

Poland EU row over ancient forest heats up

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The EU is concerned that logging in Poland's Bialowieza forest will cause irreparable loss of biodiversity

Poland is ready to take a dispute with the European Union over logging in an ancient forest to the bloc's highest court, Environment Minister Jan Szyszko said Friday.

The European Commission last week sent a "final warning" to Warsaw saying it could take [legal action](#) to halt large-scale logging in the UNESCO World Heritage forest of Bialowieza on the border with

Belarus.

"We are not afraid to take this dispute to the EU Court of Justice," said Szyszko, cited by the Polish PAP news agency.

"We are simply defending [environmental law](#) based on Natura 2000."

One of the last large ancient forests in Europe, Bialowieza belongs to the EU's Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

"I think it would be truly indispensable to put an end to this dispute at the EU Court of Justice... in case the information we have does not manage to convince the (European) Commission," said Szyszko.

Europe's executive branch gave Polish authorities one month rather than the usual two to address its concerns about the forest or face being summoned by the EU's top court, citing the "urgency of the situation".

The EU is concerned the logging will cause irreparable loss of biodiversity.

Poland defends the wood-cutting, calling it "protective logging" to stop an [insect infestation](#), preserve road traffic and fight forest fire risks.

"In the forest of Bialowieza, we are defending the law, we are acting to protect habitats. So that they can truly exist. These habitats call for human action, that is, active protection," said Szyszko.

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