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# Grandpa Kolyo's Tree – History and Traditions

*Автор(и):* Растителна защита
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*For 12 years now, the "European Tree of the Year" contest has been seeking the tree with the most interesting history. This year's candidate from Bulgaria for first place in the contest is the 350-year-old English oak from the village of Studena in Haskovo region. The voting will take place from 1 February to 28 February 2022. The results will be announced at the award ceremony for the winners of the contest, which will be held on 22 March 2022.*

**Grandpa Kolyo's Tree – the Bulgarian candidate for the "European Tree of the Year" 2022 contest**

The English oak (*Quercus robur* L.) is located in the area of the village of Studena, Haskovo region, and is 350 years old. The oak is named after the owner of the field where it grows – Nikola Angelov, known as Grandpa

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Kolyo, who used to rest in its dense shade after hard work.

According to legend, the tree is part of a dense forest that once existed in the land of today's village. Because of the forest and the river, its first inhabitants settled there – Bulgarians hiding from Ottoman raids – and thus founded the settlement. The centuries-old oak is a symbol of Studena – it welcomes its residents returning home and is a pillar of their Bulgarian spirit and faith.

The ancient tree won the national contest "Tree with Roots" with 737 votes, organized by the EcoCommunity Foundation, and thus managed to take its place among the other participants in Europe.

**"European Tree of the Year" contest**

The aim of the contest is to draw attention to interesting old trees as important natural and cultural heritage that we must value and protect. In the contest, beauty, size or age are not the most important, but the story and the connection with people. The search is for trees that have become part of the community. The organizers believe that the topic of protecting trees as bearers of the local spirit needs to become the subject of an international debate. Every year, the voting for the European Tree of the Year encourages 200,000 people to reflect on their attitude towards nature, and 16 trees with a history become the focus of public attention and care.

The "European Tree of the Year" contest was organized for the first time in 2011 as a continuation of the popular "Tree of the Year" contest, which has been held in the Czech Republic for many years by the Partnership Foundation. The European contest is the final round of the competition, in which the winners of the national contests take part.

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Finalists in the "European Tree of the Year" 2022 contest

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Bulgaria is participating for the seventh time with Grandpa Kolyo's Tree for "European Tree of the Year 2022". In 2014, the Old Elm in Sliven became the winner in the competition.

**Voting**

Online voting continues until midnight on 29 February, and the winner will be announced at an official ceremony in Brussels on 17 March 2020. The competition features 15 trees from 16 different countries. During the last week (from 22 to 28 February) the voting will be hidden and the current results will not be visible on the web

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pages. ***To avoid a national bias, participants in the voting must choose two entries – in addition to their national tree, they may cast their vote for another tree of their choice.***

You can vote for the “European Tree of the Year 2022” **HERE**

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