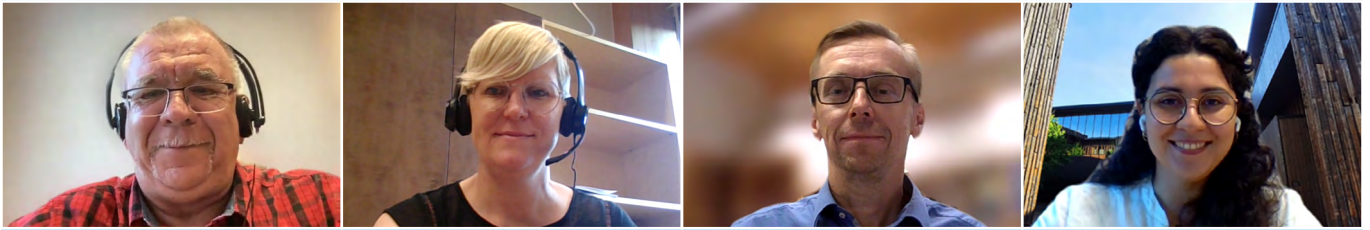




EUROPEAN FOREST
INSTITUTE



Annual Report 2020





2020:

Enhancing dialogue
and interaction



Johanna Kokkola, Salama Visual

Foreword

There is no doubt that the year 2020 will be remembered as one of the most challenging years in modern history. Hopefully, it will also be remembered as a tipping point, a transformative year to put forward a new economic model. The coronavirus pandemic as well as the climate and biodiversity crisis are not separate problems but just different consequences of the same one: our economic system. A system addicted to fossil resources and to growth at all costs that has failed to value our most important capital, and the basis for human health and wellbeing: Nature.

We reflected on that in 2020 in an interdisciplinary publication: **Investing in Nature as the true engine of our economy**¹, which included a foreword by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. The publication is the guiding document of the **Circular Bioeconomy Alliance** established by The Prince of Wales and coordinated by myself. The Alliance has been one of the milestones of the year as it aims to **connect knowledge to action** beyond the traditional boundaries of EFI.

In 2020, we saw how in times of global crisis the world turned to scientists

for answers. Unfortunately, too often scientists are only approached in a crisis, while probably the greatest value of science is in stimulating the right questions so that we are wise enough to avoid them. This should make us reflect about how science should evolve in the future to ensure collaboration between different disciplines, and the need for dialogues between scientists and society, and policy makers. While challenging, 2020 has shown the potential and opportunities for enhanced dialogue and interaction via digitalization. EFI's online activities in 2020 (including the first digital Annual Conference, and online Think-Forest events) have demonstrated both global reach and diverse interactions, lowering the threshold for participation.

Digitalization has, however, its downsides too, one of them being a flood of information. At EFI we aim to generate and contextualise scientific knowledge for better informed decision-taking in the context of an increasingly complex world. With the support of all our Network and our motivated staff we will continue this work in 2021.

Marc Palahi

¹ Available at: <https://doi.org/10.36333/k2a02>



Maria Schlossmacher

An ambitious European forest research and innovation area

In 2020, EFI strengthened its European and global cooperation and collaboration, supporting research activities and capacity building across its network.

Enhancing European and regional cooperation

In 2020, EFI project research funding reached almost 4 million euros, and EFI succeeded with a number of project applications. For example the Resilience Programme will coordinate a Horizon 2020 research project

COVID-19 impacts on forests

Given the strong impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on our daily lives in 2020, the Resilience and Governance Programmes conducted a study on visitor dynamics and preferences in a peri-urban forest near Bonn². The study was based on more than 300 interviews with forest visitors before and during the pandemic. Especially during the “lockdown” between March and May 2020, visitor

numbers more than doubled, and more young people and families with children discovered the forest. The forests were also more frequently used for sport and recreation than before. The strong increase in visitors reveals the importance of forests as “critical infrastructure” during the pandemic.

² Derks, J., Giessen, L., & Winkel, G. (2020). COVID-19-induced visitor boom reveals the importance of forests as critical infrastructure. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 118, 102253.

RESONATE (Resilient forest value chains – enhancing resilience through natural and socio-economic responses). The project includes 20 partners from 14 countries and a budget of 5 Mio EUR.

Investing in our members

The EFI Network Fund remains EFI’s main strategic instrument to foster collaboration between our Associate and Affiliate Member organizations, creating knowledge and impact. During 2018-2020 the Network Fund **supported five projects**, which finished in 2020.

In 2020 a new call was launched, with the aim of developing the concept of Biocities, as well as shaping the future work of the EFI Biocities Facility, which we aim to launch in 2021. The work has a strong focus on the transformational potential of forests, ranging from the urban to the rural, and how forests, trees and wood can enable us to rethink cities holistically to ensure their sustainability and resilience. The main outcomes will be a Book on Biocities (BIOCITIES consortium, led by the Italian Society of Silviculture and Forest Ecology) and a Research Agenda (ReBio consortium, coordinated by Bern University of Applied Sciences).

Another important element of EFI’s efforts to foster cooperation are the EFI Research Networks. In 2020 there were two Research Networks: the European Forest Policy Research Network (coordinated by BOKU) and the Forest Bioeconomy Research Network (coordinated by SLU). The latter published a report (**The Forest in Northern Europe’s Emerging Bioeconomy - reflections on the forest’s role in the bioeconomy**³) which discusses the bioeconomy transformation and green innovation in Finland, Norway and Sweden, and highlights the challenges facing forests.

³ The full report is available at: <https://forbioeconomy.com/app/uploads/2021/01/The-Forest-in-Northern-Europe's-Emerging-Bioeconomy.pdf>



New face:
*Elisabeth Pötzelsberger became
Head of the Resilience Programme.*

Supporting the next generation

In 2020 EFI broadened the scope of the EFI Short Mobility Grants, offering the possibility for a younger generation of practitioners, policymakers and journalists as well as researchers to benefit from visiting an EFI Associate Member organization. A total of **8 Short Mobility grants** were given in 2020; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the visits were postponed to 2021.

Reimagining our world: Transforming the economy



Göran Persson
Prime Minister, Sweden 1996-2006



Felipe González
Prime Minister, Spain 1982-96

This is a great opportunity,
but it can also be seen as an obstacle.

The Circular Bioeconomy Alliance: Connecting investors to investable solutions



**Sustainable
Markets
Initiative**



With the impending climate
and biodiversity catastrophe,

*Watch more videos on
EFI's YouTube channel:
[https://www.youtube.com/
user/EuropeanForest](https://www.youtube.com/user/EuropeanForest)*

Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities

In a time of heated policy debates on many topics directly impacting forests and the forest-based sector, EFI's policy support activities are gaining even more importance. The Policy Support Facility remains a central element; however, major new initiatives like the Circular Bioeconomy Alliance and the Koli Forum aim to widen the engagement with different sectors and stakeholders, and increase the impact of EFI's work.

The Policy Support Facility Multi Donor Trust Fund reached the end of its current three-year period in 2020,

and received a successful evaluation. The 10 MDTF countries decided to start a new five-year period (2021-2025). In 2020, activities included two From Science to Policy (FSTP) studies, as well as a Knowledge to Action meta-study. Four ThinkForest events were organised in 2020 as webinars, due to the impacts of COVID-19.

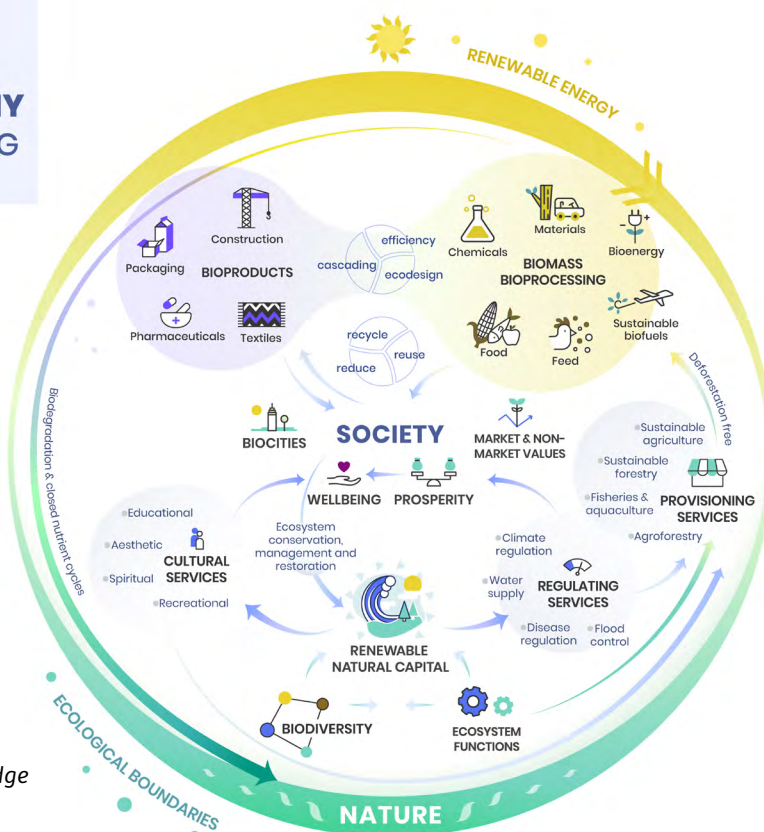
The "**European Forest Governance Post-2020**" study provides a timely look at forest governance in Europe and offers insights into the potential way forward. It reviews significant developments in the forest governance frame-



Mina Kolehmainen

CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY OF WELLBEING

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Investing in Nature as the true engine of our economy: A 10-point Action Plan for a Circular Bioeconomy of Wellbeing. Knowledge to Action 02, European Forest Institute. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36333/k2a02>

work including EU and international developments and discusses how coordination in other policy areas than forests leads to policy integration.

The “**China-Europe Forest Bioeconomy: Assessment and Outlook**” study provides the first systematic assessment of the potential challenges, possibilities for the future and policy implications for Europe-China forest-based bioeconomy development. The bioeconomy is still a new concept in China, which is by far the largest global producer and consumer country of concrete, steel, coal,

paper and oil-based products like polyester fibre and plastic.

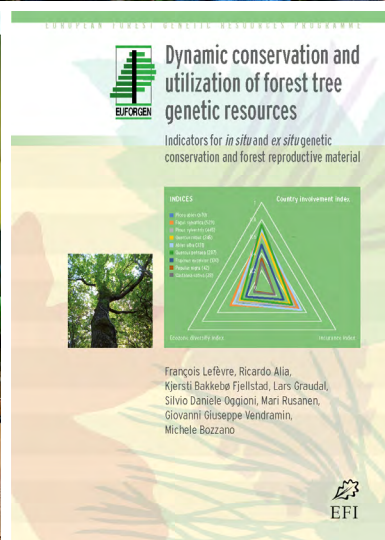
The **Circular Bioeconomy Alliance (CBA)** was established by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales under his **Sustainable Markets Initiative** in 2020. The CBA is facilitated by a Secretariat hosted by EFI and consisted of 15 members in 2020.

In June 2020, EFI’s Director facilitated a high-level roundtable on the Circular Bioeconomy hosted by HRH to dis-



EU FLEGT Facility

EFI Mediterranean Facility



EURFORGEN

The launch of the Bioregions Facility in Bilbao in March 2020

cuss the **10-point Action Plan for a Circular Bioeconomy of Wellbeing**. Written by a multidisciplinary team of over 25 authors, led by Marc Palahí, this publication forms the framework for the CBA. The publication sets out 10 Action Points (six transformative, four enabling) which are needed to create a circular bioeconomy based on a synergistic relationship between economy and ecology.

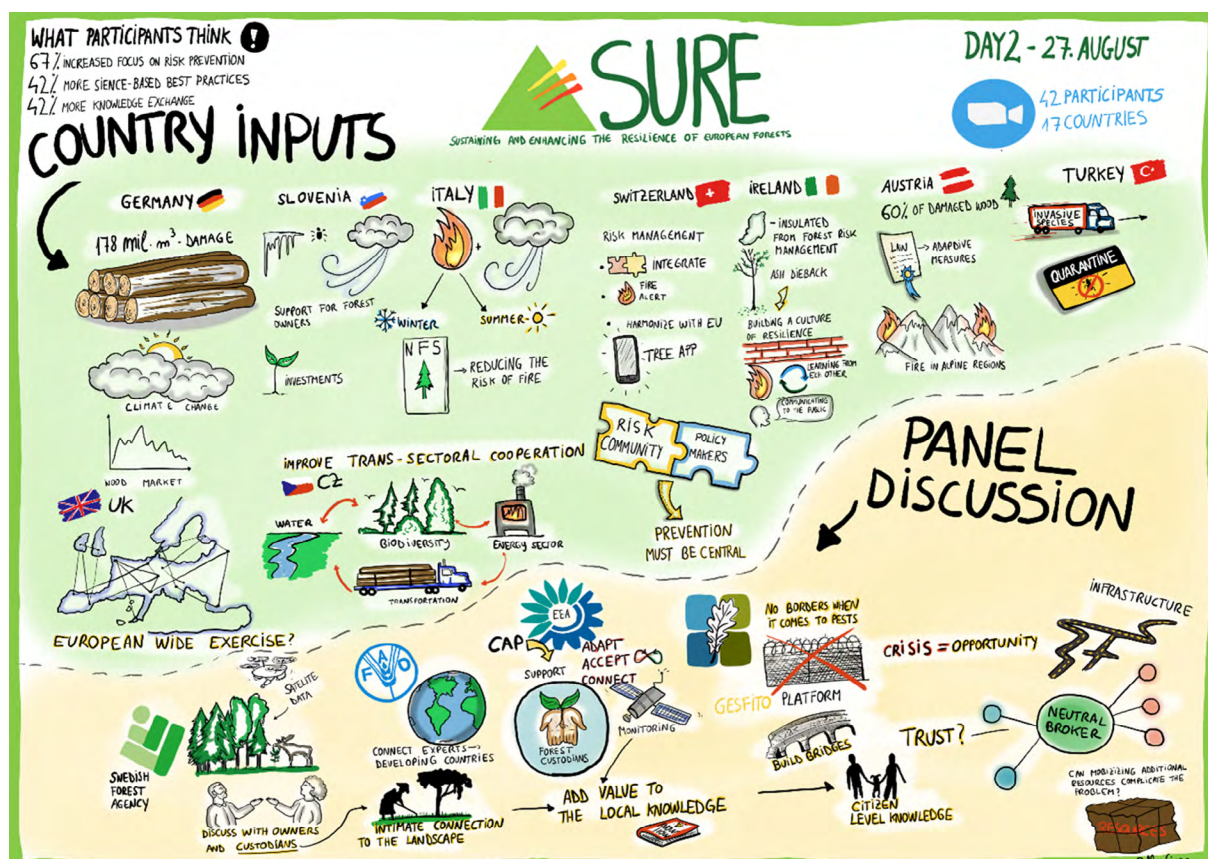
The CBA held its first event in November 2020, launching one of its flagship initiatives, a Natural Capital strategy developed by founding member Lombard Odier. The online event “Driving change: Connecting investors to sustainable investable solutions” was opened by HRH.

In February 2020, EFI was elected to host the Secretariat of the **Koli Forum** in 2020-2021. Koli Forum is a high-level

discussion platform focusing on topics related to bioeconomy and the sustainable use of natural resources. The Koli Forum organizes biennial international seminars (the next in October 2021), gathering experts from science, politics and business.

Connecting Science-Policy-Practice

In 2020, the **Bioregions Facility** was established to support transnational regional cooperation on innovation, networking and policy learning, and realise the sustainable forest bioeconomy potential in different regions of Europe. Founding regions include the Basque Country (Spain), North Karelia (Finland), and North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany).



Graphical reporting by Alex Giurca summarizing the first day of the SURE final conference.

After operating for more than 10 years exclusively under the umbrella of two dedicated Multi Donor Trust Funds, the FLEGT and REDD Unit experienced some significant changes in 2020. Dedicated projects were established to provide support in the FLEGT and REDD area to better address the needs of specific donors.

The **VPA Africa-Latin America Facility** is a 4-year programme to continue supporting FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) processes in 10 tropical timber African and Latin American countries. The programme focuses on strengthening the systems and capacities of these countries in support of the negotiation and implementation of VPAs.

EFI also signed the contract for the **Regional-ASEAN Forest Governance support programme** (EU FLEGT Asia) with the European Commission. The 3-year programme will contribute to enhancing and demonstrating good forest governance, monitoring and sustainable forest management across Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states and in the Asia region. Under this programme, EFI will also continue its long-term support to VPA processes in Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam.

The **Keberlanjutan Sawit Malaysia dan Indonesia (Sustainability of Malaysian and Indonesian palm oil - KAMI)** project is funded by the European Commission. The 3-year project endeavours to provide support for strengthened and constructive policy dialogue between

stakeholders in the EU, Indonesia and Malaysia on the sustainability of the palm oil value chain.

In 2020, the **Rapid Response Technical Assistance Projects** (EFITAP) completed its first year of implementation. EFITAP is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to quickly mobilise technical assistance action through EFI to support forest governance reform processes in response to emerging needs and partner requests.

The EFI Resilience Programme implementing the **SURE project** - **Sustaining and Enhancing Resilience of European Forests** - has been the main EFI platform to share European knowledge on natural disturbances and discuss the need and way forward for transdisciplinary European cooperation through a European Forest Risk Facility. In August 2020 the SURE project ended with the conference "Collaboration – key to forest disturbance management in a new decade". The project also supported the development of the Forest Europe resolution "Adapting pan-European forests to climate change".

Since 2018 EFI has hosted the secretariat of the **European Forest Genetic Resources Programme** (EUFORGEN). In 2020, the Programme published a **report** that for the first time offers a way to measure the conservation and use of the genetic diversity of forest trees across Europe in a standardized way. The novel set of indicators was adopted in the Report on the State of European Forests 2020, published by Forest Europe.

benefit
Research collaboration
resilience ThinkForest
Annual Conference networking
Expertise resources Collaboration
travel Board membership information
short visits capacity building
pooling of resources Board membership
highlight new knowledge for informed decision-making
co-operation governance a voice science-policy
share news about EU and other research funding calls
coordination joint research initiatives Grants
Associate and Affiliate Members
Network Fund
Knowledge synergies
EFI Network Fund
Networking
vote

Postcard developed for the membership campaign

Awareness in society of the importance of forests

Supporting better informed dialogue

EFI launched its new **Knowledge to Action series** in 2020, with the aim of bringing a wide range of research, projects and initiatives on forest-related issues closer to society. The new series has an attractive, graphic format and complements the existing EFI series, What Science Can Tell Us and From Science to Policy.

A topic that attracted high interest in political and scientific debates was the question of biodiversity and ecosystem protection versus forest management. Several project activities (e.g., SINCERE, POLYFORES, European Network Integrate) aimed to advance an informed dialogue between scientists, policymakers, forest landowners, forest managers and nature conservationists. In February 2020, the international conference "**Governing and**



“managing forests for multiple ecosystem services around the globe” took place in Bonn, and a series of webinars under the European Network Integrate focused on European forest policy and forest ecosystem services.

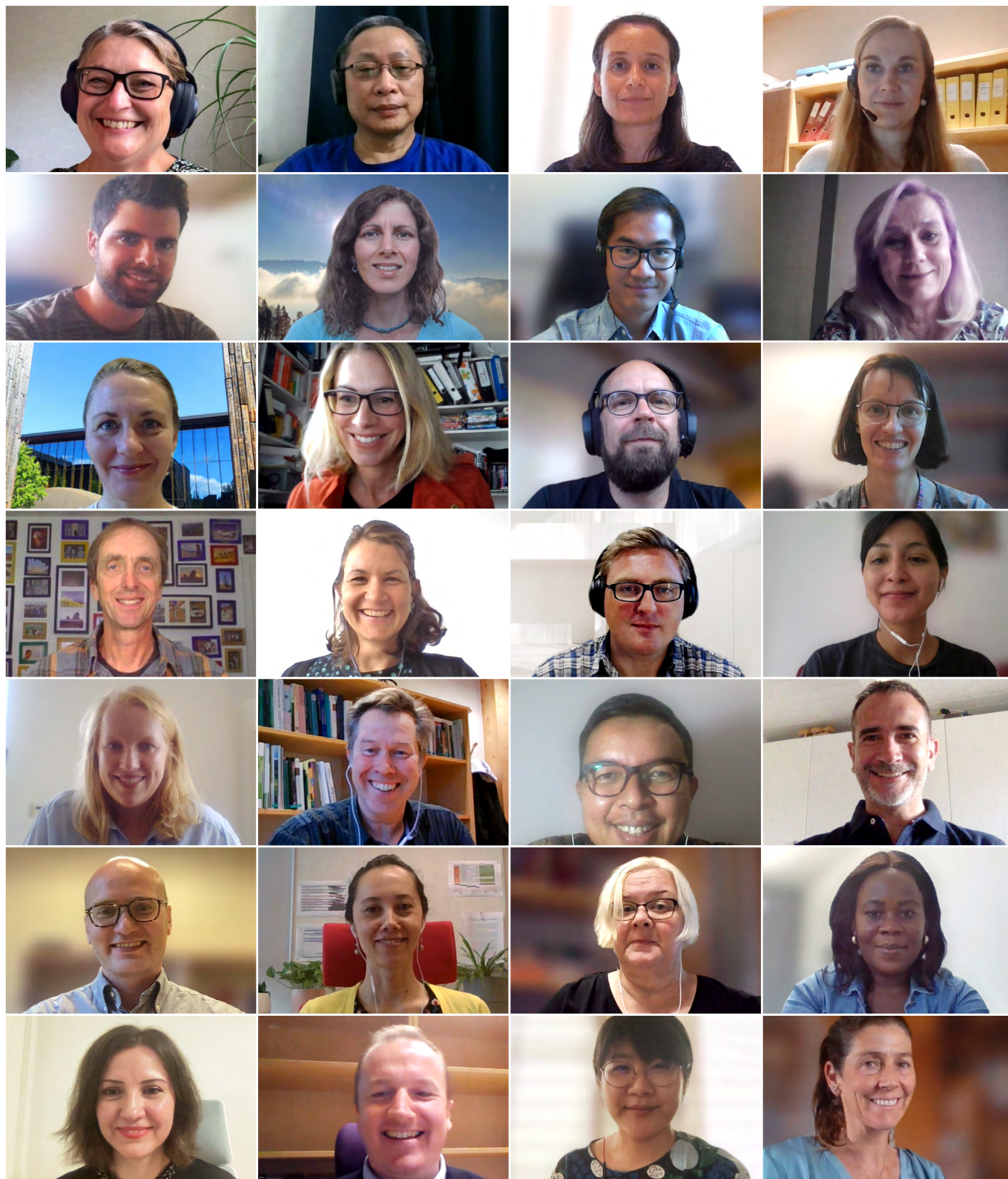
Enhancing digital dialogue and interaction

EFI continued to use a variety of online channels to support a better-informed dialogue between science, policy and society on forests, and also to raise the profile of experts from both EFI and its network. As part of a continuous process of development, EFI's online presence was revamped in December 2020.

In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of face-to-face events, EFI rapidly had to pivot to organising online activities. One benefit of moving online has been to widen participation in EFI events and increase the diversity of the organisations and individuals involved as both speakers and participants.

EFI organised its first ever **virtual Annual Conference** in October 2020 successfully bringing together over 100 participants and representatives of EFI member organizations to discuss future plans and carry out decision-making. Eleven new Associate and Affiliate Members who had joined over the last year were welcomed. A virtual networking session was also organised, where participants could join one of the breakout rooms to have an informal discussion with EFI staff on the new developments and projects.

The **membership campaign** started in 2020 with the aim of generating interest in EFI's network from new sectors; encouraging new Associate and Affiliate member organizations to join EFI; and promoting engagement with existing members (#membershipmatters) on EFI virtual platforms.



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Additional details are available in the EFI Annual Report 2020 supplement at www.efi.int

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