canyons, caves, cirques, dunes etc) geological outcrop of unusual scientific value, areas with exceptional evidence of seismic activities, rare or exceptionally valuable fossil beds, natural thermal or mineral springs, volcanoes, glaciers, boulders, waterfalls, river sources, rocks, caves and trees of historical importance [[www.biodiversity.ru](http://www.biodiversity.ru)].

These objects can be of either regional or federal importance. Procedure to define the area occupied by natural monument as area under special protection is as follows (Art. 26):

- Natural objects and their complexes can be designated natural monuments of federal importance and area where they are present considered as areas of federal importance under special protection of Government of Russian Federation upon request from authorities of subjects of Russian Federation.
- Natural objects can be designated as natural monuments of local importance and areas where they are present – areas of regional importance by appropriate authorities of subjects of Russian Federation

Government authorities of Russian Federation approve boundaries and determine procedures of special protection of monument area. The law also allows confiscation of private grounds for the purpose of establishing a natural monument.

In areas with natural monuments and within buffer zone boundaries it is prohibited to conduct any activity violating the protection of monument. Owners and holders of the land with natural monuments bare responsibility to secure the special protection conditions. All expenses of above owners made to secure and protect legally established natural monuments are reimbursed from federal budget or other funds [www.skitalets.ru].

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In many countries there are detailed legal regulations to protect trees - monument of nature.
2. The matter of protection of exceptional specimen trees and ones with natural and cultural value is considered in various nature conservation activities.
3. There is an important role of social engagement in the process of identification, designation, inventory and care of the trees. There are publicly accessible inventory websites with lists of designated and prospective natural monuments which allow proposing certain specimens for legal protection. Participation between society and nature protection authorities has been found an essential element in all activities aiming in protection of trees - monument of nature.
4. It was found that dissemination of information about natural monument trees in mass information media is an important issue which draws social attention to protection of old trees and recognition of their unique value.

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## STRESZCZENIE

W pracy podjęto analizę na temat znaczenia drzew pomników przyrody w wybranych krajach europejskich. Przeanalizowano ich znaczenie dla środowiska i społeczeństwa oraz rozwiązania prawne i inne aspekty związane z ich ochroną. W wielu krajach wyróżniają się okazy są chronione jako pomniki przyrody. Ustanawiane są z reguły przez ministra właściwego ds. środowiska. Podkreśla się szczególny udział społeczeństwa w wyszukiwaniu i klasyfikowaniu pomników przyrody drzew. Ochrona drzew w wielu przypadkach wypełniana jest tzw. programami troski o chronione obszary i chronione drzewa oraz ich strefy ochronne oraz programy ochronne, które sporządza się w przypadku krytycznego zagrożenia pomników przyrody a także chronionych arealów, rezerwatów przyrody, chronionych obszarów prywatnych, chronionych obszarów ptasich i chronionych drzew, wraz z ich strefami ochronnymi, chronionych gatunków roślin i zwierząt oraz stref i części obszarów chronionego krajobrazu. Fundamentalną kwestią jest upowszechnianie informacji o drzewach będących pomnikami przyrody w środkach informacji masowej, zwracając w ten sposób uwagę społeczeństwa na ochronę drzew sędziwych i wyjątkowych oraz podkreślenie ich unikatowej wartości. Istnieją ogólnodostępne portale przedstawiające bogactwo pomników przyrody oraz umożliwiające zaproponowanie danego okazu do ochrony. Niezbędnym w działaniach na rzecz drzew pomników przyrody jest udział państwowych instytucji związanych z ochroną przyrody oraz społeczeństwa.

## SUMMARY

The study was an analysis of the functions and protection of trees, monuments of nature, in selected European countries. We analyzed their role to the environment and society as well as the legal regulations and other aspects related to their protection. Trees - monuments of nature are also specimens that can ensure the protection of natural elements and enable documentation of biodiversity. Due to the long life of trees, they are also specimens, which retain elements of evidence of the past times, the ways of how the landscape was being formed (wayside avenues), history - widely understood monuments. In many countries, the distinguished specimens are protected as monuments of nature. They are usually designated by the Minister responsible for the environment. The specific public participation in finding and classifying natural monuments of trees is emphasized. There are websites (databases) that document the outstanding age and size of specimens of various species of trees (including France, Great Britain, Latvia, and Lithuania). Tree protection, in many cases, is fulfilled by "care programs" for protected areas and trees and their protection buffer zones, conservation programs which are prepared in the event of a critical threat to natural monuments and areas covered by them as well as nature reserves, private protected areas, bird species protection areas and protected trees, including their protection buffer zones, protected plant and animal species and zones and elements of protected landscape areas. The fundamental issue is the dissemination of information about trees that are monuments of nature by means of mass information which attracts public attention to the protection of the venerable trees and their unique values. There are publicly available websites which depict the wealth of natural monuments, and allow the public possibility of proposing a specimen for protection. Collaboration between state institutions related to the protection of nature and society are indispensable in efforts to protect trees designated as natural monuments.