



EUROPEAN FOREST
INSTITUTE

Annual Report 2019





2019:

Placing forests on
the global agenda



Johanna Kokkola

Foreword

During 2019, it was clear that climate change had reached the tipping point of a climate crisis and was having a domino effect on many of our European and global forests. A new 'normal' situation for natural disturbances like droughts, wildfires, bark beetle outbreaks or destructive storms is now being experienced by our forests in Europe and beyond. Two factors characterize this new normal: the geographical expansion of forest disturbances to new areas (for example, forest fires are increasingly affecting central and northern Europe); and the increasing interrelation and mutually intensifying effect between different disturbances – here the triangle formed by forest fires, bark beetle outbreaks and destructive storms is a good example. Many of our projects, events and initiatives in 2019 focused on building a better understanding of these great challenges.

Addressing the increasing problem of forest disturbances is crucial, not only for the forest sector or civil protection considerations, but also to ensure the wide range of ecosystem services that forests provide, including climate change mitigation. In fact, if we do not deal with forest disturbances, it will be difficult to move

towards a climate neutral Europe by 2050, a goal which was announced by the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

Given this situation, I wrote an Open Letter with the Directors of CIFOR and ICRAF, calling on global leaders to come together and hold an Earth Forest Summit. A summit that we believe is very much needed to discuss the future of our forests and agree on their governance and actions for the benefit of people and our planet. The benefits of our forests transcend national boundaries, our strategies and actions should too transcend them.

To discuss these matters, in 2019 I had the opportunity to meet the Finnish President, Mr. Sauli Niinistö, at our Headquarters. As a result of our Open Letter, I also started a set of fruitful meetings with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to discuss how to successfully place forests in the global agenda and address a defining question for a sustainable future: the necessity to restore global biodiversity while moving towards a global circular bioeconomy.

Marc Palahi



An ambitious European forest research and innovation area

Even though in recent years EFI has enlarged its strategic activities to cover policy support and media engagement, research remains at the heart of our work. In 2019 EFI strengthened its European, regional and global cooperation and collaboration. We supported research activities, knowledge ex-

change and capacity building, with an emphasis on developing the next generation of forest scientists.

In 2019, EFI project research funding reached a record level of 3.95 million euros.



EFI FPN



MOMO / Judith Contreras



Satu Koren-Williams

Enhancing European and regional cooperation

In 2019, two new Research Networks were established, bringing together EFI member organizations to focus on research, networking and capacity building within specific themes.

The **Forest Policy Research Network**, coordinated by BOKU, focuses on building a better scientific foundation of the implications of European forest-related policies for forestry and the forest based sector. It aims to: improve the understanding of the post-2020 European policy framework in terms of forest-related opportunities and challenges; contribute to addressing forest policy knowledge gaps within the Forest Europe process; understand emerging policy and management questions related to forest ownership in Europe; and build bridges between western and eastern Europe regarding forest governance scientific capacities. The Research Network, coordinated by BOKU in Vienna, coordinates its activities with the EFI Governance Programme.

The **Forest Bioeconomy Network**, coordinated by SLU, focuses on examining the role and sustainability of forest-based solutions in the emerging bio-based economy, especially in forest-intensive areas like the boreal,

sub-boreal regions in Europe. Initially, the network addresses three main topics: sustainable and efficient production and use of biomass; potential trade-offs and synergies when securing the sustainable provision of forest ecosystem services; and the supply and demand for bio-based products. The Research Network, coordinated by SLU in Umeå, works in close collaboration with the EFI Bioeconomy Programme.

Investing in our members

The EFI Network Fund promotes pan-European research collaboration, and is a unique instrument which provides funding exclusively for EFI member organizations. The first five projects started in 2018, with participation from 37 EFI member organizations across 19 countries. In 2019 a mid-term evaluation of the projects took place, and found that project activities were progressing well. Two projects received a 6-month extension, and all projects are expected to be completed in 2020.

Cooperation with other global regions

EFI also plays a central role in establishing forest scientific cooperation between Europe and other global regions. Given rapid global developments (e.g., the eco-



conomic centre of gravity moving to Asia), which could have an important impact on European forests and the forest-based sector, establishing strong collaboration with China and Russia is strategically important.

In 2019 the **RUFORCLIM** project (Impacts, challenges and opportunities for Russian forests, forestry and forest bioeconomy to respond to climate change) kicked-off. The project brings together researchers from the EU and Russia to contextualize and summarize existing data and information on the impacts of climate change on Russian forests. It will also formulate insights on climate smart forestry strategies and measures to reap the potential of forestry and the forest bioeconomy to mitigate climate change in Russia, in synergy with other economic, social and environmental benefits. RUFORCLIM is funded through the “Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA)”.

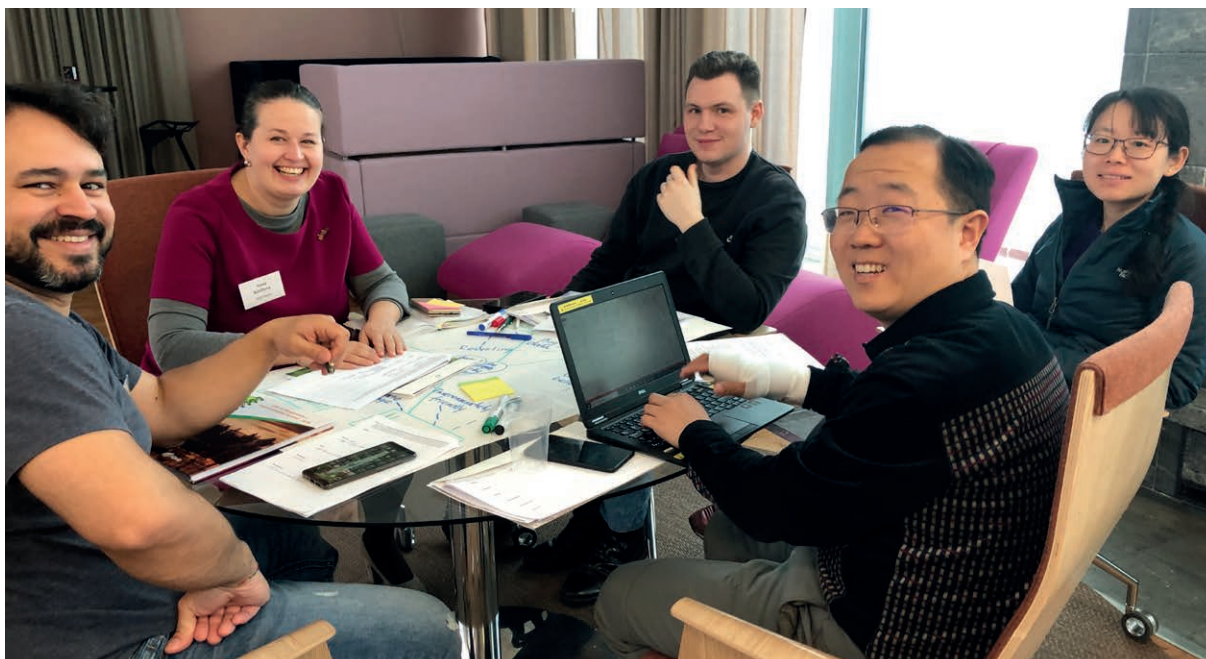
2019 also saw the kick-off of the **CLEARING HOUSE** (Collaborative Learning in Research, Information-sharing and Governance on How Urban tree-based solutions support Sino-European urban futures) project. This H2020 project aims to provide evidence and tools that facilitate the mobilization of urban forest-based solutions (UFBS) for

rehabilitating, reconnecting and restoring urban ecosystems. Together with 10 cities and urban regions in Europe and China, the project partners will develop an online application, a global benchmark tool, and guidelines that can aid in the design, governance and management of urban forests. The project is coordinated by EFI and involves 27 partners, 7 from China.

Supporting the next generation

In 2019, EFI opened its fourth call for **Short Scientific Visit grants for the mobility of Young Researchers**, enabling young researchers from our member organizations to visit another institution. The visits provide a unique opportunity for the grantees to get involved in international level forest research and research cooperation, and learn new techniques, methods or tools not available in their own institution. In 2019, 5 grants were awarded.

In collaboration with IUFRO, EFI launched the **Young Scientists Initiative (YSI)** grants for intercontinental mobility in 2017. The grants offer a unique opportunity for young scientists from Africa, Asia and Latin America to visit a European forest research organisation and conduct a sci-



Satu Ikonen-Williams

The 2019 edition of the Young Leadership Programme took place in Joensuu

entific collaboration with a young scientist from the respective host organization. They also enable European young scientists to visit a forest research organisation in Africa, Latin America or Asia. In 2019, with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 10 young scientists were awarded a grant.

The 2019 edition of the **Young Leadership Programme** (YLP) focused on Eurasia, exploring the potential of the forest-based bioeconomy in China and Russia in connection with Europe. The event was organised in Joensuu in March 2019 and was attended by 19 participants from Russia, China and Europe. As in previous years, YLP brings together leaders of the future, allowing them to

build new networks, gain expert knowledge and learn new skills to translate their knowledge into action.

With the support of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and strong collaboration with IUFRO a new project was kicked-off in 2019, in partnership with the **International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA)**. 'Global student networking and green jobs in the forest sector' aims to provide insight into the future labour market; facilitate global networking amongst the young generation of future forest leaders; and develop capacities of current forest students and young scientists in necessary skills (bridging science, education, and policy making) via an ambitious traineeship and outreach programme.

New Governance programme established!

The **Governance Programme** aims to make a science-informed contribution to good forest governance in order to stop deforestation, forest degradation and promote sustainable forest management globally as a fundamental basis for sustainable development. The following **topics** will be a priority for the programme:

- Understanding, comparing and characterising failures and successes as a basis for new forest governance mechanisms to address deforestation and the unsustainable use of forest resources in different world regions
- Drawing lessons from FLEGT and REDD and developing ways forward for combined synergies

- Analyzing the role of sustainable finance, agricultural commodities supply chains and international trade in deforestation and sustainable forest management
- Exploring the role of media, information and market transparency in supporting good governance and sustainable forest management

A unique element of the Governance Programme is direct access to experienced policy support and governance experts, namely from EFI's FLEGT and REDD Unit as well as decision makers and practitioners closely collaborating with them.

The Governance and Resilience programmes are located in the EFI office in Bonn, Germany.



Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities

The **Policy Support Facility** continues to be central to EFI's policy support work. In 2019, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) which finances the facility continued to be supported by 10 countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

In 2019, the main activities included the publication of two new From Science to Policy studies, and two flagship ThinkForest science-policy events in Prague and Brussels, as well as a seminar on China-Europe Forest Bioeconomy in Beijing, organized together with the Embassy of Finland.



Ian Jones



Andrew Hayek



The timely From Science to Policy report on **Living with bark beetles: impacts, outlook and management options** aimed to help European and national policy makers understand the complex roles bark beetles play in forests. It sets out the scientific basis for robust forest policies and management options to address emerging bark beetle problems, which in recent years have impacted forests in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Slovakia and also in North America. The report was launched at the ThinkForest forest disturbances seminar in Prague in April, with the lead author going on to present the study results and implications also in the Czech Republic Parliament.

The From Science to Policy report on **Plantation forests in Europe: challenges and opportunities** drew on recently published scientific research and four case studies (Ireland, Sweden, Italy and Georgia), to ask if plantation forestry is currently meeting its full potential to deliver European environmental and socio-economic policy. Its conclusions were discussed at the 2019 Scientific Seminar in Aberdeen, and it was launched at a well-attended ThinkForest event in Brussels in December.

Another example of EFI's diverse policy support activities is that the EC Communication on stepping up **EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests**, published in July 2019, makes use of learning and products from the

REDD Facility's work, in particular in the field of transparency of forest-risk supply chains and how it can support producers-consumers partnerships to foster sustainable land-use solutions and investments. The contributions of the **REDD Facility** in the preparation of the Communication focused in particular on definitional issues, jurisdictional approaches, transparency of supply chains and sustainable investments.

Connecting science-policy-practice

EFI's Facilities are instrumental for realizing the **EFI mission: connecting knowledge to action**. They aim to facilitate knowledge uptake by policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders via capacity building, knowledge networking and the provision of demand-based expertise. In 2019, EFI had 5 facilities: Policy Support Facility, Mediterranean Facility, Secretariat of the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN), the EU FLEGT Facility and EU REDD Facility.

Unfortunately, by the end of 2019, the **Planted Forests Facility**, which was focusing on topics around the sustainable management of planted forests, was discontinued. The reason for this decision was the lack of firm commitment (Host Country Agreement and stable funding) from France, which was established as a condition for any EFI office, as decided by the Council of EFI in 2015.



Awareness in society of the importance of forests

Great efforts have been made to create new initiatives to place EFI at the interface and as a reference platform of science-media collaboration. As result, EFI's visibility in the media continues to remain high, with a media reach of 1061 million in 2019. Many of our experts were featured in the media talking about their work, for example on hot topics such as forest fires, the effects of climate change, and the potential of the bioeconomy.

Social media continued to show significant growth and interaction, with new channels being launched in 2019 by the Mediterranean Facility, the EU FLEGT and REDD facilities and the Forest Policy Research Network. In addition a widely-read EFI blog was established, complementing the fast-growing Resilience and MedForest platforms.

Bialowieza was at the centre of EFI science-media activities in 2019. EFI's Lookout Station project launched



Ewa Hermanowicz



Ewa Hermanowicz

Sound reporting co-lab in Białowieża forest

the **Sound Reporting Co-Lab** initiative, a six-month media support programme that helps journalists produce sound-based stories around climate change impacts on forests, biodiversity and local communities. A bootcamp took place in the Białowieża forest, Poland, focusing on bark beetles and their impacts on ecological, social and industrial systems. A group of journalists from six media/teams heard experts from EFI, the Polish Forest Research Institute (an EFI member organization) and the University of Warsaw share their scientific insights into the complex and disputed situation in Białowieża. As well as hearing from scientists and experts in a seminar room, the journalists also had a chance to visit three different forests to make field recordings: old forest un-

affected by bark beetles; forest that is currently under attack; and forest that was attacked four years ago. This project was jointly supported by the MDTF, EUFORGEN, SURE project, the Polish Forest Research Institute (IBL) and Hindenburg Systems.

The Sound Reporting Co-Lab approach followed the path taken by the Białowieża Science Initiative (part of the INFORMAR project) which presented its results to media and the public in Brussels in May 2019. The BSI gathered more than 20 scientists from various disciplines, and with distinct perspectives on the conflict, to identify consensus and dissent points, solely based on scientific evidence.



EUROPEAN FOREST
INSTITUTE

Yliopistokatu 6B | 80100 Joensuu | FINLAND

TEL: +358 10 773 4300

www.efi.int

Additional details are available in the EFI Annual Report 2019 supplement at www.efi.int

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