

## EUROPEAN MUNICIPAL WOODLAND\* CHARTER

### I THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN FORESTRY POLICY FOR MUNICIPALITIES

**Article 1** - Municipal woodland must be managed sustainably and in the public interest.

**Article 2** - The aims of "sustainable management" are to preserve and improve woodland. The improvement aspect must take account of the economic, ecological and amenity functions of woodland.

**Article 3** - The objectives of municipal forestry policy are to expand the area of woodland, to improve stands, to increase forest production and to develop industrial timber processing, thereby making the Community less dependent on non-member countries.

**Article 4** - Forestry and the use and processing of wood are a way of combating the exodus from rural areas by the jobs which they secure or create locally. Conversely, the preservation of rural jobs is beneficial to woodland because it allows woodland to be managed and ensures balance and sustainability.

**Article 5** - Managed woodland makes a permanent contribution to preserving the natural environment, maintaining habitats and providing recreational opportunities for people. The future of woodland management can be jeopardised because it is insufficiently profitable:

- because of unfavourable results in the timber trade, which is dependent on the world market,
- because long-term ecological and economic improvements are initially unprofitable,
- because particular public-interest demands (especially in terms of nature protection and amenity functions) translate into higher costs or losses of revenue, or
- because disasters cause long-term falls in earnings.

In such cases, the region or State must, in the interests of solidarity, provide the affected municipal woodland owners with financial assistance to enable them to continue managing the woodland and producing the associated benefits.

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\* MUNICIPAL WOODLAND INCLUDES WOODLAND OF MUNICIPALITIES, ASSOCIATIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

**Article 6** - The variable state of municipal woodland and the need to maintain, improve and extend such woodland requires direct support from a specialised administrative unit providing technical and economic assistance, where such action is not already being taken.

## II PROTECTION OF WOODLAND

**Article 7** - Even though, overall, the area covered by woodland in the Community is increasing, in some places it is seriously threatened and therefore needs particular protection. It is threatened in particular by:

- human settlement and the accompanying infrastructure,
- forest fires,
- damage from air pollution,
- excessive game populations.

**Article 8** - The steep rise in human settlement over the past decade, the resulting demand for building plots and the construction of new infrastructure, especially transport infrastructure, have put pressures on urban woodland which have been exacerbated by the fact that the resulting damage regularly affects areas beyond those directly used. Insofar as they are involved with these issues, the people responsible for municipal woodland should apply all protective measures in their contributions to statements on development planning. If woodland is nonetheless used for construction and infrastructure, compensatory measures should be imposed on those who benefit from deforestation.

**Article 9** - In the Mediterranean area, woodland is particularly important for the ecological balance, and in particular for protecting against soil erosion, for its moderating effect on the climate and for the habitats it provides for a wide variety of fauna. This woodland is very susceptible to forest fires, which are often linked to public access, and which destroy or considerably reduce substantial areas of woodland. The Mediterranean woodland can be protected only as part of comprehensive programmes, whose funding is beyond the means of the municipalities concerned, particularly since the income from Mediterranean woodland areas is very low, and sometimes non-existent. It is essential that public assistance - especially the assistance provided by the EC, such as the Mediterranean Programme - is not just maintained, but also further developed: special measures which make it possible for municipalities which possess woodland to protect and maintain the Mediterranean forests must be devised and introduced.

**Article 10** - The Mediterranean maquis must be managed with the objective of turning it back into genuine forest. Before this goal is reached, the urgent priority must be to protect it from all damage, in particular from fire and settlement.

**Article 11** - Municipalities which own woodland attach supreme importance to continued international monitoring of the damage caused by air pollution and to further research in order to reduce this damage. The people responsible for municipal woodland will use the opportunities they have to take all appropriate measures to reduce air pollution.



**Article 12** - The main way of reducing the damage caused by hoofed game, which devalue the forest and prevent natural regeneration, is to reduce the excess population of such animals. Management plans for clear selective regulation, which take account of the excessive game population, must be implemented in the woodland in question until the local game population reaches a level which is acceptable to the owner municipality.

**Article 13** - The protection of forestry resources is the prerequisite for woodland management. The only way for municipalities to fulfil this task is by developing an effective and permanent forestry monitoring and surveillance service which has the necessary expertise and uses the appropriate equipment.

### III WOODLAND MANAGEMENT AND AFFORESTATION

**Article 14** - Apart from in special circumstances (barrier woodland, total protection zones, etc.) or in the event of local unsuitability, the general objective of silviculture in municipal woodland must be to produce value added in forestry terms, albeit without prejudice to the other functions of the woodland.

**Article 15** - Municipalities which own woodland are expected to take an active part in efforts to use the areas released from agriculture by taking over their ownership and afforesting them with the aid of public funding or supporting their afforestation by means of planning. As the setting-aside of land is linked to the common agricultural policy and its afforestation is in the public interest as part of land-use planning and environmental protection, these measures must be supported by assistance from the European Community.

In areas which are already heavily wooded, municipalities which own woodland will endeavour to bear the countryside (amenity) aspect in mind by avoiding excessive afforestation or by taking appropriate measures to reduce it.

**Article 16** - Now that some regions of Europe have succeeded in reversing the exploitative felling of past centuries by planned management, it is often necessary for local and ecological reasons to meet particular demands for the future generation of woodland in terms of the choice of species and the type of management, which will often mean making economic sacrifices.

### IV INCREASING THE VALUE OF WOOD PRODUCTION

**Article 17** - As woodland management depends on earnings, it is extremely important to guarantee a wide variety of sales opportunities and uses for wood and other forest products, especially in view of the ecological characteristics of wood: the burning of wood does not add to the greenhouse effect, its use as a raw material increases carbon reserves and therefore helps to reduce the greenhouse effect and to save water and energy.

Municipal officials and office-holders have the priority task of using their powers to encourage the use of wood for construction, furniture and energy production, especially for heating.

**Article 18** - The establishment of wood-processing businesses in the vicinity of woodland areas makes it possible to reduce transport costs and to create jobs in local municipalities, the latter being a way of maintaining the rural population. Municipalities which own woodland must endeavour to create favourable conditions for the establishment of such businesses.

## V SPREADING THE BURDEN OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Article 19** - The last few decades have seen major changes in the socio-economic position of forestry, which have led to a steady fall in income from woodland.

This unfavourable trend in income jeopardises the profitability of woodland management in various difficult situations, and therefore threatens its very continuation, with all the negative consequences that this entails for the general beneficial effects of woodland, both ecological and social.

In such cases, it is the responsibility of the national and local authorities and other local bodies to provide financial assistance to maintain woodland management.

Four groups of woodland are already in this situation:

- Mediterranean woodland, referred to above,
- certain montane woodland (on very steep terrain at high altitudes) or areas at a disadvantage because the costs of harvesting and transporting the wood exceed the possible sales revenue,
- woodland in which excess strain from visitors results in high protection costs,
- woodland whose long-term profitability is considerably reduced by disasters.

## VI PUBLIC FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Article 20** - As the improvement of woodland and its use are matters of public interest for reasons of the national economy and of environmental protection, owners should receive public assistance.

**Article 21** - Public assistance can also be provided in order to maintain woodland management where this can no longer be done by forestry revenue.

**Article 22** - Municipalities and other local bodies take the view that the European Community must provide financial assistance for their woodland over and above the assistance provided by the Member States, in order to ensure that it can be preserved and continue to be managed in the following cases:



- montane woodland because of the major function of protecting the environment and human activities, especially agriculture in the valleys, insofar as the revenue from woodland management is no longer sufficient;
- Mediterranean woodland because of the ecological, scenic and amenity functions, insofar as external pressures prevent a balance between revenue and costs from being guaranteed.

European Community assistance must continue to facilitate and promote the purchase and afforestation of unused agricultural land by municipalities and other local bodies.

**Article 23** - The establishment of forestry funds financed by compulsory contributions levied on forestry production are an effective way of increasing the value of woodland, extending the wooded area and promoting the use of wood. The municipalities emphasise that they are in agreement with such (self-help) funds, whose continued existence should not be jeopardised and whose extension should be encouraged.

## VII PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INFORMATION

**Article 24** - The public's general ignorance on questions of forestry or, worse, their unquestioning acceptance of extreme views can cause conflict and result in harmful measures. That is why it is important to communicate clearly and effectively with the public.

**Article 25** - In addition to this public relations work, it is necessary to ensure over the long term that the study of woodland and environmental protection is incorporated into the curricula of primary and secondary schools.

**Article 26** - At European Community and international level, the FECOF must establish links with forestry organisations in the public and private sector. It should acquire membership of the advisory committee on Community forestry policy and of all Community committees on forests and environmental protection.

**Article 27** - The initial and further training of those who work in forests and woodland must be constantly adapted to reflect the multi-functional nature of woodland management. The officials and office-holders of municipalities, whether or not they own woodland, are increasingly having to take an interest in woodland as an important element of environmental protection and land-use planning. These supplementary tasks require abilities which must be promoted by conducting special information and further-training measures.

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