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Том III



5-7 ноември 2026 г.

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REMARKABLE, VETERAN AND MONUMENTAL TREES AS HERITAGE: RECOGNITION AND THE GOVERNANCE OF CARE IN SELECTED EUROPEAN JURISDICTIONS

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Abstract: *How does recognising old trees as heritage lead to care? A documentary comparison of six European jurisdictions connects legal protection with biocultural and more-than-human values. It shows why designation must be accompanied by accountable care, proportionate risk management and continuity across tree generations.*

Keywords: *veteran trees; biocultural heritage; more-than-human heritage; conservation governance; public value*

JEL: Q57; Q58; Z18

1. Introduction

An old tree can be protected as a habitat, remembered as a landmark and maintained as part of a working landscape. These descriptions overlap, but they do not identify the same values or require the same decisions. Cavities and decaying wood may sustain habitat features, while a name, association or inherited practice connects the tree to human histories. Biological properties help determine what can persist and what care will involve. Research on tree-related microhabitats and biological cultural heritage examines this interdependence (Eriksson, 2018; Larrieu et al., 2018). Several of the protection regimes considered here already combine ecological, historical, aesthetic and landscape criteria. The institutional question is how recognition leads to continuing responsibilities when a protected tree grows, loses branches, develops cavities or dies. Legal designation, an inventory entry and a programme of care are different achievements. Their relationship needs to be examined rather than assumed.

Arboreal habitats have been examined as a challenge for heritage presservation, extending attention beyond exclusively human beneficiaries (Roudavski & Rutten, 2020). Decay and transformation have also become central to debates about conservation (DeSilvey, 2017). The study draws on this work to compare how selected European jurisdictions recognise significant trees and organise care, including where they leave care arrangements unresolved. How do selected European protection regimes recognise significant old and veteran trees, and what does a biocultural and more-than-human perspective reveal about the relationship between that recognition and long-term care? The comparison addresses three subsidiary questions: which qualities make a tree eligible for protection; how are

responsibilities for identification, intervention and support distributed; and what can the available documents establish about implementation? Slovakia, Poland, Germany, Italy, Romania and England provide contrasting, deliberately bounded cases.

Recognition is most useful when connected to the conditions that allow a tree and its relationships to persist. Those conditions require explicit responsibilities for care, with protection and intervention suited to the tree and its setting. Legal controls remain necessary; non-intervention is one option, not a general preference. Public value, ownership and participation are examined through institutional design and the distribution of responsibility. The study does not measure their economic effects. The comparison supports a proposed framework for examining care, rather than a ranking of countries by conservation success.

The study uses comparative documentary analysis supported by an interdisciplinary literature review. The unit of analysis is the arrangement connecting tree recognition to decisions about care. The study neither samples individual trees nor measures national tree populations or conservation performance. The six cases were selected to examine variation among individual natural-monument designations, specialised monumental-tree legislation, catalogue-based arrangements, forest-biodiversity provisions and development-planning policy. These categories overlap within jurisdictions. The comparison concentrates on the instruments most directly relevant to the research question, while recognising that England has protections beyond planning policy and Romania beyond its remarkable-tree law. England is treated as the relevant jurisdiction, not as a synonym for the United Kingdom. The selection is illustrative rather than statistically or geographically representative of Europe. Additional published studies provide external evidence; they are not further legal cases.

2. From tree categories to living biocultural heritage

2.1. Age, habitat features and designation

Ancient and veteran are not interchangeable descriptions. An ancient tree is exceptionally old in relation to its species and commonly displays age-related habitat features. A veteran tree need not be exceptionally old: significant decay and associated features can develop earlier. Neither term should be reduced to a universal age or circumference threshold applicable across species and growing conditions. For planning purposes in England, ancient and veteran trees are treated as irreplaceable habitats (Natural England & Forestry Commission, 2022). The term habitat tree emphasises ecological features. Tree-related microhabitats include structures and substrates relevant to organisms using living trees or standing dead trees. They can be recorded using a hierarchical typology developed for temperate and Mediterranean European forests (Larrieu et al., 2018). A habitat-feature inventory records different information from a register of culturally distinguished trees. A cavity is a potential habitat feature; recording it does not document every species present or establish a cultural association. A

commemorative tree may be socially important without having the features used to identify a veteran tree. Remarkable, monumental and protected tree refer to legal categories or processes of recognition in the instruments examined below. They are not universal biological classes. The terminology also varies by jurisdiction. In Germany, *Naturdenkmal*, and in Poland, *pomnik przyrody*, can encompass natural features other than trees. In Slovakia, *chránený strom* is the relevant legal designation, while Italy uses *albero monumentale* within a distinct legal framework. Translating every category as ancient tree would erase differrences in eligibility, authority and protection. Old trees is used as a broad description, with precise ecological and legal terms retained wherever the distinction affects the argument.

2.2. Biocultural relationships, memory and value

Biocultural approaches investigate relationships among biological diversity, cultural diversity and the practices through which people inhabit environments (Maffi, 2005). Here, the term concerns historically situated relationships: how land use affects tree form and survival, how trees enter local knowledge and memory, and how inherited responsibilities shape present decisions. It does not presume a demonstrable co-evolutionary process for every culturally valued tree. Eriksson's (2018) concept of biological cultural heritage is narrower, identifying biological traces of past human activities in Swedish landscapes. It describes one aspect of the broader biocultural perspective. Historical management is particularly relevant where trees formed part of agricultural production. In Transylvanian social–ecological systems, tree hay and associated knowledge show the connections between livelihoods and tree preservation (Hartel, Craioveanu, & Réti, 2016). However, reintroducing a particular cutting practice cannot be assumed to benefit every surviving veteran tree. Decisions about a tree's future should consider its history, condition and setting alongside its measurements.

Research on memorial trees in Christchurch explores the relationship between treescapes and changing memories (Cloke & Pawson, 2008). Although it provides no evidence about European institutions, it shows how trees can be part of different, sometimes unsettled accounts of place. A designation based on a historical association should distinguish the documented association, the tradition through which it is remembered and any claims whose accuracy remains uncertain **(fig. 01)**. Recording a legend as a valued local narrative does not require presenting it as a verified event. Public value refers here to reasons for sustaining trees that extend beyond the private return to a landowner. Those reasons can include ecological relationships, shared histories, access to meaningful places and responsibilities to later generations. Relational values are distinguished from a simple opposition between nature's usefulness and its intrinsic worth (Chan et al., 2016). Attachments and duties cannot automatically be converted into monetary preferences. A heritage claim also requires an account of who benefits, who bears costs and how competing claims are considered.



Fig. 01. Teiul lui Eminescu, Copou Park, Iaşi, Romania. A silver lime associated with the memory of the poet Mihai Eminescu.
Photo: Constantin Adrian Popa | Dreamstime.com.

2.3. More-than-human heritage and the temporal work of care

A more-than-human perspective asks which lives and relationships a conservation decision enables, alongside what a tree means to people. Arboreal habitats provide a useful context for examining this question within heritage studies (Roudavski & Rutten, 2020). The analysis asks whether decisions consider associated organisms, ecological processes and the material conditions of persistence. In this comparison, the approach is analytical rather than statutory and implies neither human intentions in trees nor legal personality under the systems examined. Care in more-than-human worlds can be understood as a material and political relationship (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Applied to tree governance, this raises questions about who provides care, how responsibility is distributed and how care can be sustained over time.

Retaining an unchanged silhouette, sustaining habitat continuity and extending a tree's viable life are different conservation objectives. Scholarship on curated decay challenges preservation as the indefinite stabilisation of material form (DeSilvey, 2017). For tree governance, this raises questions about whether protective rules accommodate changing form, whether reasons for intervention are recorded, and whether successors and surrounding habitats are considered in the decision. Accommodating change does not require accepting deterioration in

every circumstance **(fig. 02)**. Living biocultural heritage is used here in a biological and relational sense. UNESCO's framework for intangible cultural heritage concerns community-recognised practices, expressions, knowledge and skills and their associated cultural contexts (UNESCO, 2003, Art. 2). Knowledge about trees and practices involving them may fall within that framework. However, the fact that a tree is alive does not by itself establish its status under the Convention.



Fig. 02. Femeiche, Erle, Raesfeld, Germany. A pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) with wooden supports stabilising the remaining trunk and crown.
Photo: Reinhard G. Nießing | Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 4.0.

3. Supranational frameworks

The EU instruments relevant to this study operate primarily through habitats, species and ecosystem restoration, without a common heritage designation for individual old trees. Protection extends beyond Natura 2000 sites. The European Commission's account of the Habitats Directive explains that strict protection for relevant species applies inside and outside protected areas, including protection of breeding sites and resting places (European Commission, 1992). Its account of the Birds Directive identifies general prohibitions concerning wild birds and their nests across national territories (European Commission, 1979). A tree may therefore have legal protection through its ecological relationships without an individual monumental designation.

Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 on nature restoration includes requirements for forest structure. Article 12 requires an increasing trend in the common forest bird index and, separately, increasing trends in at least six of seven specified indicators. These are standing and lying deadwood, uneven-aged forest structure, forest connectivity, organic carbon stocks, the share of forests dominated by native tree species and tree species diversity (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2024, Arts. 12, 16). Member States are not required to improve all seven indicators. The status of national restoration plans in individual countries falls outside the scope of this review.

These obligations can support conditions relevant to old trees, but national forest indicators alone cannot establish how a particular tree has been cared for. An improvement cannot establish that a culturally significant tree has been retained, that a privately owned veteran has received care, or that a local habitat gap has been avoided. Preserving a celebrated specimen likewise does not demonstrate recovery of forest structure. Aggregate restoration and individual-tree protection require evidence at their respective scales. The European Landscape Convention understands landscape through perception and the interaction of natural and human factors. It encompasses ordinary and degraded landscapes as well as those considered outstanding, and calls for participation in landscape policies (Council of Europe, 2000, Arts. 1–2, 5). Its scope includes trees in working and everyday settings. As a Council of Europe treaty rather than EU legislation, it does not establish a uniform individual-tree protection regime across Europe.

The Faro Convention defines heritage communities as people who value aspects of heritage and wish to sustain and transmit them through public action. Submitting a tree record does not in itself confer community decision-making powers, and Article 6(c) rules out construing its provisions as creating enforceable rights (Council of Europe, 2005, Arts. 2, 6, 12). Faro provides a normative reference for shared responsibility here; treaty participation and domestic legal effects are not assumed to be identical across the six cases. A more-than-human interpretation may broaden the ethical scope beyond people, but it does not alter the Convention's legal definition.

4. Comparative findings from six jurisdictions

4.1. Slovakia

The Slovak category *chránené stromy* is established under Act No. 543/2002 on nature and landscape protection. Section 49 allows exceptionally significant trees, groups and avenues to be designated on cultural, scientific, ecological, landscape or aesthetic grounds. Eligibility thus extends beyond age. The relevant district office in the regional seat makes the designation by decree. Felling and the method of care require the nature-protection authority's consent, and the law provides for a protective zone (Slovak Republic, 2002, § 49, consolidated version effective 1 January 2026). Where a protective zone has not

been individually declared, the default extends to the ground projection of the crown plus 1.5 metres and must have a radius of at least 10 metres. This legal rule is specific to Slovakia; it should not be applied elsewhere as a biological formula. The legislation also recognises care programmes for protected trees and their protective zones. Financial compensation associated with authorised tree removal can contribute to approved programmes of protected-tree care. The provisions establish protective space and a potential funding route, but provide no evidence of the amounts owners or programmes receive (Slovak Republic, 2002, §§ 48–49, 54) **(fig. 03)**.



Fig. 03. Lipa kráľa Mateja, Bojnice, Slovakia. King Matthias's lime, a centuries-old tree whose conservation treatment in 1952–1953 is documented by SNM–Museum Bojnice.
Photo: Lucia Nováková.

4.2. Poland and Germany

Poland's *pomniki przyrody* include individual natural features and their groupings distinguished by natural, scientific, cultural, historical or landscape values. Article 40 of the Nature Conservation Act includes exceptionally significant trees and shrubs within this broader category; Article 44 provides for establishment through a municipal council resolution. Cultural and ecological values are already part of eligibility for this natural-monument designation (Republic of Poland, 2004, Arts. 40, 44, consolidated text Dz.U. 2026, item 13). Under Article 40(2), protected tree monuments in undeveloped areas remain

protected until their spontaneous, complete decomposition, provided that people or property are not endangered. Protection through decay is thus written into law, subject to location and safety conditions. The provision does not prohibit removal of dead protected trees in every setting, but allows protection to continue through biological change (Republic of Poland, 2004, Art. 40.2) **(fig. 04)**.



Fig. 04. Dąb Bartek, Zagnańsk, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Poland. After part of a limb broke in June 2025, the State Forests reported safeguarding measures and plans for further specialist work.
Photograph: Bernard Bialorucki | Dreamstime.com.

Germany's Bundesnaturschutzgesetz provides for *Naturdenkmäler* under Section 28. These are individually designated natural features, or areas up to five hectares, whose special protection is required for specified scientific, natural-historical or regional-study reasons, or because of rarity, particular character or beauty. Removal and actions capable of destroying, damaging or altering a designated monument are prohibited in accordance with the detailed provisions. The federal rule neither designates every old tree nor establishes a uniform care budget or national tree inventory. A particular tree's protection depends on its designation and implementing arrangements (Federal Republic of Germany, 2009, § 28).

4.3. Italy

Italy's *alberi monumentali* are recognised through Law No. 10/2013 and the implementing decree of 23 October 2014. The criteria encompass age and dimensions, form, ecological value, botanical rarity, plant architecture, landscape value and historical, cultural or religious associations **(fig. 05)**. They apply to individual trees and specified tree formations. Recognition involves municipal recording, regional procedures and a national list; citizens and other organisations can also submit proposals. These legal and administrative criteria define a different population from a census of biologically ancient trees (Italian Republic, 2013, Art. 7; 2014, Arts. 3, 5–7). Article 18 of Law No. 131/2025 amended this framework. The amendments address the tree protection zone, *zona di protezione dell'albero*, including protection of the root system and vitality; provide specified temporary safeguards while recognition is pending; and introduce procedures for overcoming administrative inaction. They also earmark relevant sanction revenues for care, safeguarding and promotion. The pending-recognition safeguards address the interval between identification and formal protection. Whether they have reduced delays or damaging interventions remains to be established (Italian Republic, 2025, Art. 18).

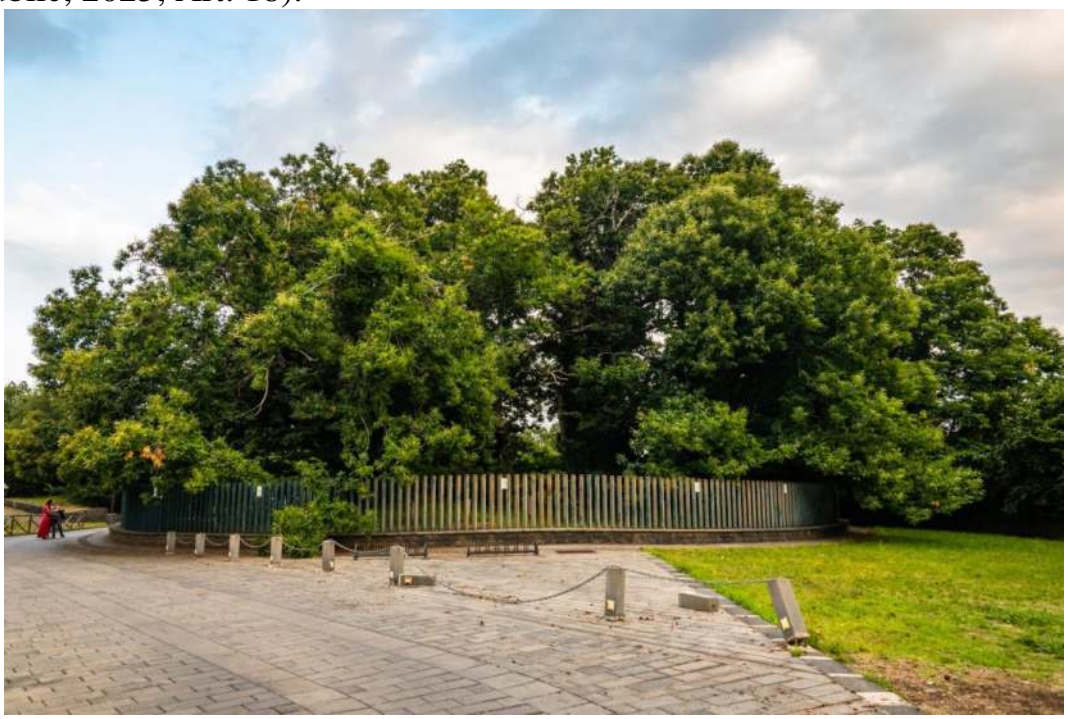


Fig. 05. Castagno dei Cento Cavalli, Sant'Alfio, Sicily, Italy. A monumental sweet chestnut on the slopes of Mount Etna, associated with a legend in which a mounted retinue sheltered beneath its canopy. Genetic analysis by CREA confirmed that samples from the three principal trunks belonged to the same individual. Photo: Maurizio Callari | Dreamstime.com.

The national list reports 5,008 entries representing 17,564 individual trees. Entries include tree formations as well as single specimens, so the two totals count different units. An increase in entries therefore cannot be read directly as a count

of newly protected individual trees. Neither total establishes national population coverage or ecological improvement (Ministero dell'agricoltura, della sovranità alimentare e delle foreste [MASAF], 2026). Italy's 2020 guidelines for the care and safeguarding of monumental trees provide professional guidance on intervention alongside the legal provisions for recognition (Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali, 2020). These instruments connect selection, records, spatial protection and care. Assessing how consistently they operate would require regional case files, expenditure records and monitoring of the trees themselves.

4.4. Romania

Romania's Law No. 97/2023 defines *arbori remarcabili* outside the national forest fund through alternative criteria: species-specific minimum circumference, a documented age of at least 160 years, or cultural–historical significance, including associations with a legend **(fig. 06)**. Article 2 excepts private properties within settlements from its statement of mandatory application, whereas Article 4 formulates restricted grounds for felling irrespective of ownership. Their application to particular ownership situations is not resolved in this review. The comparison records both without assuming universal protection or a universal private-property exemption (Romania, 2023, Arts. 1–4).



Fig. 06. The centuries-old oak of Cajvana, Suceava County, Romania. A monumental pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) associated with the historical and cultural identity of Cajvana.
Photo: Cristian-Mihail Miehs. | Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

The felling provisions identify limited grounds, including complete drying, natural uprooting and a safety danger that cannot otherwise be reduced, subject to

the conditions and assessment specified in the law. Article 5 requires prior evaluation and a favourable opinion from the competent territorial forest guard. Article 7 establishes inventory responsibilities, allows individuals to request the recording of previously unidentified trees with geographical coordinates, and provides for collaboration with academic and civil-society organisations. Individuals and organisations can contribute to identification through these procedures, without acquiring shared authority over permits or land management (Romania, 2023, Arts. 4–5, 7). Article 6 states that private owners are to be compensated, on request, for remarkable trees entered in the catalogue, with the methodology and amounts determined by implementing norms. Joint Order No. 1,048/644/175/2026 approves implementing norms and a compensation methodology and quantum (Romania, 2023, Art. 6; 2026).

Law No. 331 of 20 December 2024, published in January 2025 as the Forest Code, addresses the forest context through provisions on habitat trees, ageing islands and other biodiversity features. Article 86(2) recognises high conservation value in specified features, including remarkable trees inside and outside the national forest fund. This links individual-tree recognition with forest structure while leaving the scope restrictions of Law No. 97/2023 intact. Procedures cannot be assumed to be identical for all trees, and recognition alone provides no evidence of resource allocation or the retention of particular trees (Romania, 2024, Art. 86).

4.5. England

In England's August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework, Policy N6(2) states that development causing loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, should be refused unless wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exist. N6(2) replaces the relevant paragraph references in earlier versions. The policy applies to development decisions; it does not automatically give every ancient tree a statutory designation in every context (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG], 2026). The standing advice provides definitions and technical guidance on assessing impacts and protective space. It warns that inventories identify only a small proportion of ancient and veteran trees: absence from an inventory is not evidence of absence on a development site. A tree's habitat qualities therefore matter in planning decisions even where it is not already celebrated or named. Compensation cannot reproduce an irreplaceable habitat immediately, and the exceptional-reasons test should not be treated as a routine exchange of an old tree for new planting (Natural England & Forestry Commission, 2022; MHCLG, 2026).

5. Discussion

5.1. An inventory is not a monitoring programme

The jurisdictions recognise trees through mixed value criteria, ecological qualities and administrative procedures. A register can make a tree visible to authorities and publics, but its contents depend on eligibility criteria, survey effort and recording procedures. Official totals may count designations, records, groups or individual trees, as Italy's published figures illustrate. A longer list can reflect new observations or administrative revisions without establishing that more old trees survive. Nor does the lack of an entry establish that a tree lacks relevant ecological qualities (MASAF, 2026; Natural England & Forestry Commission, 2022). Stratified national monitoring of veteran oaks in Norway, based on initial surveys conducted in 2012–2016 and revisits in 2019, estimated approximately 138,100 veteran oaks, compared with roughly 10,000 then recorded in the national database, and an annual mortality rate of 1.2% over the observed interval (Jacobsen et al., 2023). These estimates are specific to the study population and period and should not be treated as a current European census or projected directly to 2026. The findings distinguish opportunistic recording from population monitoring but do not establish a causal link between any particular legal model and the observed mortality.

It is useful to distinguish three types of records: why a tree is recognised, what has happened to it, and what is known about its population or habitat network. A recognition record might retain a tree's historical status after death; a condition record should make death or removal explicit; and a monitoring programme needs a defined sampling and revisit strategy. Linking these records would allow historical status and biological condition to be read together without confusing them. A surviving entry is no proof of a living tree, while deleting a dead tree's record can erase evidence needed to understand change.

5.2. Public value and the distribution of costs

Protection justified by public value still leaves costs to be allocated. The questions are who pays for assessment and specialist intervention; who bears restrictions on surrounding land use; whether financial assistance is an entitlement or discretionary support; and who maintains records and successor trees. Romania provides an entitlement on request, subject to the catalogue and implementing arrangements. Slovakia has a potential route for supporting approved care programmes, while Italy earmarks sanction revenues. These mechanisms differ in their design, and none alone establishes whether payments are accessible, timely or sufficient. Sanction-derived income cannot be assumed to provide a recurring maintenance budget. Ecological, cultural and recreational values cannot be added together as if they were commensurable quantities. Relational values include attachments and responsibilities that a narrow price-based account may miss (Chan et al., 2016). A care decision should explain the values at stake, how burdens are distributed and which losses a payment or substitute planting cannot

repair. Economic considerations can then inform the decision without an unsupported monetary total determining it.

5.3. Safety, decay and proportionate intervention

The National Tree Safety Group (2024) advocates a proportionate approach that considers trees' benefits, the likelihood of harm and the use of the surrounding space. Visible decay alone is insufficient to establish risk: exposure and the consequences of failure also matter. Cavities should be assessed in context rather than treated as uniformly harmless or dangerous. Before choosing an irreversible intervention, those responsible for care should consider alternatives. Where professionally justified, these may include changing how the surrounding space is used alongside work on the tree **(fig. 07)**. The response should be proportionate to the assessed circumstances and the values that would be lost. A transparent record should explain the alternatives considered, the reason for the chosen intervention and the conditions under which it will be reviewed. Any application of these principles to an individual tree requires professional assessment. Poland's decomposition provision allows protection to continue as a tree changes, subject to a safety qualification. It provides a legal example of protection that accommodates decay, although its application elsewhere would depend on the relevant legal system (Republic of Poland, 2004, Art. 40(2)). A more-than-human interpretation asks how an intervention affects associated habitats. Human responsibility concerns who must assess, explain and maintain the resulting arrangement.



Fig. 07. Ficus di Piazza Marina, Giardino Garibaldi, Palermo, Italy. A large ficus in an urban park. A wooden walkway beneath the canopy was designed to allow public access while enabling the tree's roots to establish.
Photo: Anna Kazantseva | Dreamstime.com.

5.4. Participation, expertise and unequal capacities

The Italian census procedure and Romania's provisions for requests and collaboration give citizens ways to nominate and record trees. These roles are distinct from the authority to approve interventions, allocate funds or determine access. A community's attachment does not automatically displace an owner's rights, and a landowner's willingness does not resolve every ecological or public-interest question. Participation needs to be assessed through these specific roles and their limits (Italian Republic, 2014, Art. 3; Romania, 2023, Art. 7). Faro's heritage-community concept provides a basis for considering shared responsibility without presuming consensus or equal capacity to participate (Council of Europe, 2005). Evaluation should ask who can submit knowledge, whose accounts are recorded, who can contest an assessment, and whether participation depends on time or resources that not everyone possesses. Community-based recording can enrich institutional knowledge while statutory duties and specialist responsibilities remain in place. Conclusions about exclusion in particular initiatives would require empirical investigation of these questions.

Representing more-than-human interests requires observation, research and professional judgement. A transparent process should distinguish measured habitat features from uncertain ecological predictions and from ethical commitments about what deserves care. Cultural associations should also be documented on their own terms, separately from ecological measurements. Using these forms of knowledge in a decision requires clarity about what each can establish and where disagreements remain.

5.5. The tree, its setting and its successors

The management of ancient and veteran trees should consider their wider setting and the need for successor generations (Lonsdale, 2013). Long-term protection requires care for the existing tree, conditions suitable for associated organisms and space for future trees to develop. Replacement planting may contribute to that future, but it cannot be assumed to reproduce a veteran's present habitat features or historical relationships immediately **(fig. 08)**. A point in a database is administratively convenient, yet care may concern rooting conditions, competing vegetation, access routes and relationships with surrounding trees. The record should be linked to a site-specific account of these conditions and a succession plan whose assumptions can be reviewed. Buffers and management prescriptions would vary accordingly. That account should include environmental change and tree-health threats where supported by site-specific evidence; they should not become generic justifications for removal or non-intervention. A biocultural succession plan should identify what can be transmitted and what will be lost. Habitat features, management skills, names, associations and forms of public use persist over different timescales. Preserving a story after a tree dies can maintain part of its cultural significance, but cannot be reported as preservation of the living tree. Retaining deadwood can sustain some ecological relationships

without reproducing every function of the former organism **(fig. 09)**. Each form of continuity needs to be recorded alongside its limits.



Fig. 08. Lech, Czech and Rus, Rogalin, Poland. The named oaks form part of a wider landscape of old trees around Rogalin Palace.
Photo: W. Balsewicz | Dreamstime.com.



Fig. 09. Major Oak, Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire, England. An ancient oak associated with the legend of Robin Hood. The tree was believed to have died after a prolonged decline. Its plans include retention as deadwood habitat and continued monitoring of the tree and its surroundings.
Photo: Steven Bramall | Dreamstime.com.

6. Conclusion

The selected jurisdictions recognise old trees through different combinations of ecological qualities, exceptional characteristics, cultural associations and institutional procedures. Across these arrangements, designation, catalogue publication, financial provision and ecological persistence require separate evidence. Recognition provides a basis for continuing care, but how that care is delivered must be examined in each case. Biocultural analysis brings historical practices, memories and responsibilities into decisions about trees. A more-than-human perspective considers lives and relationships that human commemoration and registry categories may miss. Alongside legal protection, these approaches support care that accommodates changing form, manages risk proportionately, assigns explicit responsibilities and provides for future tree generations. The comparison does not allow national performance to be ranked or implementation gaps across Europe to be measured. Further evaluation should focus on individual cases and assess what these arrangements achieve for trees, associated organisms and the people who sustain them.

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