

EFI Trust Fund for Policy Support: Annual Report 2022

08.02.2023



Credit: Massimo Ravera / Moments via Getty Images



Executive Summary

What is this document?

This document is the Annual Report of the **European Forest Institute (EFI) Policy Support Facility Trust Fund** (hereafter **Trust Fund**) for 2022. It presents the activities, outputs, impacts and budget of the Trust Fund for 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022. Year 2022 was the second year of the new five-year cycle of Trust Fund (2021-2025). The Annual Report aims to provide transparent information, which can also be used to assess and evaluate the performance and impact of the Trust Fund work.

Facility management

Helga Pülzl, EFI Assistant Director coordinates the Trust Fund project activities, supported by Communications Officers Ulla Vanttinen and Maria Schloßmacher, Head of Communications Rach Colling, Administrative Officer Jarkko Haltia and Brussels Liaison Officer Harald Mauser. The ThinkForest Forum has been chaired by its President Janez Potočnik since 2021. In addition, other EFI staff resources and outside subcontracting have been used to carry out the activities during 2022.

Facility funding and costs in 2022

In 2022, the Trust Fund consisted of the following 11 Trust Fund countries: *Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden*. The total financial contribution from the countries to the Trust Fund by the end of 2021 was **523 372 euros**. The total amount of expenses in 2022 is estimated to have been **566 292 euros**. It should be noted that when writing this on 5 February 2023, the EFI accounts for 2022 had not yet been finalized.

Summary of activities

The highlights of activities and outputs from 2022 include high-level ThinkForest events, both online and in person, as well as the dissemination of publications and its widely use. Two editions of the From Science to Policy series “[Forest biodiversity in Europe](#)” (FSTP 13) and [Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe](#) (FSTP 14) were published in 2022. Two more study teams (FSTP 15 and FSTP 16) have started their work which results will be published in 2023. Through the Policy Support, EFI has launched a new Policy Brief series, in which context already two Policy Briefs have been published in 2022. The first publication in the series [How can we effectively maintain and enhance forest biodiversity in Europe?](#) was launched at Forest Europe’s first High-Level Policy Dialogue, ‘Sustainable Forest Management: Unlocking forest biodiversity’s potential’, which took place on 30 August. The second Policy Brief [How can forests and wood use help meet climate goals?](#) was published on September 20th. EFI’s Assistant Director for Policy Support Helga Pülzl is editor-in chief of this series.

ThinkForest events are the flagship science-policy events organized by the Trust Fund. A High-level ThinkForest event in Romania took place on May 20th entitled “What science can tell us about Forest Biodiversity in Europe & Launching of Europe’s transnational forest restoration project –SUPERB” reaching out to the biggest audience received so far. In addition, two more webinars “Closer to Forest Management” on April 6th and on September 20th on “How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals?” were organized in 2022. An in-person closed Roundtable discussion took place in Brussels on 15th of June “*Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe*”.

Summary of impacts

Publications were widely distributed in digital forms in 2022, and the electronic copies of both newly published and back catalogue publications again proved popular. The webinars served among others as official launching dates for the publication, generating more visibility for the publication and promoting the dissemination of them. The highest number of direct downloads from the EFI website was reached with the From Science to Policy edition 13 “Forest Biodiversity in Europe”. Since its publication it has been downloaded 1669 times.

ThinkForest event participation: The public ThinkForest webinars were high in participation and interaction. The online format of the webinar allowed a high number of participants from many different countries. Diverse topics attracted various stakeholder groups. Feedback surveys conducted after the events have shown that many people have joined EFI events for the first time in 2022. The webinars were made available on social media after the events. 185 people took part in the webinar on “Closer to Nature Forest Management” in May 2022. In addition, the recording of the webinar has been watched 581 times until the end of 2022. The webinar in September “How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals” was attended by 237 people and has been watched 250 times before December 31st. The ThinkForest event in Romania was livestreamed and followed by approximately 900 people. 142 people attended the event in Romania. Since the event, the recording has been watched 5932 times. In total around 600 people have participated in the webinars and events, more than 7600 times the recordings were watched until 31.12.2022.

Media impact: The work of the Trust Fund was actively promoted- in particular to highlight new publications and advertise ThinkForest events. In addition to direct communication with journalists, various social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and the EFI blog were frequently used to promote the Trust Fund policy work. The Twitter EFI account has almost 13700 followers (as of 31.12.2022) which is an increase of approximately 13% compared to 2021.

More than 7500 times, ThinkForest events have been streamed and watched on YouTube. Due to the travel restrictions of the global pandemic, online events were even more high on demand than in the previous years.

11 press releases/news items were published in 2022 on the EFI website and EFI blog, on timely, relevant topics. Of these, the press release on the event of May 30th had the greatest impact and led to an international media coverage of more than 40 articles.

Expert presentations, hearings and statements: The authors of the From Science to Policy series, including the Policy Briefs were invited to online and in person meetings to present their study and to provide expert statements at various occasions. The number of requests shows that there is a high interest, and it further indicates the importance of these publications.

Feedback from the network: The publications and ThinkForest events have been tackling highly topical policy issues and have been considered absolutely timely. In particular, participants have appreciated that issues high up the political agenda (such as close to nature forestry, biodiversity protection and the climate mitigation potential of forests) have been brought to the discussion, and needed science-based information has been provided by the studies and ThinkForest webinars. ThinkForest online events have been highly valued by various Commission officials, national government civil servants, EFI Associate Member representatives, and forest-based sector stakeholders.

Contents

1. Introduction and background.....	5
1.1 <i>EFI Policy Support Facility Trust Fund.....</i>	<i>5</i>
1.2 <i>Trust Fund funding and management.....</i>	<i>7</i>
2. Activities and outputs	8
2.1 <i>Publications</i>	<i>8</i>
2.2 <i>ThinkForest events.....</i>	<i>11</i>
2.3 <i>Other outputs</i>	<i>16</i>
3. Impacts	19
3.1 <i>Downloads.....</i>	<i>20</i>
3.2 <i>Impact and feedback from stakeholders and network.....</i>	<i>21</i>
3.3 <i>Expert presentations, statements and hearings.....</i>	<i>22</i>
3.4 <i>Media impacts.....</i>	<i>24</i>
4. Reporting of expenses	25
4.1 <i>Background</i>	<i>25</i>
4.2 <i>Expenditures by cost category.....</i>	<i>26</i>
5. Current and emerging forest-related policy issues and trends in Europe	27
5.1 <i>Changes in the organizational structure and decreasing experience on forest-related issues in the European Commission</i>	<i>27</i>
5.2 <i>Expanding number of policy proposals relevant for the forest-based sector</i>	<i>28</i>
5.3 <i>Strengthened cooperation of Member States for the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy.....</i>	<i>29</i>
5.4 <i>Unclear role of forests and wood in serving EU policy objectives in a changing global policy framework</i>	<i>30</i>
6. Conclusions	33
Annexes	34
<i>Table 1: Country funding contributions</i>	
<i>Table 2: Online statistics</i>	
<i>Table 3: Number of ThinkForest participants according to background</i>	
<i>Table 4: Stakeholder follow-up articles related to events and publications</i>	
<i>Table 5: Media coverage</i>	
<i>Table 6: Publication citations</i>	

1. Introduction and background

1.1 EFI Policy Support Facility Trust Fund

The objective of the EFI Policy Support Facility Trust Fund (Trust Fund) is to support the operationalization of the activities of the EFI Policy Support Facility. The Trust Fund has started a new 5-year-period at the beginning of 2021, so 2022 marks the second year of this 5-year period.

The Steering Committee is the highest decision-making body of Trust Fund. The Steering Committee approves the Trust Fund work programme and related budget. The main aims and responsibilities of the Steering Committee are to provide *strategic guidance* on the activities of the Facility funded by the Trust Fund. It receives information from the EFI secretariat and gives feedback regarding the outputs, outcomes and impacts resulting from the activities of the Facility. The Steering Committee does not take part in the operation and management of the Trust Fund policy support work, science-policy studies, or the selection of the scientists conducting the studies. This is in line with the principle of safeguarding the scientific integrity of the actual science-policy work. However, the Steering Committee members can *comment* the science-policy study manuscripts, but they *do not review* them. That is, the decision how to incorporate, or not to incorporate, the possible Steering Committee comments to the studies, rests on the scientists.

The Steering Committee consists of a representative of each Member state and the Director of EFI or his authorized representative. The Chairs of the EFI Board and EFI Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), or a designated Board/SAB member, take part in the meetings as an observer. The membership of a Trust Fund member ends 12 months following the last contribution of the donor. The Steering Committee meets at least once a year, and maintains an active interaction through correspondence, and can meet informally in connection with other international meetings.

In 2022, the Trust Fund Steering Committee members were:

1. Harald Aalde, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Norway
2. Steven Dörr, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Germany
3. Katarina Dahlman, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland (from September 2022)
4. Alenka Korenjak, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia (from July 2021- January 2022)
5. Tomas Krejzar, Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Czech Republic
6. Nerijus Kupstaitis, Ministry of Environment, Lithuania
7. Fergus Moore, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland
8. Marc Palahí, EFI
9. Enrico Pompei, Ministero dell'Agricoltura, della sovranità alimentare e delle foreste, Italy
10. Magdalena Lackner, Federal Ministry on Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Austria
11. Simon Poljansek, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia (from February 2022)
12. Daniel Roures, Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain

13. Jan Svensson, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Sweden

14. Tatu Torniainen, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland (till July 2022)

The Trust Fund policy support work is managed and administrated by the EFI Policy Support Facility. The actual implementation of the science-policy studies is based on the work by EFI staff, its Associate Members, and the science community in general. The aim of the work is to:

- respond in a timely manner to policy makers' information needs with scientific-based analysis and information in an easily understandable and policy-relevant format and scale;
- support the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable policies and strategies relevant for the European forest-based sector;
- communicate effectively and consequently build a better understanding of forest-related issues, proactively involving policy makers, scientists and stakeholders.

The above objectives are carried out in particular through EFI Trust Fund science-policy publications (*From Science to Policy* reports and *What Science Can Tell Us* reports) and ThinkForest forum high-level science-policy seminars and online events. The ThinkForest forum events are usually chaired by its President. From July 2019 onwards Janez Potočnik, the former EU Commissioner for both Science and Research, and Environment, has been the ThinkForest President. The President's role has also been important in representing ThinkForest and EFI policy support work in different platforms (e.g., international conferences, webinars, videos), providing important networks and access to high-level policy makers, inviting speakers to the ThinkForest seminars and online events, and providing strategic advice for EFI management in science-policy support work.



ThinkForest President, Janez Potočnik, since July 2019.

1.2 Trust Fund funding and management

Funding: The members of the TF in 2021 were 11 countries: **Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden**. The total contribution of donors in 2022 was **523 372 euros**. The expenses of Trust Fund activities during 1 January to 31 December 2022 is estimated to have been **566 292 euros** (including 13% overheads; the exact amount will be known when the EFI accounts for 2021 are finalized in 2022).

According to the Trust Fund Guidelines, funding can be used to finance the following categories of expenditure:

- Policy Support Facility staff costs and travel expenses;
- EFI staff costs, consultant and expert fees and related expenses (including but not limited to travels) to coordinate and conduct studies and implement products and services;
- Costs for contracting EFI Associate and Affiliate Members and other relevant organizations for carrying out scientific assessments, policy studies, etc.;
- EFI staff costs and travel expenses related to the negotiations of the Trust Fund, its establishment and enlargement;
- Communication and media expenses, including publications (e.g. *From Science to Policy, What Science Can Tell Us* studies, policy briefs, EFI policy support newsletter, etc.), translations, and video and electronic media, media conferences, etc.;
- Workshop, conference, webinar and meeting expenses, including costs associated with presenters, publicity, translation and reporting; exchange of experts, training and demonstration events, etc.;
- Equipment;
- Office running costs;
- Costs for auditing of the Trust Fund and external evaluation of the Facility;
- Costs related to the Facility or the Trust Fund, not included above, that have the approval of the Trust Fund Steering Committee.

Management: The Trust Fund policy support work is managed and administrated by the *EFI Policy Support Facility*. It initiates, coordinates, carries out and disseminates science-based analysis and synthesis assessments for policy makers, stakeholders, media and the public at large. It supports science-policy dialogue and functions as a go-between scientists and policy makers. One of the main activities is also the managing and operation of ThinkForest Forum, the high-level science-policy information, discussion and information-sharing forum.

Based on feedback from the Steering Committee members, EFI prepares an annual work plan and an associated budget which is approved by the Steering Committee. The team responsible for managing and administrating the Trust Fund policy support work in 2022 was:

Helga Pülzl, Assistant Director, EFI

Rach Colling, Head of Communications, EFI

Jarkko Haltia, Administrative Officer, EFI

Harald Mauser, Brussels Liaison Officer, EFI

Ulla Vanttinen, Communications Officer, Events, EFI

Maria Schloßmacher, Communications Officer, EFI

2. Activities and outputs

The activities under Trust Fund for Policy Support were of many different types during 2022. The flagship activities are the ThinkForest webinars and science-policy publications. In addition, a number of related and supporting activities were carried out, such as the policy support newsletter, videos, policy support webpage, social media activities, expert statements and presentations in policy forums/webinars, and efforts to get new countries to join the Trust Fund. This chapter gives more detailed information about these activities.

2.1 Publications

2.1.1. Science-policy studies

PSF publications build on existing EFI series, with the aim of creating a cascade of products, targeted at different audiences and purposes. Their main objective is to synthesise existing science analysis and results, and draw policy implications based on these, to inform policy making and stakeholders' work. The text is accordingly written in a format that is easily accessible to these target groups. To help wider distribution and impact, the studies or their Executive Summaries are also translated to other languages, when needed. So far, the translations include Chinese, Czech, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish editions.

To ensure maximum impact and findability, from 2019 onwards all EFI publications have been given Digital Object Identifier or **DOI references**. This is a string of numbers, letters and symbols used to identify an article or document and link it to the web. A DOI helps a reader easily locate a document and makes the publications more citable.

In 2022, EFI relaunched its policy brief series. Each policy brief brings together scientific knowledge on a policy-relevant topic in a short, easy-to-read format for all readers, in particular policymakers.

EFI series	No of pages	Purpose
<i>What Science Can Tell Us</i> (WSCTU)	80-100	Synthesis of large scope studies. Main target groups: civil servants, policy makers' assistants, stakeholders, experts, researchers
<i>From Science to Policy</i> (FSTP)	28-50	Synthesis of a specific topic, carried out within a short timeframe (typically in 4-8 months). Main target groups: civil servants, policy makers' assistants, stakeholders, experts, researchers
<i>Knowledge to Action</i> (K2A)	12-60	Presents the results of research (or topic synthesis), an initiative or project in an attractive format. Main target groups: society, stakeholders, policy-makers, media.
<i>Policy Briefs *NEW*</i>	2	Brings together a summary of scientific knowledge on a

(PB)		policy-relevant topic.
------	--	------------------------

In 2022, two From Science to Policy publications were published, as well as two associated policy briefs. The policy briefs were translated into German, with French, Italian and Spanish and their publication are planned in the first quarter of 2023.



From Science to Policy 13: Forest Biodiversity in Europe

<https://doi.org/10.36333/fs13>

The report was coordinated by Prof Bart Muys from KU Leuven. It had 13 authors from 12 institutions, and 10 countries.

Policy Brief 1: How can we effectively maintain and enhance forest biodiversity in Europe?

<https://doi.org/10.36333/pb1>

Author affiliations	Countries represented
Czech University of Life Sciences*	Belgium
EFI	Czechia
Finnish Environment Institute*	Denmark
KU Leuven*	Finland
INRAE* / University of Bordeaux	France
Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London	Germany
Julius Maximilians University Würzburg / Bavarian Forest National Park	Romania
Slovenian Forestry Institute*	Slovenia
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences SLU*	Sweden
University of Copenhagen*	UK
University of Freiburg*	
Universitatea Stefan cel Mare*	

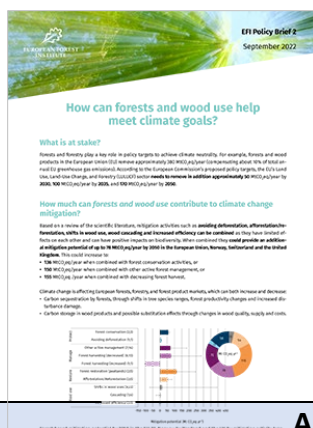
*EFI Associate or Affiliate Member organization



From Science to Policy 14: Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe

<https://doi.org/10.36333/fs14>

The report was coordinated by Dr Hans Verkerk from EFI. It had 11 authors from 9 institutions, and 7 countries.



Policy Brief 2: How can forests and wood use help meet climate goals?

<https://doi.org/10.36333/pb2>

Author affiliations	Countries represented
EFI Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change Forest Research* INRAE* Natural Resources Institute Finland* Norwegian University of Life Sciences* Potsdam Institute for Climate Change* University of Helsinki* World Wildlife Fund	Finland France Germany Italy Norway UK USA

*EFI Associate or Affiliate Member organization

2.1.2 Policy support mailings

The *Policy Support Highlights* mailing list sends information to subscribers about ThinkForest events and TF-funded studies, in addition to more general news items on current TF themes. Subscription was actively promoted during the year (e.g. during registration for events), and by the end of 2022, the list totalled some c.1087 subscribers. Information about events was also cross-posted to the general EFI Highlights mailing list.

Analysis showed better open and click-through rates for single-issue mailings rather than newsletters, consequently this was the focus for 2022. More detailed information is available in the Annex, under Online Statistics.

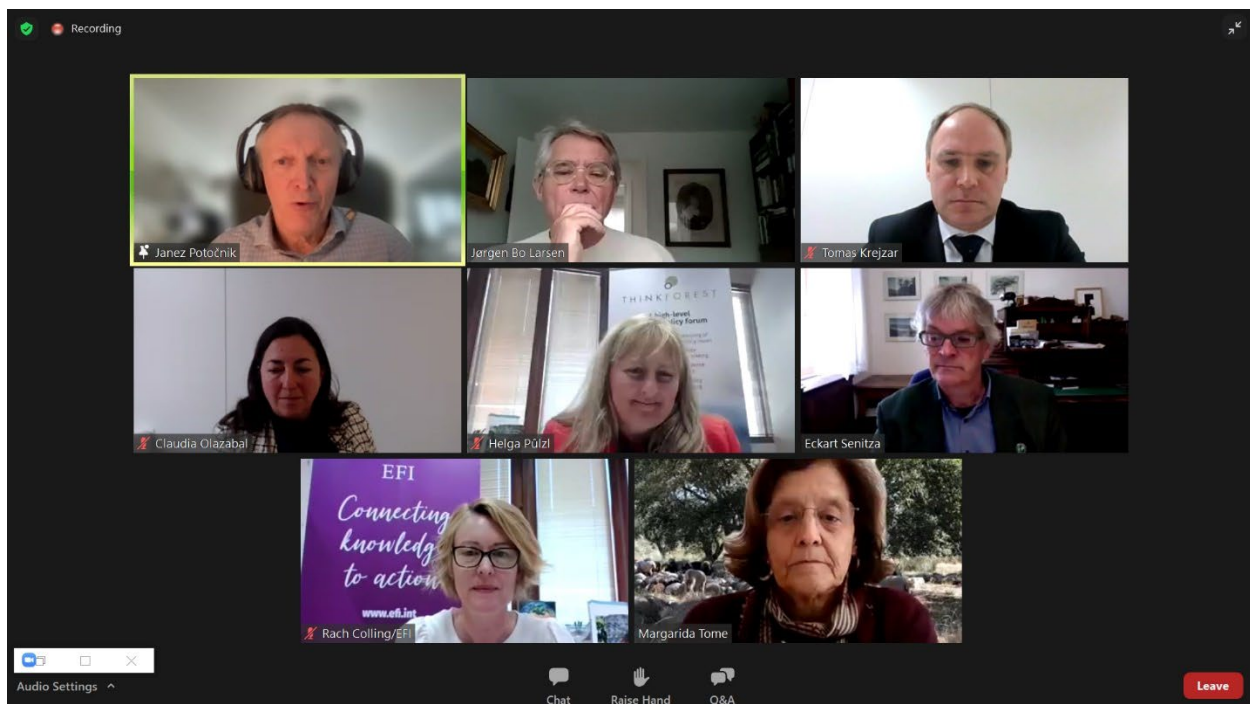
2.2. ThinkForest events

Closer-to-Nature Forest Management, 6 April 2022

Online webinar

Recording: <https://youtu.be/lw1NasD22ig>

European forests are under increasing strain, thanks to current climate and biodiversity crises and increased human activities and pressures. The ThinkForest event brought together scientists and policymakers to explore how the concept of Closer-to-Nature Forest Management could help to integrate different management objectives, including biodiversity and adaptation.



Prof. Jørgen Bo Larsen presented the results of EFI's Closer-to-Nature Forest Management study (<https://doi.org/10.36333/fs12>) The report builds on the latest scientific evidence to support defining the concept of Closer-to-Nature Forest Management, based on a set of seven guiding principles.

"If we cannot develop forest for future climate and other challenges, we will not only lose biodiversity, but also all other functions forests should deliver for our children and grandchildren", he said. Different regions need different management approaches, but we can use adaptive management as a way to tackle uncertainties. However, this is not a quick-fix – long-term measures (including policy measures to support forest owners in the transformation), are needed.

A lively panel discussion highlighted some of the opportunities – and barriers – for implementing Closer-to-Nature Forest Management in Europe. Claudia Olazabal outlined how the European Commission has started to develop guidelines on Closer-to-Nature Forest Management. She emphasised the need for inclusive governance, as forests are a societal discussion.

Panel discussions also focused on how Closer-to-Nature Forest Management needs to be a system in which all forest owners can engage, where forest management develops biodiversity and resilience but is also profitable, in terms of wood extraction and payments for ecosystem services. Fragmentation of forest ownership is a challenge when working at a landscape level, and support for forest owners is crucial. Forest advisory services, networking, cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange on best practices are needed, as Closer-to-Nature Forest Management is a knowledge intensive approach. The discussions emphasized that we need to motivate forest owners rather than be restrictive. Legislation and policies need to be flexible to allow many approaches – for example payments for ecosystem services could come from both public and private funding.

ThinkForest President Janez Potocnik concluded that the implementation of Closer-to-Nature Forest Management needs collective learning, with close cooperation between policymakers, scientists and practitioners. "We need to build resilient economies and societies. Review existing subsidy regimes. Convince private owners of the approach. Develop and use new technologies and tools for this more diverse and structure-rich forest".

The webinar was followed live by 185 participants. The event was recorded and the video has been watched 581 times by the end of 2022. Out of all registered participants (366), 10 were country representatives (ministries and embassies). Other main participant groups were researchers (137), NGOs (47) forest owners and forest industry (39).

What science can tell us about Forest Biodiversity in Europe, 30 May 2022 Sibiu, Romania

Recording: <https://youtu.be/SCmxHvGYjkw?t=780>

Speech by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales: <https://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speech/speech-prince-wales-european-forest-institute-romania>



Photo credit: Romanian Ministry of Environment.

Leading scientists, experts and practitioners met in Sibiu, Romania on 30 May to launch Europe's largest cross border forest restoration project. The ThinkForest science-policy event celebrated a growing movement to restore forest biodiversity and advance the circular bioeconomy, for the benefit of people and the planet.

The event was opened by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, who the same day launched a landscape restoration project in the Carpathian mountains, funded by his [Circular Bioeconomy Alliance](#) and developed in collaboration with the Horizon 2020 project SUPERB.

The Romanian Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests Barna Tănczos joined HRH for the opening of the event.

His Royal Highness [emphasised in his opening speech](#) that we have to rethink our economy if we want to rewrite our future. We need a circular bioeconomy, investing in three mutually reinforcing areas: biodiversity, innovation and local and indigenous communities. The rest of the world can learn from the way Romania has relied on regenerative approaches to create rich landscapes in areas such as Transylvania, where man lives in harmony with nature.

The ThinkForest event also marked the launch of the 20m euro Horizon 2020 project, SUPERB, coordinated by the European Forest Institute. The project involves more than 100 forest science and practice organizations in 20 different countries and includes 12 large-scale forest restoration demonstration sites across Europe. One of the sites is located in the Romanian Carpathian mountains.

Prof. Bart Muys presented a new EFI [science-policy study on Forest Biodiversity in Europe](#) at the event. Written by a group of distinguished scientists from 10 European countries, the study provides policymakers as well as forest and landscape managers with a better understanding of the complex subject of biodiversity in the context of European forests.

142 participants and various media representatives attended the event in person. Approximately 900 people watched the live webstreaming on YouTube, which was recorded. Since then, the video has been watched 5932 times by the end of 2022.

**ThinkForest Roundtable lunch seminar on European forest-based sector climate change mitigation,
15 June 2022
Brussels**

The ThinkForest Roundtable Discussion discussed European forest-based sector climate change mitigation and its connection to the EC LULUCF proposal.

The Roundtable Discussion was initialized by the presentation of a new EFI study on Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe by lead author Dr Hans Verkerk. The presentation was followed by short comments and discussions on the topic with policymakers. Attendance was by invitation only and it offered the possibility to ask questions and discuss about the scientific evidence and its implications.

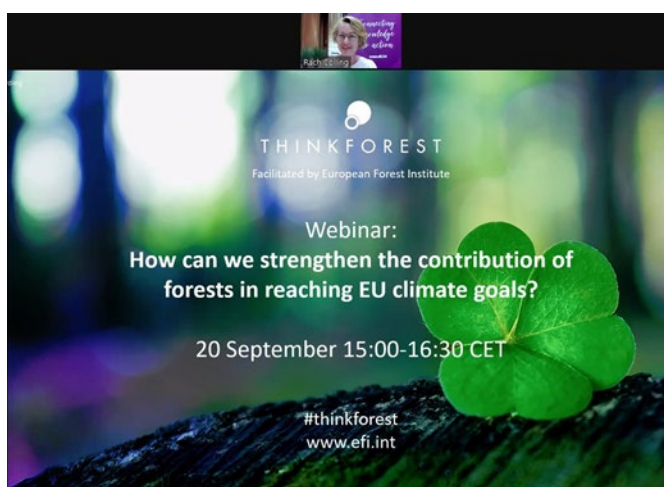
**How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals? 20 September 2022
Online webinar**

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp4T7i6bwLU>

The ThinkForest event brought together scientists, architects and policymakers to explore how forests and wood use can help meet climate goals.

Janez Potocnik, the ThinkForest president, opened the webinar by reflecting on the many current crises and challenges, pointing out that the best and most efficient way to link and boost solutions to any crises is always to improve resilience.

Dr Hans Verkerk, Principal Scientist at EFI, presented the results of a new EFI study on 'Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe' that he coordinated. The report analyses how much forests and wood use can contribute to climate change mitigation, and how that contribution can be maximised. The multidisciplinary team of 12 authors from 7 countries conclude that European forests and wood products can provide a significant contribution to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 - but their contribution is finite and can by no means compensate for delayed actions in other sectors.



Webinar to launch the new publication “Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe”

Related policy and management strategies should not just focus on one activity. Combining all possible mitigation activities will maximise forest-based mitigation potential. However, the mitigation pathways depend on where you are – as forests across countries and regions differ, so too should implementation strategies.

A lively panel discussion on the implementation highlighted further some of the issues raised in the report. Panellists emphasised that the diversity of systems across the EU has to be respected, and that we do not have a single recipe for all Europe – interventions have to be customized to the local context and have to reconcile various expectations across the landscape. Policies targeted to single goals will not deliver.

Panel discussions also emphasised that solid monitoring and reliable data is key, to be able to evaluate carefully the impacts of mitigation activities and assess what is a success. We need to measure better to manage better! In addition, planning is vital - it is important to integrate forest resilience and climate adaptation in any climate mitigation adaptation, and it has to be planned beyond 2050.

The panellists also emphasised that sharing of knowledge is key (for example via very recently started EU research projects like ForestPaths), and that here common terminology and understanding is needed. Communicating the complexity of the topic is crucial, especially as mitigation and adaption needs local stakeholders. For example, in the built environment and construction taking account of the circularity of whole value chains (including eg. production of materials to eco-design to waste management and reuse) are important, together with reference projects. This could help overcome cultural barriers eg towards the use of engineered wood products.

The webinar was followed live by 237 participants in total. The event was recorded and the video has been watched 250 times by the end of 2022.

2.3. Other outputs

2.3.1. Online activities

The EFI website is an important tool in policy support communication activities, as it acts as a central, easily accessible and durable source of information about activities. Whether arriving via Google search or via social media channels, users can easily find more information, eg via the:

- Policy Support Facility page (www.efi.int/policysupport)
- ThinkForest events page (www.efi.int/policysupport/thinkforest)
- Dedicated subpage for each new ThinkForest event including mini-biographies of key speakers, programme, background information etc (this is updated after each event to include relevant news releases, photos, presentations and videos).
- All publications are deposited in the site-wide Publications Bank (www.efi.int/publications-bank).

As reported in 2021, a sub-site (www.efi.int/forestquestions) was set up for materials from the Key questions on forests in the EU report (K2A04), providing an extended answer for each question, with detailed referencing.

Launched in March 2021, the sub-site had approx. 10,500 page views by the end of 2021. This doubled to **approx. 20,000 page views in 2022**.

Highlight - Web pages	Page views 2022	Page views 2021
Forest questions (/forest questions) plus subpages	19,978	10,500

In 2022, the subsite was expanded to include **German, French, Spanish and Italian translations** of questions. In addition, **new questions** were added, and the site was reorganised, with new thematic navigation introduced.

What role do forests play in the water cycle?

Key forest questions

Topic area 1: Forest resources in Europe

Topic area 2: Forests and climate change

Topic area 3: Forests and biodiversity

How can we effectively maintain and enhance forest biodiversity in Europe?

How does management affect biodiversity?

What role do forests play in the water cycle?

Topic area 4: Forests and society

Deutsche Übersetzung

Download graphics

Watch the animation

Key forest questions /

Read the short summaries

- EN: [What role do forests play in the water cycle?](#)
- DE: [Welche Rolle spielen die Wälder im Wasserkreislauf?](#)
- ES: [¿Qué papel desempeñan los bosques en el ciclo del agua?](#)
- FR: [Quel est le rôle joué par les forêts dans le cycle de l'eau ?](#)

Authors: [Bart Muys](#) (KU Leuven), [David Ellison](#) (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences SLU), [Sven Wunder](#) (EFI)

Clean, fresh water has become a key asset of the 21st century, becoming ever more expensive and increasingly becoming a source of conflict (e.g. Gleick 2014). On the one hand, increasing world population and in most places rising per capita consumption drive a continuous rise in demand. On the other hand, global environmental change is further enhancing water scarcity, including climate change induced dry spells and land conversions that reorient rainwater allocation away from green water production toward faster surface runoff. Together these trends are leading to chronic shortages of these valuable resources, both worldwide and across Europe. Among the countries with a critical freshwater balance worldwide, we note several European countries, such as Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain (Reig et al. 2013).

Against this background, forests play an essential role in the stable provision of clean, fresh water and many other water-related ecosystem services, such as flood and erosion protection and climate regulation (Table 1). Additionally, next to all the things we have known about forest-water interactions for many years, the last

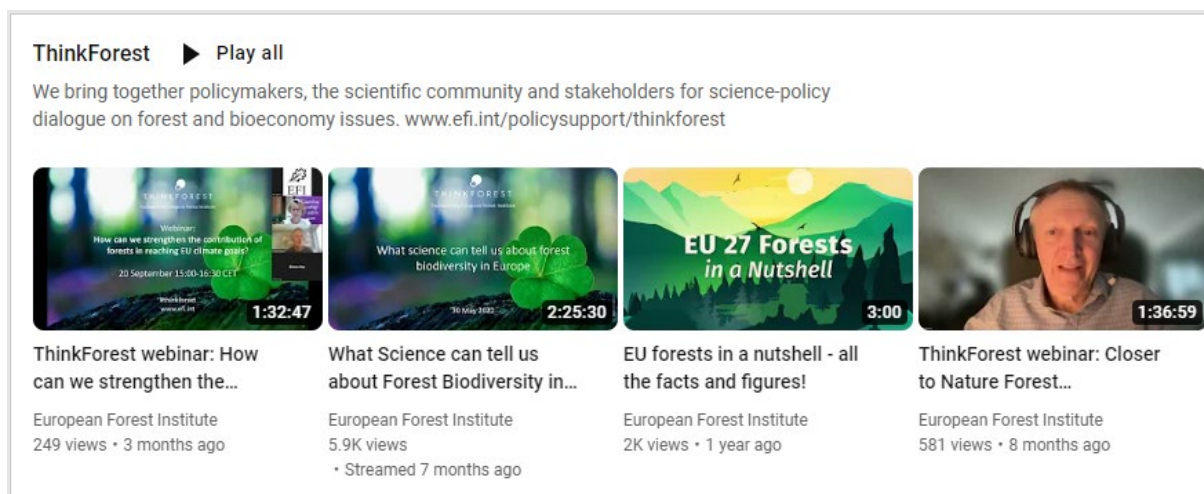
Website

Access to the policy support and ThinkForest pages on the website remains high. Visitors arrive at the website from social media, with particularly high interest in ThinkForest events and activities.

Web pages	Page views 2022	Page views 2021
Policy support main landing page (policysupport/)	1,045	1,106
Our work (policysupport/ourwork)	226	193
ThinkForest: (policysupport/thinkforest/) plus subpages	7,265	6,581

VIDEOS

In 2022, all ThinkForest events apart from the Brussels lunch were accessed as webinars. The webinar recordings were made available afterwards via the EFI YouTube channel, giving a lasting record of ThinkForest discussions.



Video	Published	Recording views 2022
ThinkForest webinar: Closer to Nature Forest Management	6.04.2022	581
What Science can tell us about Forest Biodiversity in Europe	30.05.2022	5,931
ThinkForest webinar: How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals?	20.09.2022	248

More details are available in the Annex, in the Online Statistics section.

Previous videos published before 2022 are constantly watched and produce ongoing impact (see Annex for number of recorded views). Please also note that in our media/social media communications are relate to those older videos and publications as well.

SOCIAL MEDIA

During 2022, TF-funded policy support work was promoted via EFI's social media channels, to reach a geographically widespread audience. Considerable audience growth took place on LinkedIn in 2022.

Social media channel	Number of followers (31 Dec 2022)	Number of followers (31 Dec 2021)	Number of followers (31 Dec 2020)
Twitter (main EFI account)	13,759	11,950	10,300
Facebook	10,000	9,560	8,141
LinkedIn	20,691	14,830	11,450
YouTube	1,870	1,553	1,210

2.3.2. Other policy relevant documents

Two documents were developed in 2022 that have not been published yet:

- a. Bouriaud, L. et. al. New concepts, same forests: the role of SFM and other forest-related concepts to solve competing interests and needs on forest ecosystem services. A literature review. (upcoming)
- b. Wydra, D. A matter of impact: possibilities for bridging the science-policy gap. (upcoming)

Both publications were presented in policy-relevant workshops and will be published during the year 2023. The first paper deals with the sustainable forest management concept and a large range of similar, but different forest-related concepts. Based on a literature review it aims to compare across them to understand how SFM is different or similar to those other concepts. The second paper is also based on an extensive literature review in order to understand how to bridge the science-policy to maintain and increase impact for scientific knowledge. This work was used to prepare the science-policy impact workshop that took place in the beginning of January 2023.

Enlarging the TF

The Trust Fund started in January 2015 with 8 countries: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Sweden. In 2016 Spain joined, in 2017 the Czech Republic and in 2018 Lithuania. However, at the end of 2018, France stepped down from the TF.

Currently Central-, Northern-, Southern and Eastern Europe are all represented in the TF. During 2020-21, active efforts to engage more European countries to TF were taken by the EFI Director and Assistant Director, and in 2021 Slovenia joined. Poland albeit being interested in joining the TF for a considerable time informed EFI that they were no longer able to become a member. Discussions are ongoing with other three European countries. More countries are to be approached during 2023.

3. Impacts

The EFI Trust Fund for Policy Support work has received a lot of positive feedback during 2022 and it has reached a wide audience through its various activities. The impact indicators given in this Report show a

robust continuation of Trust activities impact (see Appendix). Due to continued COVID19 restrictions it was not possible to receive a lot of direct feed-back on the activities in the ThinkForest networking events, nor in large face-to-face meetings with the policy-makers, stakeholders, etc, hoping that this will be more frequently possible in 2023 and in the next years to come.

The feedback given during and after the webinars and as well as other events and meetings was very positive. Especially the webinars provided a platform that allowed the participants to interact, raise questions and proceed in high-level discussions. Further, the online format permitted bigger audiences, hence more visibility for the publications including the reach-out to new persons that have never participated before. An increased number of downloads of the publications is a very positive sign and underlines the continuous interest for the selected topics both from the policy-maker and science community. Given that policy-makers and policy advisors have less time available the new EFI Policy Brief series aims at meeting those target groups with shorter texts and graphics. Again, download rates of the first two policy briefs indicate the need to have those shorter reading formats. With the updated forest questions page and translating them to different languages a new audience can be reached out to.

During multiple personal meetings and discussions that EFI's Director, Assistant Director and Brussel's Liaison Officer had during 2022 with European Parliament MEPs, European Commission staff, national ministries and stakeholders, very positive feedback was given for the Trust Fund policy support work. Overall, these impacts show that this form of policy support provides not only a unique, but needed platform for pan-European forest-based sector science-policy work.

3.1 Downloads

The electronic copies of these studies again proved very popular. A detailed overview of the downloads of all major Trust Fund publications produced to date (2015 onwards) can be found in the Annex, p. 49ff. In 2022, two editions of the From Science to Policy series were published.

Title	Publication date	No of electronic copies downloaded 2022*	DOI resolutions** 2022	Lifetime copies downloaded (since publication)
PB2 (Forests and wood use to meet climate goals)	Sept 2022	442	968	442
FSTP14 (Climate change mitigation potential)	Sept 2022	1070	2037	1070
PB1 (Forest biodiversity in Europe)	Aug 2022	526	401	526
FSTP13 (Forest biodiversity in Europe)	May 2022	1669	2356	1669

* In 2020 we moved to a new system of measurement for online downloads, with consequently smaller figures.

*** DOI resolutions: shows the number of people who have clicked on the DOI address for a publication*

From Science to Policy 13 "[Forest biodiversity in Europe](#)" was downloaded 1669 times from the EFI website since its publication in May, the corresponding Policy Brief received 526 downloads till the end of 2022. The most recent publication From Science to Policy 14 "[Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe](#)" was downloaded 1070 times; the Policy Brief 442 times. The number of people who accessed the publications via DOI were also extremely high.

3.2. Impact and feedback from stakeholders and network

The continued COVID19 impacts in 2022 decreased the possibility to have a lot of those face-to-face meetings with the relevant network who participates in and follows Trust Fund activities. Consequently, the direct responses to the Trust Fund activities were much scarcer relative to the previous years. However, during continued online exchanges including with member states representatives, European Commission services, forest stakeholders and Non-governmental Organisation as well as scientists, covering both natural and social scientists, the results of Trust Fund publications were presented and discussed. This work was well received and found policy relevant.

The EFI Director had several meetings with His Royal Highness Prince of Wales (HRH) now His Majesty the King Charles III, and in those meetings discussed also the work based on Trust Fund publications. Under the patronage of HRH, the Circular Bioeconomy Alliance was established in 2020, which the EFIs Director coordinates.

In summary, both the direct and indirect impacts of the Trust Fund work carried out in past years and in 2022 have had an impact at a high level of policy.

ThinkForest webinars

In summary, the events have been considered to be timely and tackling topical issues. In particular, participants have appreciated that issues high on the political agenda have been brought to the discussion, and additional science-based information has been provided by the publications and ThinkForest webinars. ThinkForest webinars have been considered important e.g. by European Commission staff and Brussels-based stakeholders. Below are some examples of the comments received.

ThinkForest webinar Closer to Nature Forest Management

This ThinkForest webinar was followed live by 185 participants. By end of December 2022, a recording of the webinar had been watched 581 times. Out of all registered participants, the main participant groups were researchers (137), NGOs (47), forest owners and forest industry (39), other stakeholder groups (25). Below you'll find some feedback related to this webinar as received in anonymous feedback questionnaire:

Feedback (examples)

The presentation of the report was very good! And it was obvious that the moderator had prepared the panel in a very professional way. Very interesting and useful even! I learned a lot! The panel members did very well in presenting their views. It was efficient, useful, and entertaining and inspiring at the same time.

30 more minutes would have been nice, with answers to more questions - but that would make the webinar longer and in need of a pause 😊.

The panel discussion was very insightful.

The topic was highly relevant.

ThinkForest webinar How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals?

This ThinkForest webinar was followed live by 230 participants. By end of December 2022, a recording of the webinar had been watched 250 times. Out of all registered participants, the main participant groups were researchers (149), International Organisations and other (55) and NGOs (28). Below you'll find some feedback related to this webinar as received in anonymous feedback questionnaire:

Feedback (examples)

Excellent introduction and moderation, very good experts/speakers, very interesting discussion.

The way multiple contributions have been presented in a compact and followable way.

I in particular liked the choice of speakers.

The general flow from the chairman to the individual talkers and especially the direct questions at the end. The questions were very topically and the answers easily to follow even for the non- specialists.

3.3. Expert presentations, statements and hearings

In 2022 two editions of the From Science to Policy series have been published as well as two Policy Briefs. The authors have presented the publications in various occasions and in different formats.

Publication	Presenter / event
<p>“Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe” From Science to Policy 14 (Published, September 2022)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verkerk, H. Discussion with EU Parliament and Commission Members at Forest Think Tank Roundtable lunch seminar on European forest-based sector climate change mitigation in Brussels, Belgium. 15 June 2022 2. Reyer, CPO. <i>Rohstoff Holz: Rettung oder Untergang?</i>. Panel Discussion at Waldklimagipfel. Wohllebens Waldakademie, 4 October 2022. 3. Reyer, CPO. “Controversies around the German (and European) forest carbon sink”, PIK internal seminar. 11 November 2022. 4. Mäkipää, R. MEP breakfast meeting on ‘Forests and the wood-based bioeconomy – Beyond the Bio-Bubble’, European Parliament, Brussels, 29 Nov 2022 5. Verkerk, H. Climate smart forestry: introducing the FORWARDS and ForestPaths projects at the “Old-growth forests in the context of climate policy: information for decision-makers”. 8 December 2022
<p>“Forest Biodiversity in Europe” From Science to Policy 13 (Published, May 2022)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Muys, B. Hearing on the European Forest Strategy in the Environment Commission of the European Parliament, “Forest management for multiple ecosystem services” online, 28 February 2022 2. Muys, B. Kick-off meeting of the EU Horizon 2020 project and ThinkForest Event presenting the EFI FS2P 13 study on Forest biodiversity in Europe “What science can tell us about Forest Biodiversity in Europe”, Sibiu, 30 May 2022 3. Muys, B. Forest Europe High-Level Policy Dialogue 2022, “Science-base for biodiversity-focused forest management in Europe” Bonn, 30 August 2022 4. Muys, B. Conference in the framework of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Climate adaptation conference Designing Climate Resilient Landscape, “How can forests contribute to resilient landscapes in Europe?” Prague, 13 September 2022 5. Muys, B. Annual meeting of the Rectors and Deans of the European Life Sciences Universities “Enhancement of Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems”, Kaunas, 20 October 2022 6. Muys, B. Joint IUFRO/ SUPERB webinar, “Biodiversity as a key asset for Forest Restoration in Europe”, online, 14. December 2022

Presentations based on several TF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pülzl, H. Waldpolitik der EU: zwischen Fragementierung und Integration, DFWR-EU Symposium „Wald trifft Politik“, 29th April, 2022 2. Pülzl, H. European Union – forest policy and decision making, IFSA -IUFRO Webinar with Ukraine (online), 11th July 2022
-----------------------------------	--

studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Pülzl, H. European Union – forest and biodiversity governance. Symposium: forest policies and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services in a changing world, ECC Congress, 26th August 2022 4. Bouriaud, L. and Cosofret, C.– Forest-related concepts -new concepts, same forests? Forest Euroep, Think Tank Meeting 30th November 2022 5. Wydra, D. Bridging the science-policy gap. What Literature tells us. Science-Policy Impact Workshop, European Forestry House, Brussels
---------	---

3.4. Media impacts

There was active contact with the media during 2022, with news items/press releases and invitations to ThinkForest events.

11 press releases/news items were published in 2022 on the EFI website and EFI blog, on timely, relevant topics.

22.12.2022 [Should the EU have its own forest policy?](#)
12.12.2022 [Is there enough wood?](#)
26.09.2022 [ThinkForest explores how forests and wood use can help meet climate goals](#)
20.09.2022 [New study analyses how forests and wood use can help meet climate goals](#)
30.08.2022 [EFI launches new policy brief series](#)
12.08.2022 [EFI to participate in FOREST EUROPE High-Level Talks](#)
30.05.2022 [HRH The Prince of Wales launches restoration of forest landscapes in Romania](#)
30.05.2022 [New EFI study launched - Maintaining and enhancing forest biodiversity in Europe](#)
20.05.2022 [Focus on forest biodiversity](#)
21.04.2022 [Why is natural resource management so important?](#)
07.04.2022 [ThinkForest discussions explore Closer-to-Nature Forest Management](#)

Of these, the press release about the 30 May ThinkForest event in Romania had the greatest impact, thanks to intensive collaboration with the British Embassy in Bucharest. Many journalists from different media have participated in the event and during the following week, over 40 articles were published (see Annex Table 5, media coverage).

Media invitations and notifications

Press invitations were distributed by email, using an off-the-shelf system, Meltwater. This allows you to create distribution lists based on country and the journalist's 'beat' (area of specialism), and to monitor whether each invitation has been opened.

Meltwater covers all journalists in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA. In addition, a separate in-house list of Brussels-based correspondents is used; this was updated in 2022.

Journalists were sent invitations to ThinkForest events, and eg press releases about relevant publications, depending on their area of work.

Event/Publication	Mailing list size	% read	Media registration for event	Media articles
Media invitation: Closer to Nature Forest Management webinar, 06.04.2022	250	30.8%	4	0
Media invitation: What science can tell us about forest biodiversity and restoration in Europe, 30.05.2022	194	30.93%	n/a	>40
HRH The Prince of Wales launches restoration of forest landscapes in Romania	410	29.02%	n/a	>40
Media invitation: How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals?	273	46.15%	2	0
New study analyses how forests and wood use can help meet climate goals	275	46.18%	n/a	10

Media attendance and immediate coverage of live events is often limited, with journalists mostly using events as an opportunity to gain background information on a subject. Journalists also watch the recording afterwards, although this is only possible to validate anecdotally. In case of the event on May 30th, the invitation process for media representatives was organized by the British Embassy.

4. Reporting of expenses

4.1 Background

The general background principle for reporting of the funding and budgeting of the Trust Fund for 2022 is given here. Due to the time lag between closing of the accounts, as of 20 January 2022 (time of writing this) the financial accounts for EFI 2022 have not yet been closed.

According to the Trust Fund rules however money can only be spent upon receipt. So, if contributions are received in December, they can in most cases only be spent the following year.

4.2 Expenditures by cost category

In 2022 the Trust Fund funded partial salaries of the Assistant Director managing the TF, Communication Officer responsible for the administration and event organisation, Administrative Officer responsible for administrative procedures (e.g. contracting) of Trust Fund SC, Head of Communications responsible for the Trust Fund communication, and Brussels Liaison Officer supporting the dissemination and increasing the impact of the Trust Fund work and networking in Brussels (all positions partly funded by Trust Fund). These salary costs were linked to the general management, planning, administration, communication, networking, and coordination of the Trust Fund work. All the other salaries paid from Trust Fund to EFI staff were related directly to specific policy support activities and Work Packages.

Besides the salaries, expenses related to the expenditure categories listed under the Trust Fund Guidelines (shown also in Chapter 1.2) were covered by the Trust Fund funding.

According to Trust Fund Guidelines, 13% is allocated to overheads (indirect costs). Compared to common practices, this is a low share. For example, in European Commission Horizon 2020 overheads is 25% for research and innovation projects. Indeed, in the Trust Fund case, the 13% overheads can be viewed to cover the usage of EFI brand, some of the EFI staff costs (e.g., Director's work input, ad hoc and small administration work input), maintenance of administration software (e.g. budgeting software), office rent and office maintenance costs, etc. The staff costs related to the Trust Fund activities (e.g., coordination, management, administration, EFI lawyer costs related to subcontracting and country agreements, working for the publications and ThinkForest webinars) are reported under Trust Fund salaries, not overheads.

The activities under Trust Fund have been organized for administrative and cost following purposes under Work Packages (WP). In 2022, costs were related to following WPs:

1. FPS Multi-Donor Trust Fund General
2. FPS TF WP11: European forest facts
3. FPS TF WP13: Environmental impacts of using wood for construction and textiles
4. FPS TF WP14: European forest-based sector climate change mitigation
5. FPS TF WP15: Enhancing and financing forest biodiversity in Europe
6. FPS TF WP16: Study on Meeting EU Forestry Goals
7. FPS TF WP17: Workshops
8. FPS TF WP18: Literature Review on SFM
9. FPS TF WP19: Taxonomy and biodiversity Criteria

5. Current and emerging forest-related policy issues and trends in Europe

According to the TF Guidelines “EFI will provide on a yearly basis a broad overview (summary) of the current and emerging European forest-related policy issues and trends”. This chapter seeks to fulfil this objective.

This chapter describes important developments in the EU framework relevant for forest and wood related policies that took place in 2022.

5.1 Changes in the organizational structure and decreasing experience on forest-related issues in the European Commission

The handling of forest-related topics continued to shift in the European Commission (EC), from Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) to the Directorate General for Environment (DG ENV). Questions to DG AGRI on the implementation of the 'New EU Forest Strategy for 2030' (EFS) were referred to DG ENV. DG ENV invited to the autumn meeting of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) although according to the rules of procedure of the SFC this is the responsibility of DG AGRI. In the AGRI Council, the report on the progress of implementing the EFS was presented by Commissioner Sinkevičius, responsible for the environment, instead of Commissioner Wojciechowski, responsible for agriculture and rural development.

In the beginning of 2022, a reorganization of DG AGRI led to closing of the previous unit “D.4 Environment, climate change, forestry and bio-economy”. Forest topics are now handled by the newly established unit “B.2 Environmental Sustainability”. While a small number of former staff members continues to deal with forest issues in the new unit, the long-time leader of the forest team moved to another unit. In November 2022, staff rotation in DG ENV resulted in changes of head position of three units dealing with forest-related topics: D1: Land Use and Management, D2: Natural Capital & Ecosystem Health, D3: Nature Conservation leading to a loss of forest-related expertise. The Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) was also reorganized. The responsibility for the wood-working industries moved from unit “I1: Energy Intensive Industries and Raw Materials” to “H1: Construction”. DG GROW chairs the “Expert Group on Forest-based Industries and Sectorally Related Issues” which offers a platform for Member States and stakeholders to discuss EU policy items relevant for the wood-processing industries. The staff member with the longest working experience in this field retired in autumn. Overall, the result is a continued decrease in experiences on forests and the forest-based sector within the EC staff.

To simplify forest governance and create a coherent dialogue with Member States the Commission proposed in the EU Forest Strategy the merging of the SFC with the Working Group on Forest and Nature led by DG ENV into one single expert group with the mandate to reflect all the environmental, social, and economic objectives. However according to the EU rules, the reorganization of the SFC cannot be done by the EC itself. The EC has to propose a decision to the European Parliament and the

Council to amend Council Decision 89/367/EEC of 29 May 1989 setting up a Standing Forestry Committee. So far, no draft was presented. Consequently, the SFC has continued to work under its current rules of procedure. It established on 16 September a sub-group relating to the development of a proposal for a new EU framework for forest monitoring and strategic plans. This group has started already its work, including two meetings taking place in the second half of 2022.

The Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork (CDG) will not be continued after the expiry of its current term by end of 2022. Again, according to the EU Forest Strategy, the creation of a new stakeholder group based on this Civil Dialogue Group and the Working Group Forests and Nature to respond to the widened scope for forest policy was suggested. An agreement on the terms of reference for such a new group is needed not only within DG AGRI, but also with several other DGs, the Secretariat General of the EC and the cabinets of the involved Commissioners. Given its complexity such an agreement was not reached by end of 2022. A call for applications for membership in the new group was planned for November 2022, the appointment of members was planned for December, neither did not happen yet. Consequently, the new group is not operational as planned by the beginning of 2023.

5.2 Expanding number of policy proposals relevant for the forest-based sector

Since the start of the new EC led by President Von der Leyen in summer 2019, 21 new EU legislative acts and 17 non-legislative strategies and resolutions with direct relevance for forestry and/ or the wood-processing industries have entered into force. 10 of these new initiatives were completed in 2022. Another 18 legal proposals relevant to the forest-based sector have been debated by the co-legislators, the European Parliament (EP), and the Council. For 4 of them (*Revision of the Effort Sharing Regulation, Revision of the LULUCF Regulation, Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, Deforestation Regulation*) agreements during the trialogue negotiations between the EC, EP and Council in the last weeks of 2022 were reached. Furthermore, the EC has already announced one strategy and 7 proposals for legislative acts of relevance for the sector for which it will present the documents and legal texts in 2023. The Annex compiles all new and upcoming legislation and strategies.

In the DG ENV led Working Group on Forest and Nature, the elaboration of 4 guidelines (*primary and old-growth forests; biodiversity friendly afforestation and reforestation, closer-to-nature-forestry practices, update of the Natura 2000 guidance on forests*), planned to be presented in 2022, is delayed. In 2022, the EC approved the Common and Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plans for all Member States. They include to various extent forestry aspects and forest-oriented measures in Pillar 2 of the CAP.

To implement the EU Taxonomy Regulation, the EC must define technical screening criteria for each of the six environmental objectives through delegated acts. One of these environmental objectives is objective 6 on “the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems”. The Platform on Sustainable Finance supports the EC in preparing those delegated acts by elaborating in its Technical Working Group recommendations for the technical screening criteria for a series of economic activities, including forestry. As the subgroup for the forest sector of this Technical Working Group could not reach an agreement, five forest scientists were appointed as new experts in the beginning of 2022. These

scientists substantially disagreed with the draft on forest technical screening criteria for environmental objective 6, elaborated by BirdLife, and requested a complete re-drafting. After intensive controversial debates, the Platform administration decided at the end of the term to vote by all platform members on the BirdLife draft which hardly considered the critical comments by the forest scientists. The disagreement in the Platform over the tabled proposal led to the inclusion of a dissenting document of 4 pages in the final recommendations of the Platform. The next mandate of the Platform on Sustainable Finance will run from Q1 2023 to Q4 2024. The EC launched a call for applications for members for the new mandate in October, ending on 9 November 2022. The future Platform will consist of a maximum of 35 members, up to 28 of whom will be selected through this call. The new composition of the Platform members has not been published yet.

In general, Member States and stakeholders of the forestry and wood-processing sectors involvement, and the uptake of their expert contributions were seen as weakened in recent policy discussions. Their expertise and inclusion could however facilitate taking a more holistic view on forest-related issues, in particular when addressing economic sustainability, respecting market realities and the diversity of conditions in the field. This perceived lacking involvement in policy making and repeated communication by the EC about the allegedly poor condition of forests in the EU goes hand in hand with the risk of losing out on forest owners to engage in the many activities requested by recently adopted rules and strategies, especially when those require the development of new skills and additional investments.

5.3 Strengthened cooperation of Member States for the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy

The weak involvement of Member States in the development of the most recent EU Forest Strategy as well as the perceived lack of inclusion triggered new initiatives for closer collaboration for its implementation. Austria, Finland, Slovenia, and Sweden established the “For Forest Group” to coordinate at ministerial level their positions in the discussions with the EC on implementation actions. Other Member States are invited to join this endeavor. One example was a joint information note on “The importance of working in close cooperation with the Member States when preparing the EU framework for forest monitoring and strategic plans” to prepare the discussion on this topic in the AGRI Council in October 2022. This note was signed by 19 Member States. The AGRI Council in November discussed the general progress of the implementation of the EFS with Commissioner Sinkevičius. All Member States stressed the need for closer collaboration with the EC and supported a stronger role for the SFC in policy design and coordination.

Another new initiative at ministerial level is the European Wood Policy Platform (woodPoP), founded by Austria and Finland. It aims to (a) facilitate policy dialogue and cooperation between governments, scientists, businesses, European stakeholders from the industry and environment etc. (b) to support development of policy solutions with regards to the sustainable production and consumption of wood and (c) to stimulate innovation. The platform was launched on 1 December 2022 in Innsbruck, Austria at its 1st High Level Meeting. 14 European countries, FAO, IUFRO and several stakeholder organisations and

observers attended the meeting. The participants exchanged views in support of the “WOODPOP CALL on upscaling wood policy cooperation in Europe”.

In Brussels, the Deputy Permanent Representatives of some Member States have established a like-minded group dealing with forest-related EU policies. Austria, Finland, and Sweden co-chair this group that for the moment also includes Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. This group discusses topics supported by national experts that are nominated by the respective ministries with which also the topics are coordinated. The results of this collaboration are used in the communication with the EC in the implementation of the EFS.

5.4 Unclear role of forests and wood in serving EU policy objectives in a changing global policy framework

The numerous new legal rules and policy targets (*for forests and the forest-wood value chain*) agreed to in 2022 and the past few years establish more requests and obligations for Member States and stakeholders in the forest-based sector. It remains still unclear how the manifold trade-offs nourished by different interests and objectives of all these initiatives are to be handled in consistent ways during implementation. This deficit impacts also already started discussion on new legislative initiatives such as the EC proposal for a regulation on nature restoration (COM(2022)304). The AGRI Council in November and the Environment Council in December stressed the need to balance conservation and restoration objectives with securing food, energy, and raw material supply, in particular in view of the impacts of the Russian military aggression against the Ukraine. Also, the vulnerability of global supply chains visible during the COVID pandemic has raised the interest in strengthening the domestic provision of raw materials and the manufacturing of goods inside the EU to improve resilience of its economy. Finally, the newly agreed EU deforestation regulation which aims to avoid that goods placed on the EU market contribute to deforestation and degradation may lead to behavioral changes of companies, but may also create the possibility for leakages. In other words, certain goods may be deemed for the European markets only, while others will be delivered elsewhere including creating potential shortage of forest-related goods.

The forest-based sector in the EU has the potential to strongly contribute in a competitive manner to a socially fair transition to a more sustainable, climate and environmentally friendly society that is also less dependent on fossil and other finite resources from third countries. Realizing this potential will also need a supportive policy framework that empowers this sector to deliver to the full extent possible. Such an empowerment will also need investments in scientific breakthroughs and innovation, activating forest owners in maintaining and actively managing their resources, as well as keeping the interest of the industry to engage in innovation on new wood-based products and other marketable forest-based services. On the one side, the growing number of regulations on forest management and impediments of providing wood to markets brings along risks for financial investors and for the economic sustainability of forestry. On the other side, forest disturbance have increased over the past 5 decades as well as the loss of forest biodiversity. This shows how important it is to invest in resilient and

biodiversity rich forest landscapes. The increase of forest disturbances (storms, forest fires and abiotic threats) may lead forest owners (especially smaller ones) to abandon forests and engage less in their management. This may then impede other functions society demands for e.g. recreation and the delivery of non-wood goods including close to cities and in urban areas. It is of course also extremely crucial to maintain resilient forests in those areas where forests have also protective functions to fulfill. While abandonment may increase forest biodiversity in the long-term, it will put again clear constraints on reaching EU's climate and energy goals in the transition to climate neutrality.

A comprehensive assessment of impacts on the wood-processing industries, as well as on economic sectors interested to change to renewable biobased feedstock in their transition to a more sustainable and climate-friendly business model, the consequences on the regions affected, and on the increasing resilience of the EU economy by reducing its dependency on raw material imports is highly needed, but still missing.

Trade-offs created through the manifold EU policy targets that reach far beyond the sector but are relevant to tackle in the implementation of those legislations will play out differently across member states. Forests are complex ecological systems that differ considerably across the EU member states, therefore also forest management practices are diverse and one size fits all policies are hard to be implemented successfully. Balancing between those different societal demands, while providing enough wood resources to support the transition of industrial sectors and meet consumer needs will be challenging. Comprehensive large-scale assessments of how this can be done are still lacking but will become more demanded for in the future.

Annex to Chapter 5 – Recent and upcoming EU legislation and strategies

(selection of policy initiatives relevant for the forest-based sector)

Year	Legislative	Non-Legislative
2019	Plant Health Delegated and Implementing Regulations Taxonomy Regulation	EU Action Plan on Protecting and Restoring the World's Forests
2020	Plant Health Delegated and Implementing Regulations 2030 Climate Target Plan Delegated Regulation on Forest Reference Levels CAP Transitional Provisions	A New Industrial Strategy for Europe New Circular Economy Action Plan A Farm to Fork Strategy Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 A Renovation Wave for Europe
2021	Horizon Europe European Climate Law Amending the Aarhus Regulation (better access to justice) Civil Protection Mechanism CAP Horizontal Regulation CAP Strategic Plan Regulation Taxonomy Delegated Act on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Taxonomy Delegated Act on Disclosure LIFE Regulation LIFE Multiannual Work Programme 2021-2024	New EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas New EU Forest Strategy for 2030 New European Bauhaus Soil Strategy for 2030 Restoring Sustainable Carbon Cycles incl. Carbon Farming Initiative
2022	Vertical Block Exemption Regulation ('VBER') accompanied by the new Vertical Guidelines General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive Horizon Europe Work Programmes 2023-2024 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive State aid – exemptions for small amounts of aid (de minimis aid) (update)	Sustainable Products Policy Initiative Strategy on Sustainable Textiles Bioeconomy Strategy Progress Report and Re-framing within the new Context European Parliament Resolution on Illegal Logging in the EU
Co-Legislators currently working on Legislative Proposals from the European Commission		
	Revision of the Effort Sharing Regulation	
	Revision of the LULUCF Regulation	
	Revision of the Renewable Energy Directive	
	Revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive	
	Regulation on Social Climate Fund	
	Regulation on European Green Bonds	
	Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence	
	Regulation on Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism	
	Directive on Improving Environmental Protection through Criminal Law	
	Regulation on Deforestation and Forest Degradation	
	Revision of the Ecodesign Directive	
	New Regulation on Construction Products	
	Revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directive	
	Regulation on Nature Restoration (Restoration Law)	
	Update of EU Rules on Sustainable Use of Pesticides	
	Policy Framework on Biobased, Biodegradable and Compostable Plastics	
	Review of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive	
	Regulation on Carbon Removal Certification	
Proposals for EU Legislation and Strategies announced by the European Commission		
Announced for	Legislative	Non-Legislative
Q2 2022	Renewed Strategic Partnership with the outermost Regions	
Q4 2022	Revision of the Legislation on Forest Reproductive Material	
Q4 2022	GreenData4All - Revision of INSPIRE	
2022	Biodiversity Governance Framework (Biodiversity Law)	
2022	Taxonomy Delegated Acts on 4 Environmental Objectives	
2022-2023	Revision of Ecolabel Commission Decisions (on wood-based products)	
Q2 2023	EU Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection	
Q2-2023	Soil Health Law	
2025	Post-2030 individual Member State LULUCF carbon removal targets	

6. Conclusions

2022 was the 2nd year of operation of the new cycle of Trust Fund (2021-2025). Two webinars, a Roundtable discussion and a highly prestigious in-person event in Romania were held in 2022. In addition, two editions of the *From Science to Policy* series were published, accompanied by two *Policy Briefs*, that marked the launch of a new EFI Policy Brief series. The high number of participants in the webinars as well as the continuously growing number of streams and downloads underline the importance and the need for a science-policy platform at the European level.

Even though the Covid19 pandemic was challenging in the past year for everyone, two more study groups started their work. The results will be published in 2023. This report clearly shows that the work of the Trust Fund and policy support is appreciated by a wide range of actors and policy impact is generated in many different forms both directly and indirectly.

Work to enlarge the number of countries has continued throughout 2022 and will be pursued further during 2023. The dialogue with Trust Fund member countries to learn about country priorities was further intensified during 2022 and new ways to work at the science-policy interface will be further identified to not only reach out to again larger audiences, but also to support policy-makers and scientist.

Annexes

Table 1: Country funding contributions

Table 2: Online statistics

Table 3: Number of ThinkForest participants according to background

Table 4: Stakeholder follow-up articles related to events and publications

Table 5: Media coverage

Table 6: Publication citations



This Report has been compiled by Helga Pülzl (Assistant Director), Rach Colling (Head of Communications), Harald Mauser (Brussels Liaison Officer) and Maria Schloßmacher (Communications Officer), EFI