



STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN  
2017–2021

*Connecting knowledge to action*

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A horizontal strip at the bottom of the page shows a close-up of green oak leaves, with some leaves in the foreground being more in focus than others in the background.

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# 1 Framework

The EFI adopted a new strategy in 2016 (full EFI strategy document is available [here](#)). The strategy is built around three interconnected and interdisciplinary themes: **Bioeconomy**, **Resilience** and **Governance** and three mutually reinforcing strategic goals, namely (Figure 1):

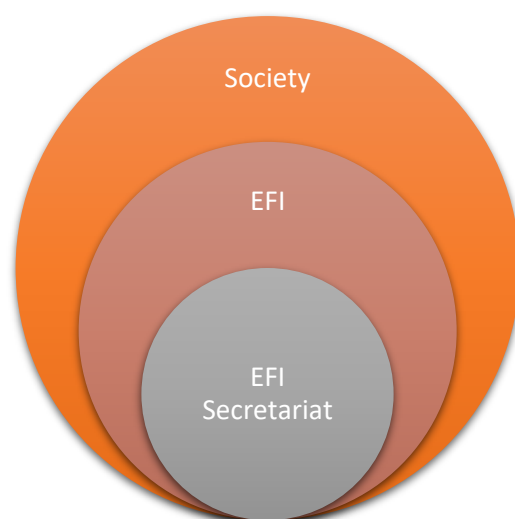
- An ambitious European forest research and innovation area
- Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities
- Awareness in society of the importance of forests

Furthermore, the strategy defines EFI's strategic activities (**Advocacy**, **Research** and **Foresight**, **Knowledge networking**, **Capacity building**, **Building bridges**), which are implemented to address the strategic goals within the new thematic framework.



**Figure 1: EFI's strategic themes and goals**

The present **Strategy Implementation plan** aims at operationalising the Strategy goals within the new thematic framework during the period 2017–2021. The Strategy plan is structured around **operational goals** (cascading from the strategy goals) and key **organisational structures and instruments** to implement the Strategy activities within the new **thematic framework**. Three operational goals per strategic goal have been identified in order to address three key operating levels (Figure 2):



**Figure 2: Operating levels addressed by the operational goals**

- **Secretariat:** including aspects related to the internal structures and the activities by its employees;
- **EFI:** addressing the needs of EFI Member countries as well as Associate and Affiliate Members in implementing the new Strategy.
- **Society:** society at large, including relevant actors, end-users and stakeholders that can help in maximizing the impact of EFI activities.

For clarity, along the present document we use the following definitions (coming from EFI convention) related to the different operational levels:

**Secretariat** = Comprises the personnel of EFI  
**EFI** = includes Member countries, Associate and Affiliate Members, and the Secretariat  
**Society** = any other parties than the EFI (level at which knowledge is finally connected to action)

## 2 Operational goals

Three operational goals per each strategic goal have been identified to address the three relevant operating levels: **Secretariat, EFI, and Society**, to implement efficiently EFI Strategy -connecting knowledge to action.

### I. **Strategic goal: An ambitious European forest research and innovation area**

*To provide European forest research organizations and scientists with the resources, capacities and infrastructures to maximise their scientific and societal impact.*

#### **Operational goals:**

1. **Society. Increase European resources for forest related research activities** – EFI, in collaboration with other key actors like Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP), actively **advocates** for an increased availability of European resources for forest related research.
2. **EFI. Enhance transnational forest research cooperation within EFI** – a transnationally active network of Associate and Affiliate Members is a pre-condition for an ambitious European forest research and innovation area. The Secretariat provides appropriate resources and mechanisms to facilitate networking within EFI. This includes the establishment of a **EFI Network Fund** (see [below](#)).
3. **Secretariat. Establish and consolidate three research programmes addressing the new strategic themes: Bioeconomy, Resilience and Governance** – The Secretariat develops three interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research programmes as key structures for producing research in collaboration with EFI member organizations.

### II. **Strategic goal: Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities**

*To increase the relevance and impact of forest-related research on European policies, and support policy makers and practitioners in the transition towards a circular, bio-based society.*

#### **Business goals:**

1. **Society. Increase the use of forest related scientific work in supporting relevant policy processes and policy development** – to increase the use of science-informed knowledge by policy-makers, it is essential not only to produce policy-relevant research but especially to facilitate the uptake of existing knowledge by contextualizing it at the right format and scale for policy decisions.

2. **EFI. Increase the commitment by Members for EFI’s science-informed policy support** – to further increase the funding support and the number of Member countries participating in EFI’s policy support activities like the EFI Policy Support Trust Fund (for more information see [below](#)).
3. **Secretariat. Develop a number of EFI facilities to support an effective European science-policy-practice interface within EFI’s thematic framework** – EFI Facilities address the need for knowledge uptake by policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders via capacity building, knowledge networking and the provision of demand-based expertise (see [below](#)). They also play an important advocacy role.

### III. Strategic objective: Awareness in society of the importance of forests

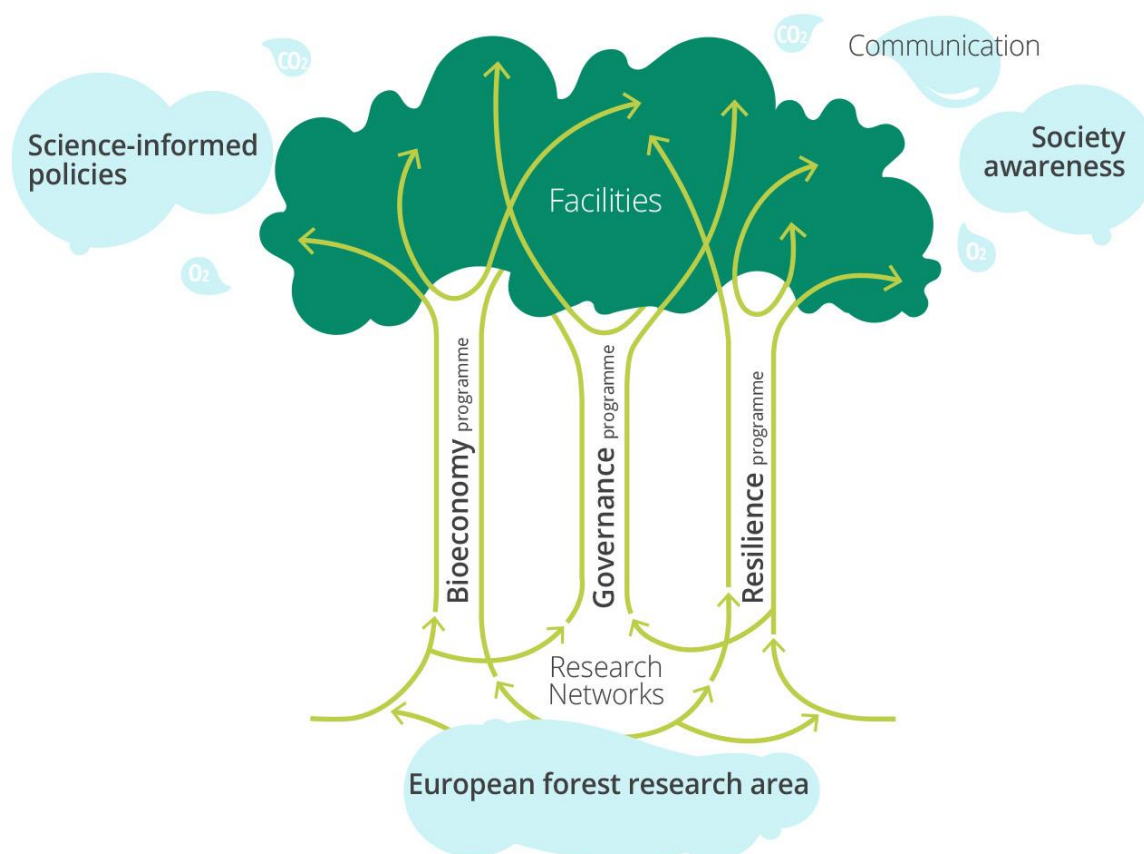
*To contribute to increased awareness of the role of forests and forest science in building a sustainable society, based on a science-informed narrative, which especially addresses media, policy makers, young people and urban populations.*

1. **Society. Build and facilitate effective science-media capacities to support a better informed dialogue between scientists, policy-makers and society.** EFI facilitates building science-media trainings and interactions within the strategy themes.
2. **EFI. Develop EFI into a global brand and recognized source of reliable, contextualized and comprehensive information on forests for media and society.** This requires that EFI’s visibility and recognition are strategically and exponentially increased via digital communications and media partnerships building, with the support of the entire organization.
3. **Secretariat. Consolidate an organization-wide communication unit within EFI Secretariat** – a strong EFI communication unit is a precondition for developing EFI into a highly recognised brand and address media needs and opportunities (see [below](#)).

## 3 Key Structures and instruments

### 3.1 Structures

Three organizational structures are considered crucial in implementing the new EFI Strategy according to the new mission - connecting knowledge to action: **Research Networks, Programmes and Facilities**. Research Networks mobilise and coordinate EFI member organizations in order to produce and share scientific knowledge within EFI’s thematic framework as well as connect it to the work of EFI Programmes and Facilities. Programmes’ main focus is to produce new scientific knowledge within the Strategy thematic framework, while Facilities connect that knowledge to action within the science-policy-practice interface. **Programmes and Facilities** are parts of the Secretariat while **Research Networks** are administered directly by EFI member organizations. The existing Regional Offices, case by case, will transition (within 2017-2018) to one of the above structures according to their characteristics, as well as the needs and expectations from the Member Countries and member organizations involved.



**Figure 3. New EFI structural framework as formed by Research Networks, Programmes and Facilities.**

### Research Networks

**Strategic goals:** An ambitious European forest research area

**Main strategic activities:** Knowledge networking, Capacity building, Building bridges; Advocacy

These consist of a subset of EFI member organizations and other relevant research partners. Research Networks aim to enhance European and/or Regional cooperation and coordination of transnational research within the EFI Strategy themes. Research Networks are coordinated by a EFI member organization, which acts as liaison with the EFI Secretariat. Research Networks are important to maintain a permanent dialogue between EFI member organizations and EFI Programmes and Facilities. Research Networks operate for a certain time period (five years, subject to renewal) and their coordination is self-financed.

### Programmes

**Strategic goals:** An ambitious European forest research area; science-informed policies

**Main strategic activities:** Research and foresight; Advocacy

Responsible for producing EFI research and foresight within the three strategic themes. EFI Programmes conduct research at the European level together with member organizations and other partners across disciplines, sectors and land-uses in order to address effectively policy-relevant questions. Following the three strategy themes, the aim is to establish and consolidate three Research Programmes by 2021, on **Bioeconomy, Resilience and Governance**.

## Facilities

**Strategic goals:** Science-informed policies; Awareness in society

**Main strategic activities:** Knowledge networking; Capacity building; Building bridges; Advocacy

Key for connecting EFI knowledge to action. They facilitate knowledge uptake by policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders via capacity building, knowledge networking and the provision of demand-based expertise (e.g. policy analysis and synthesis studies). Facilities are flexible structures that can address a particular policy (e.g. FLEGT), topic (e.g. plantation forestry, natural disturbances, etc.) or activity (European-level science-informed policy support). Facilities build on the research knowledge generated by Programmes, Research Networks, other EFI member organizations and the wider science community. Facilities also aim at providing feedbacks back to the EFI Programmes and Research Networks from the end-users. Facilities interacting closely with policy-makers and practitioners and other stakeholders have an important advocacy role.

### *Communication Unit*

**Strategic goal:** Awareness in society

**Main strategic activities:** Knowledge networking; Capacity building; Building bridges; Advocacy

Communication as well as advocacy need to be integral part of all EFI employees' activities. However, coherent and efficient communication structures need to be created as means to reaching increased awareness, visibility and successful re-branding of EFI. Consolidating an organization-wide communication unit within EFI Secretariat is therefore a priority.

The EFI Communication Unit will bring efficiency to all communication activities throughout the organization. The Unit will play a vital role in engaging with society on the themes important to EFI, using a unified visual image, innovative digital tools and strategic media partnership building. Science-media capacity building (see [below](#)) will also be a crucial task in this work, empowering all EFI staff to participate in creating a global EFI narrative.

## 3.2 Strategic instruments

EFI's main competitive advantage is its membership structure, consisting of 26 Member Countries and 116 member organizations from 36 different countries working in diverse research fields. This dual membership places EFI in a unique position to generate, connect and share knowledge at the interface between science, policy and practice. In order to unlock the potential and serve the needs of such dual membership, EFI will further develop two type of strategic instruments: (1) funding instruments and (2) capacity building instruments.

### *Funding instruments*

#### *Policy Support Trust Fund*

**Strategic goal:** Science-informed policies

**Main strategic activities:** Knowledge networking; Capacity building; Advocacy

The aim of the Policy Support Trust Fund (Trust Fund) is to support the science-policy dialogue in order to facilitate science-informed policies on forest-related issues. The Trust Fund is a key instrument to operationalise EFI science-informed policy support, including the broader scientific community. Any EFI Member country can join the Trust Fund with a voluntary contribution, which also allows it to participate in the steering committee, providing strategic guidance on the activities and topics to be addressed. The Trust

Fund does not support new research activities but finances the synthesis and contextualization of existing scientific knowledge in appropriate formats to address effectively policy questions. Therefore, the Trust Fund directly **addresses the need of Members for policy-relevant and science-informed knowledge**. The EFI ThinkForest Forum, also funded by the Trust Fund, provides a high-level platform to present the most relevant results of its activities in European relevant circles. In the future, the Secretariat Unit responsible for coordinating and managing the activities of the Trust Fund will be rebranded as the **EFI Policy Support Facility**.

#### *EFI Network fund*

**Strategic goal:** An ambitious European forest research and innovation area

**Main strategic activities:** Knowledge networking; Capacity building; Research and foresight; Advocacy

Activating the transnational cooperation of EFI member organizations is a precondition for building an ambitious and effective Pan-European forest research and innovation area. In that context, EFI aims to establish a new specific **EFI Network Fund in order to support the transnational cooperation** of its member organizations in **implementing** the new EFI Strategy. The EFI Network Fund addresses the following strategic activities: research, knowledge networking and capacity building. The Fund is created based on the annual fees of member organizations (up to now used to support the operations of the Secretariat), which currently amounts to around 180,000 euros annually. The target is to increase this amount via co-financing contributions from the member organizations benefiting from the Fund. Other organizations, such as foundations will be approach for voluntary contributions. The EFI Network fund will be established in 2017, to start supporting activities from 2018 onwards.

#### *Capacity building instruments*

EFI's strategy recognises capacity building as one of the strategic activities. EFI works to build capacity among scientists, policy makers and practitioners to be able to tackle future societal, scientific and communication needs.

**Strategic goal:** An ambitious European forest research and innovation area; Science-informed policies; Awareness in Society

**Main strategic activities:** Capacity building; Knowledge networking; Building bridges; Advocacy

Existing and new capacity building instruments, as described below, will be developed to implement effectively the new Strategy.

#### *EFI Short Scientific Visits*

The aim of a *Short Scientific Visit* is to strengthen EFI's network by fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. The grants are provided to Early Stage Researchers from EFI Associate Member organisations. These *Visits* provide an opportunity for young researchers to get involved in international level forest research and research co-operation. **Between 5-10 Grants per year.**

#### *IUFRO-EFI Young Scientists Programme*

EFI is conscious of the importance of connecting the young forest science community at the global level and providing them with international experience to be able to address efficiently the future global challenges. Therefore, EFI entered a strategic partnership with the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) to establish a joint Programme for Young Scientists. The joint IUFRO-EFI Programme offers mobility grants for Early Stage Researchers from IUFRO and EFI Member organisations. These visits should foster trans-continental collaboration, by providing an opportunity for EFI young scientists to visit a forest research organization in another continent and non-European young scientists to visit a EFI member organization. **Between 5-10 Grants per year.**



### ***EFI Young Leadership Programme***

The Young Leadership Programme (YLP) aims at increasing the capacities of young professionals with leadership potential coming from the academic, business, public administration or non-governmental organizations sector. YLP offers an opportunity for participants to interact with their global peers, and to better understand the emerging opportunities and challenges around the complex forest-related operating environment as framed by the EFI thematic framework. The YLP provides access to new information and knowledge shared by researchers, policy makers, and business leaders working on those issues. Participants build new networks and obtain new knowledge by learning and sharing practical experiences. They also improve their leadership and communication skills to translate knowledge into action. So far the YLP has had a special focus on the **Bioeconomy** and **Russia**. In the future, YLP should be developed and tested for the **Mediterranean region**. **International governance** and **Urban forest-based solutions** are other relevant topics to be developed under this instrument.

### ***EFI Science-media programme***

Getting the public and the decision-makers to know about advances in science is crucial to research institutes and scientists themselves. However, few are media-savvy, and confident when interacting with media. At the same time, especially online media are hungry for stories, on increasingly segmented topics. Yet again, the numbers of specialized science journalists are limited. **Science communication – from the viewpoint of the scientists, media as well as the public – could be vastly improved**, to facilitate an informed societal dialogue. To address this problem, EFI Communication Unit, together with partners, organizes a **series of tailor-made science journalism workshops in various European locations**. The seminar participants as well as the tutors are a **mixed group of EFI member organizations' scientists and journalists**. The seminars are **organized in conjunction with EFI's scientific events** and led by experienced journalists, from organizations such as the Thomson Reuters Foundation or the European Journalism Centre.

### ***EFI Innovation Schools***

EFI Innovation schools bring together scientists, practitioners and policy makers with the aim to speed up the circulation of knowledge to action, operating at the science-policy-practice interface. Innovation schools include interactive sessions where new scientific contextualised knowledge is presented, in combination with demonstrations and training in the use of the latest tools and techniques for assisting professionals. Innovation schools include field work or visits as well as exposure to existing practical experiences on specific topics (e.g. plantation forestry, management of natural disturbances, etc.). The target audience are professionals (foresters and other relevant professions), managers and forest owners, forestry policy makers, and postgraduate-level students.

## **4 Thematic framework**

Research Networks, Programmes and Facilitates as well as the activities implemented by the different EFI strategic instruments need to address the new strategy thematic framework. The thematic framework articulated around three interconnected and interdisciplinary themes: Bioeconomy, Resilience and Governance is described below, including key priority topics.

### **4.1 Bioeconomy**

Forests, forestry and the forest-based sector are the cornerstone of the European bioeconomy, and a major contributor to climate change mitigation. The speed and scale of European forest bioeconomy development crucially depends on several questions, such as, technological and market developments within and outside the forest-based sector, the dynamics of global biomass demand and supply, the European and international policy framework and the ability to use forests in a sustainable way. The forest bioeconomy is also affected by globalization, the digital economy and symbiosis with other sectors: construction, chemicals, textiles and energy, etc.

In that context, EFI addresses the need for generating and connecting knowledge to action at the interface of markets, products, policies and forest resources including sustainability implications. The following topics are a priority:

- The future demand and supply of forest products, forest biomass and ecosystem services, and their implications for sustainable forest management as well as for afforestation and plantation forestry.
- Sustainability impact assessment and monitoring of forest-based products and services value chains.
- The future markets of increasingly diversified and cross-sectoral forest-based products and services as a result of socioeconomic and policy changes.
- The role of innovation and digitalization, and policies affecting sustainable bioeconomy development.

## 4.2 Resilience

The increasing impacts and complexity of global change call for a new strategic role for forests in fostering Europe's socio-ecological resilience. In a highly urbanised Europe where cities are responsible for 80% of the population and energy use, urban forestry and forest-based solutions like wood construction are key to developing climate-smart cities. Furthermore, the role of forests and trees in enhancing essential resources like water, soil and biodiversity is increasingly important in the context of sustainable rural areas and agricultural systems.

In that context EFI addresses the need for new interdisciplinary knowledge a basis for effective, integrated policies and land-use strategies. The following topics are a priority:

- The impacts of global change and related risks on forest socio-ecological systems, and the strategies to enhance and restore their capacity to adapt and provide forest ecosystem services and products.
- Policies, strategies and management practices to enhance biodiversity in a rapidly changing environment, considering different regional and socio-economic settings.
- Strategies and management practices to enhance the role of forests and trees in increasing the resilience of rural areas to climate change, including a better understanding of agroforestry.
- The role of urban forestry, nature based solutions and wood construction in developing climate smart cities, better rural-urban interfaces and enhancing health and wellbeing in urban areas.

## 4.3 Governance

In the future, the dynamics of supply and demand for water, food, energy, raw materials and land will be drastically altered, as result of global change and the need to transition towards a circular, bio-based society. Land will become an increasingly scarce resource and conflicts around land resources may result in global political instability and increasing migration pressure. The situation requires governance schemes and policies that maximise synergies and reconcile different goals (e.g. resilience and bioeconomy-related) at different spatial and temporal scales.

In this context, EFI addresses emerging forest governance challenges and opportunities based on the understanding of interests, expectations and perspectives (e.g. urban versus rural, local versus global) from different stakeholders and sectors on forest land uses and forest management goals. The following topics are a priority:

- Forest and land use conflicts and synergies, including an understanding of key societal demands and the trade-offs between forest ecosystem services, products and land uses.
- The design of appropriate forest and land use governance schemes, including new and innovative approaches to involve stakeholders, align diverging interests and seek synergies.

- The impacts of different supply chains and international trade, including agricultural commodities, for international forest governance, land use conflicts and sustainable development.
- European forest-related policies and forest governance, addressing both regional diversity within Europe as well as emerging global challenges and opportunities.

#### 4. Key performance indicators

To quantify and monitor the implementation of the Operational goals a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was developed. Together with Operational Goals, the KPIs will guide the preparation of the annual work plans at the EFI Unit level. Additionally, the operating environment of the strategic goals will be followed up on biannual basis by short contextualisation briefs to the EFI Board during Board meetings.

Strategic goal	Operational goal	Key performance indicator
An ambitious European forest research and innovation area	Increase European resources for forest related research activities	<p><b>EU Bioeconomy Knowledge Center</b> – By 2018 EFI becomes a key partner in the new EU Bioeconomy Knowledge Center.</p> <p><b>EU forest research funding</b> – the amount of forest related research funding in FP 9 has increased by 100% in comparison to H2020.</p>
	Enhance transnational forest research cooperation within EFI	<p><b>EFI Network Fund</b> - In the period 2017-2021 EFI will make available at least one million € of funding for its member organizations to enhance transnational research cooperation within the new EFI Strategy.</p> <p><b>Capacity building</b> – for the period 2017-2021 EFI will provide a total of 50 grants for early stage researchers.</p> <p><b>Research Networks</b> – by 2021 EFI has at least one Research Network active in connection to each strategic theme (in total at least 3 RNs).</p>
	Establish and consolidate three research programmes addressing the new strategic themes: Bioeconomy, Resilience and Governance	<p><b>EFI Research programmes</b> - By 2021 EFI has established and consolidated, according to the following indicators, three research programmes: bioeconomy, resilience and governance.</p> <p><b>EFI external research funding</b> - By 2021 EFI's external research funding has increased by 100% compared to 2016.</p> <p><b>Scientific publications</b> – In the period 2017-2021 EFI has published at least 250 scientific articles in SCI journals of which at least 5 were published in journals of highest impact level (e.g. Nature, Science).</p>
Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities	Increase the use of forest related scientific work in supporting relevant policy processes and policy development	<p><b>Policy impact</b> - By 2021, EFI studies are referred in all relevant forest related European strategies and policy working documents.</p> <p><b>Publication impact</b> – by 2021 the number of EFI's policy support publication downloads increases to 50,000 per year (23,000 downloads in 2016).</p> <p><b>Media impact</b> – by 2021 the number of media articles about EFI policy support outputs (events, publications) increases to 100 per year (25 published articles in 2016).</p>
	Increase the commitment by Members for EFI's science-informed policy support	<p><b>Trust Fund funding</b> - By 2021 the annual budget for policy support trust fund is consolidated to one million € per year.</p> <p><b>Trust Fund members</b> - By 2021 at least 60% of EFI Member countries contribute and participate in the Trust Fund.</p>

Strategic goal	Operational goal	Key performance indicator
	Develop a number of EFI facilities to support an effective European science-policy-practice interface on forests	<p><b>EFI Policy Support Facility</b> - By 2021 EFI Policy Support Facility is consolidated and referred to on the global arena with regard to the EFI strategic themes.</p> <p><b>EFI facilities</b> - By 2021 EFI has consolidated a set of Facilities addressing operating at the science-policy-practice interface within the strategy thematic framework.</p>
Awareness in society of the importance of forests	Build and facilitate effective science-media capacities to support a better informed dialogue between scientists, policy-makers and society	<b>EFI science-media programme</b> - In the period 2017-2021 EFI has organised 15 science-media training events.
	Develop EFI into a global brand and recognized source of reliable, contextualized and comprehensive information on forests for media and society.	<p><b>Media visibility</b> - In the period 2017-2021 EFI has established five international media partnerships.</p> <p><b>Multi media</b> – In the period 2017-2021, visibility of EFI as measured by meltwater and social media analytics increases by at least tenfold when compared to 2016.</p>
	Consolidate an organization-wide communication unit within EFI Secretariat	<b>EFI communication unit</b> - By 2018 an efficient organization-wide EFI communication unit is operating.