

Poland, Bystra, Warszawa, 29.07.2020

Frans TIMMERMANS
Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal
European Commission
frans-timmermans-contact@ec.europa.eu

Dear Executive Vice President Timmermans,

On behalf of the undersigned 27 environmental and civil society organizations from Poland, we would like to urgently ask you to take all possible steps to prevent massive, uncontrolled devastation of Polish forests - the plans to remove and burn dead and decaying wood in power plants for bioenergy.

On 16.07.2020 the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament, Sejm of the Republic of Poland, adopted a bill amending the Polish Renewable Energy Sources Act in order to change the definition of wood that can be burned for energy. One of the main motivations behind this amendment is to launch large-scale sanitary cuttings aimed at acquisition and sale of wood raw material to power plants. This kind of wood might not have significant economic value but is crucial for the protection of forest ecosystems and biodiversity.

If the amendment comes into force, trees that are essential for maintaining forest biodiversity will be felled and removed to meet renewable energy goals.

Dead and decaying wood not only stores large amounts of carbon, but also enriches the soil with minerals and humus and provides many other ecosystem services which are of utmost importance for the functioning of forest ecosystems. Trees in this state provide habitats for many legally protected plant, fungi and animal species (including those protected by EU Directives). All of this is irretrievably lost when trees are removed from the forest and burned. It must be stressed that these plans, which will have a drastic impact on the preservation of biodiversity in Polish forests, have not been subject to any kind of environmental impact assessment or public consultation.

Plans for removal and burning of trees crucial for biodiversity are in strong opposition to the objectives of the European Green Deal and the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, which have already recognised the growing pressure on forests caused by increasing bioenergy demand.

Both of these strategic documents stress the importance of biodiversity for life on the planet and for the economy. A change in the Polish renewable energy law will result in additional harvesting of millions of cubic metres of wood, including from forests within Natura 2000 sites, in order to burn them in power plants for inefficient electricity production. This will lead to impoverishment of

forest ecosystems in Poland, accelerate and strengthen the process of biodiversity loss, and undermine actions aimed at combating climate change. According to the stipulated aims of the Biodiversity Strategy as well as the Renewable Energy Directive, the use of woody biomass for energy should be steered away from the use of whole trees towards using actual residues and wastes. In our opinion, the amendment to the Polish Renewable Energy Sources Act is in clear contradiction with these aims. As we are facing unprecedented climate and ecological crises, there must be no room for double standards in the actions of the European Commission.

We are aware of the fact that, as the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of the European Green Deal, you are committed to effective protection of forests in the European Union. Thus we regret to have learned that the European Commission has approved this amendment (notification number 2020/337/PL¹) harmful for the Polish forests and their biodiversity. Therefore, we ask for an urgent intervention on notification no 2020/337/PL and that you take all possible steps to save Polish forests from devastation.

We enclose the position of Polish NGOs and representatives of the science community on the draft amendment to the Polish RES Act.

We would very much appreciate an opportunity to explain the problem to you in more detail in an online meeting, and we remain at your disposal, should you need any further information or clarification.

On behalf of the signatories
Yours sincerely,

PREZES PNRWI
Stowarzyszenie
Radosław Ślusarczyk

Signatories:

Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot
Fundacja Greenpeace Polska
Akcja Demokracja
Fundacja Alter Eko
Fundacja Dziedzictwo Przyrodnicze
Fundacja Dzika Polska
Fundacja Ekologiczna „Zielona Akcja”
Fundacja GAP Polska
Fundacja Greenmind
Fundacja Niech Żyją!
Fundacja Noga w Łapę
Fundacja Otwarty Plan
Fundacja „Rozwój TAK Odkrywki NIE”
Fundacja Siła Lasu!
Fundacja Szkatułka

¹<https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tris/en/search/?trisaction=search.detail&year=2020&num=337>

Fundacja Zielone Światło
Inicjatywa Dzikie Karpaty
Instytut Spraw Obywatelskich
Instytut na rzecz Ekorozwoju
Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków
Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okręg Mazowiecki
Stowarzyszenie „Eko-Unia”
Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno – Kulturalne Wspólna Ziemia
Towarzystwo dla Natury i Człowieka
Towarzystwo na rzecz Ziemi
Zielone Wiadomości
Związek Stowarzyszeń Polska Zielona Sieć