

# Final judgment of the EU Court of Justice: logging in Bialowieza Forest breaks EU law

News / 17 April 2018

The EU's top court ruled today that increased logging in Bialowieza Forest violates EU law. The ruling comes into force immediately, so the Polish Environment Minister must quickly reverse the decisions that allowed logging. If he fails to do this, the government risks a minimum fine of €4.3 million and up to tens of millions of euros.

ClientEarth chief executive James Thornton said: "This is a huge victory for all defenders of Bialowieza Forest. Hundreds of people were heavily engaged in saving this unique, ancient woodland from unthinkable destruction.

"We warned that the increased logging would breach EU law even before the minister officially authorised it. From a legal perspective, the case has been as clear as day from the beginning – it was very obvious that the law was being broken.

"This is not the end of our fight. The ruling is just on paper for now: we need to see concrete action. First, the decisions that allowed logging must be withdrawn. Then, the Polish government should also consider enlarging the national park so it encompasses the whole of Bialowieza Forest. This is the only way to guarantee that devastation of the forest will not happen again. We believe that this World Heritage site and one of the last primeval forests in Europe deserves it."

## History of the legal fight to protect Bialowieza

The story began back in March 2016 when Jan Szyszko – then Minister for Environment, dismissed last month because of this case – tripled the logging limits in Bialowieza Forest, despite warnings from scientists all over Europe that this would be very harmful for the forest.

ClientEarth, together with six other organisations, filed a complaint to the European Commission. The Commission acted very quickly, and in July 2017 the case was already at the Court of Justice of the EU.

The [judgment is final](#) and the Polish side cannot appeal it. The verdict is valid from today, so government will have to adjust to it as soon as possible. Otherwise, the Commission will launch a legal case over non-compliance, which could result in hefty fines. The minimum penalty is €4.3 million, but usually in such cases the fines are much higher, potentially reaching tens of millions of euros.

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