

ANNEX III

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SITES ELIGIBLE FOR IDENTIFICATION AS SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE AND DESIGNATION AS SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION

STAGE 1: Assessment at national level of the relative importance of sites for each natural habitat type in Annex I and each species in Annex II (including priority natural habitat types and priority species)

A. Site assessment criteria for a given natural habitat type in Annex I

(a) Degree of representativity of the natural habitat type on the site.

(b) Area of the site covered by the natural habitat type in relation to the total area covered by that natural habitat type within national territory.

(c) Degree of conservation of the structure and functions of the natural habitat type concerned and restoration possibilities.

(d) Global assessment of the value of the site for conservation of the natural habitat type concerned.

B. Site assessment criteria for a given species in Annex II

(a) Size and density of the population of the species present on the site in relation to the populations present within national territory.

(b) Degree of conservation of the features of the habitat which are important for the species concerned and restoration possibilities.

(c) Degree of isolation of the population present on the site in relation to the natural range of the species.

(d) Global assessment of the value of the site for conservation of the species concerned.

C. On the basis of these criteria, Member States will classify the sites which they propose on the national list as sites eligible for identification as sites of Community importance according to their relative value for the conservation of each natural habitat type in Annex I or each species in Annex II.

D. That list will show the sites containing the priority natural habitat types and priority species selected by the Member States on the basis of the criteria in A and B above.

STAGE 2: Assessment of the Community importance of the sites included on the national lists

1. All the sites identified by the Member States in Stage 1 which contain priority natural habitat types and/or species will be considered as sites of Community importance.
2. The assessment of the Community importance of other sites on Member States' lists, i.e. their contribution to maintaining or re-establishing, at a favourable conservation status, a natural habitat in Annex I or a species in Annex II and/or to the coherence of Natura 2000 will take account of the following criteria:
 - (a) relative value of the site at national level;
 - (b) geographical situation of the site in relation to migration routes of species in Annex II and whether it belongs to a continuous ecosystem situated on both sides of one or more internal Community frontiers;
 - (c) total area of the site;
 - (d) number of natural habitat types in Annex I and species in Annex II present on the site;
 - (e) global ecological value of the site for the biogeographical regions concerned and/or for the whole of the territory referred to in Article 2, as regards both the characteristic of unique aspect of its features and the way they are combined.