



EUROPEAN FOREST  
INSTITUTE

# Annual Report 2022



# 2022:

Reconnecting and  
collaborating





Sarah Adams

# Foreword

## Reconnecting and collaborating

The year 2022 brought a surge in interest and increasingly heated debates around the pivotal role of forests in combating societal challenges, like climate change and biodiversity loss. A growing multitude of stakeholders, often with opposing viewpoints, further underlines the important role of EFI in providing unbiased, science-based knowledge.

One example of this role is the EFI-led EUFORE (European Forest Research and Innovation Ecosystem) project, which began in 2022. This forward-looking project assembles the entire spectrum of forest-related stakeholders across Europe. Its purpose is twofold: to outline strategic research and innovation priorities for Europe and to establish a sustainable collaborative platform.

Our ThinkForest seminar in Sibiu, Romania, also offered the opportunity to engage with diverse stakeholders, linking EFI's science-policy

work on forest biodiversity with the launch of the SUPERB project and the Circular Bioeconomy Alliance's Romanian Living Lab on landscape restoration. The event brought together scientists, experts, practitioners and policymakers.

After two years which were shaped by COVID-19 restrictions, 2022 was also a year for reconnecting with our network. In October we organised the Annual Conference and Scientific Seminar in Barcelona. The seminar was an opportunity to discuss an important emerging topic within EFI – Biocities: a new vision to rethink our urban environment with the transformative power of trees, forests and wood. This is a topic that EFI addresses from the new Biocities Facility in Rome, which was established in 2022, in partnership with other networks, disciplines and actors willing to place nature at the centre of the urban agenda.



# An ambitious European forest research and innovation area

## Enhancing European research & innovation cooperation

One of the most strategic projects EFI is coordinating is **EUFORE (European Forest Research and Innovation Ecosystem)**, a Horizon Europe project which began in Novem-

ber 2022. The project supports the preparation for a possible European research and innovation partnership on forests under the Horizon Europe Programme. The project will assess and outline research needs, and provide a platform for increased R&I cooperation, coordination and joint funding for forestry and the forest-based sector



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– thus supporting the implementation of the new EU forest strategy. EUFORE outputs include a co-created strategic R&I agenda for forestry and the forest-based sector (SRIA), along with accompanying implementation measures and stakeholder commitments.

In November the **Mediterranean Forest Research Agenda 2030** was published, to help facilitate research and capacity building in the complex and fragmented Mediterranean area. The Mediterranean Facility (EFIMED) led the development of this landmark publication together with its network of scientists.

### Investing in our members

Several initiatives were implemented through the EFI Network Fund in 2022 to enhance forest research cooperation.

**Five grants were offered to young Ukrainian researchers**, to develop their capacities in the field of forest monitoring and explore the suitability and robustness of different monitoring procedures in the context of Ukraine. The grants will be implemented within projects currently carried out by EFI and its Associate Members.



In 2020 **two parallel studies were launched to develop the concept of Biocities** and to identify specific topics and activities that could be addressed by the new **EFI Biocities Facility**, headed by Giuseppe Scarascia-Mugnozza. In 2022, both studies delivered their final results. The **BIOCITIES consortium**, led by the Italian Society of Silviculture and Forest Ecology developed the Biocities concept and published the first Book of Biocities. The book assesses the overall state of knowledge, policy and sectoral challenges. The **ReBio consortium** led by Bern University of Applied Sciences developed the **Biocities Research Agenda**.

### Supporting the next generation

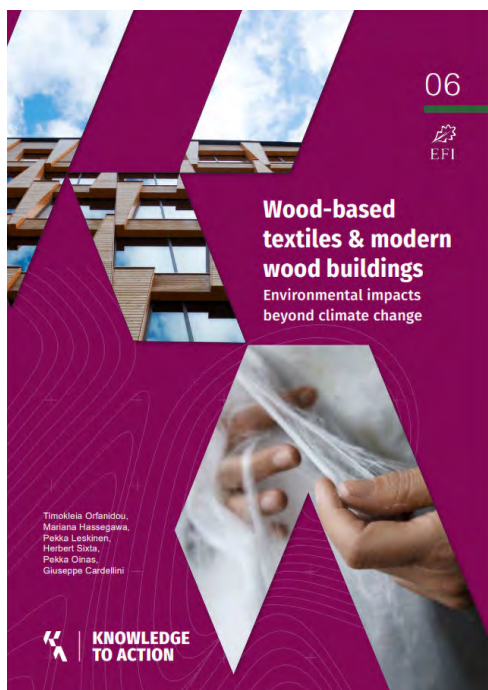
There has been a growing interest in the concept of Climate Smart Forestry in the past few years, leading to the launch of the EFI CSF Research Network in March 2022, coordinated by Wageningen Environmental Research (WUR) with the support of 19 other partners. During the EFI Annual Conference 2022, 11 young researchers took over the stage for a **Young Scientists session on Climate-Smart Forestry (CSF)**.

### Exploring new avenues

A comprehensive update of the Database on Forest Disturbances in Europe (DFDE) was carried out in the Forest Value project **I-Maestro**. **An article by Patacca et al. in Global Change Biology** and **EFI Policy Brief 4** documented an increasing trend for all disturbance agents, with different regional trends. Windstorms caused the highest damage, but bark beetles and other biotic disturbances reported the strongest increase. Moreover, other biotic disturbances (with greatest damage increase) are among the most widely underreported disturbance agents.

Since 2016, the Integrate Network has continuously grown and increased its visibility throughout Europe. In 2022, it evolved into the **'Integrate Network Multi-Donor Trust Fund (I-MDTF)'**, an alliance of representatives of different European countries promoting the integration of nature conservation into sustainable forest management at the policy, practice and research level. EFI facilitates the process in the role of secretariat.

**Wood-based textile fibres and engineered wood products used in buildings** have been recognized as promising areas for carbon storage and reductions in greenhouse



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gas emissions. However other environmental impacts potentially associated with their use, such as acidification, water and air pollution, and biodiversity loss are not fully understood. A **new EFI study** looked at published life-cycle assessment (LCA) studies and conducted interviews with experts to better understand the environmental impacts, as well as the expected technological developments that could positively contribute to the environmental sustainability of these two critical end uses of wood.

The new Horizon Europe project **ForestPaths** will co-design, quantify and evaluate forest-based solutions to meet the EU's Climate Targets for 2030 and 2050. Forests are vital to achieving the EU's goal of halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and becoming climate neutral by 2050. The project started in September 2022, and is coordinated by EFI, with 16 partner organisations from 9 countries. It will optimise forests' climate change mitigation potential by providing forest-based policy pathways, whilst also conserving their biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The online International Forest Policy Meeting in April tackled the thorny question of whether Europe needs a

new science-policy-society interface for forests and forestry. An important part of the event was a session exploring the world of investigative journalism where participants learned how investigative journalists start their inquiries, gather scientific information and data, work with sources and bring their stories to the public.

In 2022, EFI researchers in the New Ways for Forest Governance (**NEWGO!**) project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) investigated how sustainable finance links to forests and what role the financial sector plays in either driving or stopping deforestation. A paper "Rich forests, rich people? Sustainable finance and its links to forests" investigated the emerging expert debate on the topic.

A new Horizon Europe project **CLEVER** is led by the University of Bonn in collaboration with EFI and ten other partners. It aims to improve the scientific basis for measuring, analyzing and computer-assisted simulation of links between international trade in agricultural and forest products and biodiversity. CLEVER also aims to enhance transformative change for biodiversity policy making, addressing indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, and upscaling corresponding transformative innovations.



# Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities

**E**FI continues to provide scientific knowledge to policymakers and to promote science-policy dialogue. Three editions of the From Science to Policy series, **Closer-to-Nature Forest Management** (FSTP12), **Forest biodiversity in Europe** (FSTP 13) and **Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation in Europe** (FSTP 14) were published in 2022. In addition, EFI relaunched its policy brief series bringing together scientific knowledge on a policy-relevant topic in a short, easy-to-read format.

As well as the high-level ThinkForest event in Romania to launch the SUPERB forest restoration project, two online ThinkForest webinars in 2022 focused on “Closer to Nature Forest Management” and “How can we strengthen the contribution of forests in reaching EU climate goals?”.

EFI is co-coordinating with the Liaison Unit Bonn the **Forest Europe process** during the German presidency 2020-2024. EFI is responsible for **scientific steering, organisation, and communication**. The highlights of 2022 were





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the establishment of the SFM Think Tank, a discussion forum on the future of sustainable forest management, the establishment of pilots for the Forest Risk Knowledge Mechanism, and a series of events around the topic of green jobs. In collaboration with EUFORGEN, a webinar on forest genetic resource conservation and sustainable forest management was organised.

### Connecting science-policy-practice

In 2022, the International Partnerships Facility (IPF) focused on addressing deforestation in commodity supply chains such as palm oil, cocoa and coffee.

The **Sustainable Cocoa Program** focuses on promoting cocoa sustainability in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. In alignment with the EU Sustainable Cocoa Initiative, the Facility works to foster a shared understanding among cocoa stakeholders in these countries. In Côte d'Ivoire, IPF provides technical assistance to the government in creating a land-use map for 2020, with the involvement of stakeholders. This map is a crucial component of the country's cocoa traceability system and supports the implementation of its National Sustainable Cocoa Strategy. In Ghana, the Facility supports the Cocoa Board in integrating deforestation risk assessment into the national cocoa traceability system. In Cameroon, IPF facilitated five national Cocoa Talks in 2022 bringing to-

gether over 500 stakeholders to foster understanding and collaboration on key issues such as traceability and forest monitoring.

In 2017 EFI initiated the creation of the **European Network of Forest Extension Organizations (FOREXT)** to strengthen international cooperation on forestry issues (management, mobilization, climate change, education and training, etc.). FOREXT started its second 4-year period in 2022, and with its 20 members from 16 European countries has become a go-to network for projects looking for advisory services to be involved in their work.

### Circular Bioeconomy Alliance

The CBA continues to explore new ways to collaborate with and transfer knowledge on sustainable bio-based solutions to the private sector. Its network of Living Labs is testing a variety of approaches – in 2022 a new Living Lab in Chad focusing on regenerative agroforestry, land restoration and cotton production was launched.

The CBA offers possibilities for global collaboration, and in 2022, EFI and the CBA provided **science-based advisory support** to AstraZeneca for large scale restoration projects. EFI and the CBA collaborated with CIFOR-ICRAF and FAO to co-organize a session on the bioeconomy at the World Forestry Congress in May 2022.



ANNA MAS TALENS

# Awareness in society of the importance of forests

## Supporting better informed dialogue

For more than five years, EFI has been actively engaging with media worldwide to help them explore complex issues related to European and global forests.

Under EFI's Lookout Station, a science-media capacity-building initiative, the online **Solution Hack for Journalists - Hacking Finance to End Deforestation**, was organised in January-February 2022 to feature research insights from the NewGo! Project. From 200 applications, 25 editors and journalists were selected from international media (e.g. *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Reuters*), national broadcasters (e.g. *RTL Nieuws*, *YLE*), national daily, independent online media (e.g. *InfoCongo*, *Climate Tracker*), investigative journalism agencies (e.g. *OjoPublico*) and freelance journalists in Colombia, Ivory Coast and the USA.

This edition featured several aspects of NewGo! research, in particular, sustainable finance and zero deforestation.

It invited EFI researchers and experts from external organisations like the World Economic Forum, Global Canopy, and Cornell University as discussion facilitators and speakers. Thanks to collaboration with Trase, it also provided training on how to use supply chain and finance monitoring tools for journalistic investigation. The masterclass wrapped up with a discussion on solution journalism, revisiting the role media can play in putting a spotlight on solutions rather than problems. Some journalists noted the need for collaboration, and others wanted to multiply what they've learned from the hack to further train young journalists.

## Interacting with our network

On 5 October, close to 90 participants joined the EFI Secretariat at the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site in Barcelona for the EFI Annual Conference 2022. This was the first time since 2019 that member organisations had met in person, and was a welcome return to interaction and networking. The



Conference was organised in collaboration with member organisations in Catalonia, under the coordination of the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC).

The Members' Dialogue session focused on EFI's facilities, giving members an opportunity to find out more about their activities and topics. During the Decision-making Session, Dr Sanja Perić, Croatia was elected as the new Board member. It was also agreed to waive the 2022 membership fees for EFI's Ukrainian member organisations, and a warm welcome was extended to five new Associate Members and two new Affiliate Members. Former

Assistant Director Dr Lauri Hetemäki was awarded the title of Fellow of EFI.

EFI's 2022 Scientific Seminar on 6 October explored the transformative potential of trees, forests and wood to rethink the built environment. "Biocities: placing nature and people at the centre of the urban environment" placed architects, health workers, urban planners, policy-makers and civil society representatives alongside forest scientists, managers and practitioners to discuss how we might create healthy, sustainable and resilient cities as well as rural-urban sustainable interfaces.



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Additional details are available in the EFI Annual Report 2022 supplement at [www.efi.int](http://www.efi.int)

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