

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Petitions

12.02.2008

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0372/2007 by Adam Bohdan, Polish, on behalf of 'Pracownia na rzecz wszystkich Istot - Oddział Podlaski', on the failure of the Polish authorities to implement the EU's environmental legislation in forestry management in the Bialowieza national park in eastern Poland

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner complains about the way in which the Polish authorities responsible are managing the Bialowieza national park in eastern Poland, on the border with Belarus, and claims that they are persistently infringing the EU's birds and habitats directives. He points out that the park is particularly rich in fauna. The largest animal in Bialowieza, and in Europe as a whole, is the European bison. Apart from the bison, elks, wild boar, deer, roe deer and beavers also live in the park. Among the larger predators there are wolf and lynx. No fewer than 130 bird species nest in the park, including the black stork and the crane, along with a number of rare woodpeckers. The petitioner says that excessive tree-felling, in particular the felling of medium-age and old trees, by the forestry service is resulting in loss of, or damage to, the habitat of these species. He therefore asks the European Parliament to take immediate steps to ensure the effective protection of this unique natural environment.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 4 September 2007. Information requested from Commission under Rule 192(4).

3. Commission reply, received on 12 February 2008.

The petitioner is concerned about the level of protection for the Bialowieza Primeval Forest in Poland and Belarus and, in particular, forest management on the Polish side of the border.

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[The same concerns were already raised in 2006 by the member of the European Parliament, Magdalena Mosiewicz (petition no. 489/2006)].

The petitioner provides additional information on the impact of forest management practice on two species of woodpeckers *Dendrocopos leucotos* and *Picoides tridactylus* listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC¹), which are subject to protection under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC²) in the Natura 2000 site, PLC200004 Bialowieza Forest, designated by the Polish government in 2004.

The Commission's comments

The Commission, in its response to petition no. 489/2006 on the subject of nature protection in the Bialowieza Forest, has already provided explanations on the protection status of the Natura 2000 site and applicable legal instruments in Poland, as well as clarification on the Community competence with regard to the part of the forest within the territory of Belarus.

Regarding the additional information on the relationship between forest management and the occurrence of the two species of woodpecker, it is insufficient to allow the Commission to conclude whether the forest management practice on the site after its inclusion in the Natura 2000 network (May 2004) has any negative impact on the species. The scientific references quoted by the petitioner date either from the pre-accession period, or from early 2005 – less than a year after inclusion of the site in the Natura 2000 network. However, the references made by the petitioner to the general link between forest management and ensuring that a suitable habitat is available for the species within the Natura 2000 site would appear to have some relevance for the conservation of the two species.

Conclusions

The Commission will contact the Polish authorities regarding the conservation status of the two species of woodpeckers and the management measures undertaken to ensure their long-term survival.

¹ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1-18

² OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50