



fern

MAKING THE EU WORK
FOR PEOPLE & FORESTS

ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2019

FORESTS

Fern's theory of change

Forests are essential to life on earth: they maintain biodiversity and protect land and water. More than 1.6 billion people rely on them for their livelihoods, and they're critical in the fight against climate change.

What's more, as the weather becomes deadlier and hurricanes, droughts and floods intensify, forests can offer some protection. Yet the threats against forests are multiplying.

Around the world forests are being plundered for timber and cleared to make way for mines, infrastructure and agriculture.

We identify the threats facing the world's forests, and work with affected peoples, social and environmental organisations and policy makers to devise and deliver solutions.

Our purpose, as a Europe-based NGO, is to address the root causes of this forest destruction from a European perspective. As the number one global trade and aid power, the EU has an immense influence on the world's forests and the people who depend on them.

Our close work with partners in the global South and Europe shapes and drives our campaigns and is vital to bring about lasting change on the ground.

Fern makes decisions by consensus and all our campaigns are built in close collaboration with social and environmental organisations and movements across the world.

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Board members

Ramy Bulan (Malaysia): Director of the Centre for Malaysia Indigenous Studies & Professor of Law at the University of Malaya (*outgoing*)

David Kaimowitz (Nicaragua): Director Natural Resources and Climate Change, Ford Foundation

Jacques Lauruol (UK): Specialist in NGO finance and financial training

Mardi Minangsari (Indonesia): Former national coordinator of Indonesia's forestry monitor network. Since 2016, she has been actively involved in the initiative to reform Indonesia's palm oil sector (*incoming*)

Margareta Nilsson (Sweden): Head of Programs at the International Land and Forest Tenure Facility. She is a specialist in rights-based forestry, natural resource management and land governance with over 20 years' experience in international development cooperation in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Balkans (*incoming*)

Elisa Peter (UK): Executive Director of Publish What You Pay, a coalition of more than 700 civil society organisations promoting transparency and accountability in the extractive industry (*outgoing*)

Fred Pearce (UK): Author and journalist who has reported on environment and development issues from 67 countries. His books have been translated into 16 languages and won a number of prizes

Korto Reeves Williams (Kenya): Head of Women's Rights at ActionAid International. She has 20 years' experience across Africa, the Middle East and the Americas and is a member of the African Feminist Forum (*incoming*)

Flip van Helden: Coordinator for International Affairs team, the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs. Specialist in EU Affairs and FLEGT



Welcome

Elisa Peter stepped down from her position as chair of Fern's Board at the end of 2019. She's been part of the Fern family more than 20 years and a Board member for the past 13. Here she reflects on the changes she's seen and the challenges ahead.

Fern's not a traditional conservation organisation, as it's always been focused on people.

It sees the Indigenous Peoples who've lived in forests for centuries, and who know how to preserve and use the ecosystems, as their guardians. For 25 years Fern has worked with a constellation of organisations around the world who share its ethos: that local people should be involved in the decision-making processes about how forests are used. And when Fern works in a country, it stays there for the long run, through the ups and downs.

Flat structure and organisational changes

Twenty years ago, Saskia [Ozinga] hired me as the coordinator of the Taiga Rescue Network, which protected boreal forests and Indigenous People's rights in the Circumpolar North. When I left, she invited me to join Fern's board.

The organisation was still quite small when I joined, but in the past 13 years I've seen it grow into a super professional organisation that's able to hire talent left and right, and which is recognised throughout the forests and peoples' rights' movement.

Fern doesn't just challenge power dynamics in the outside world, it does it within: tackling the same negative, hierarchical structures that are replicated externally, through its flat structure. This also sets it apart from most other organisations. When you're just two or three people, it's much easier than when you have 20 or so staff and various consultants. But Fern still makes it work.

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Fern's had a very successful leadership transition. There aren't many organisations where the founders – Saskia and Sian [Pettman], who began it as a little entity practically out of their kitchens – are able to step down, and let the organisation flourish and potentially go



Elisa Peter (left) saying goodbye to Marie-Ange Kalenga from Fern at her very last Board meeting.

on in a different direction. I think that's a tremendous achievement.

Same dangers, different causes

When I first got involved with Fern, the issues were so different. People weren't talking about agricultural commodities as the main driver of deforestation.

Back then, discussions focussed on certification and ancient forests being destroyed to make pulp and paper products that would be thrown away after a single use. Those issues are still here but we have also increasingly worked to address the underlying, systemic drivers of deforestation and forest degradation such as weak tenure rights by indigenous peoples and communities. One of Fern's strengths is that it's been able to constantly adapt and reinvent itself: to always be ahead of the curve on the impending threats to forests.

The problem is the same, but the root causes are different. The drivers of deforestation have changed. So whether forest destruction is driven by climate change or land grabbing, or for agricultural commodities or bioenergy, Fern tries to address the root causes, which is much more difficult than just addressing symptoms.

Challenges

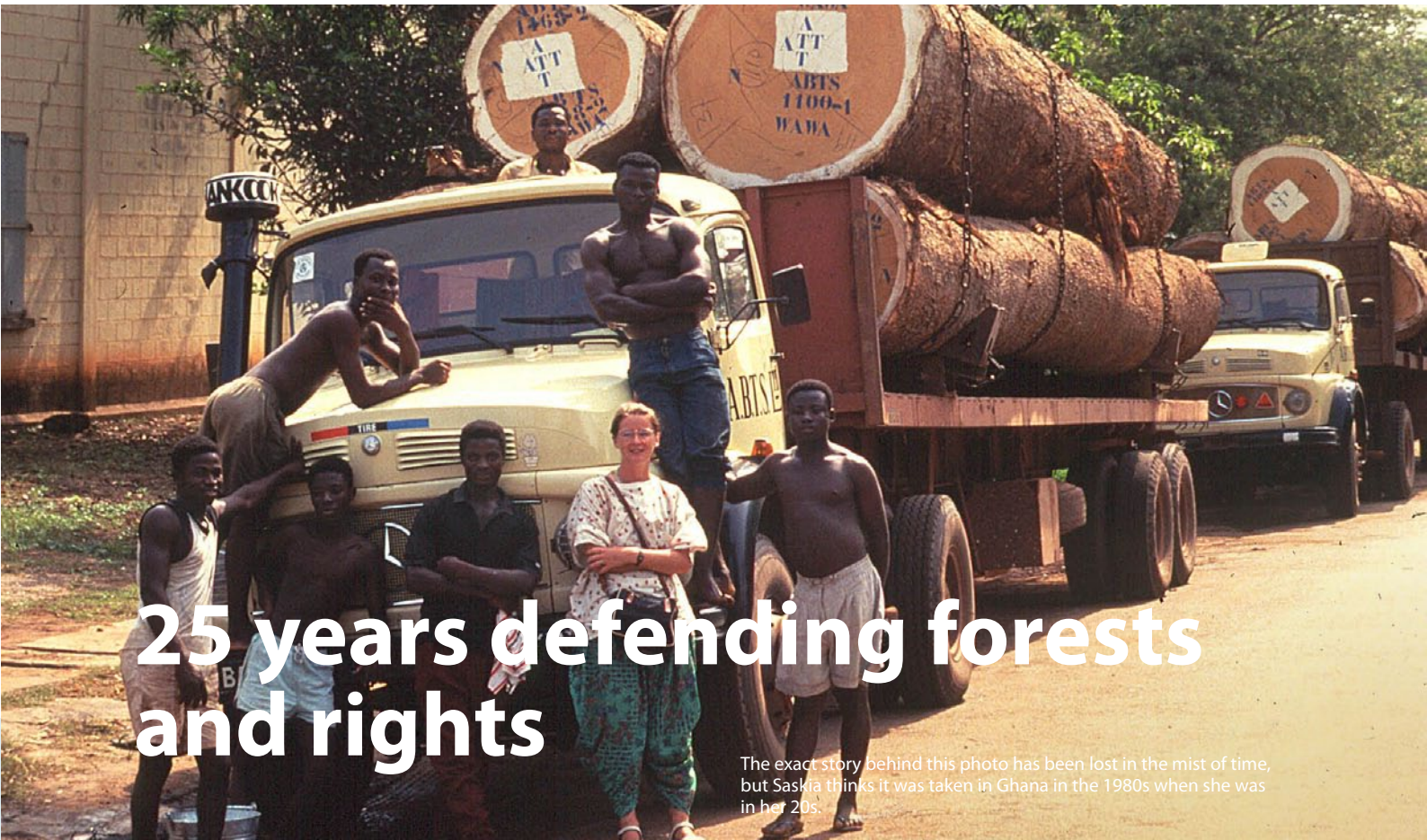
The current political climate and the rise of populism – whether it's in Brazil, Russia or elsewhere – is a big challenge.

- > Government elites in those countries see natural resources – forests, as well as oil, gas and minerals – as sacrosanct as far as economic growth is concerned. And if you oppose that economic development model, you're seen as a traitor.

The EU is still a big trade player and imports a lot of forest related products and agricultural products that lead to deforestation, but its political and economic influence is likely to decrease in the next 10 to 20 years. So, should Fern be looking at trying to influence

players such as China who are gaining global influence in relation to forest and forest peoples?

When you've been involved in something for 13 years, that's a major chunk of your life, so on a personal level I'm sad to leave Fern. But what comforts me is the friendships I've made and these relationships will continue. I am also comforted by knowing that Fern is in a solid position now and that the legacy of its visionary founders will prevail. We remain allies in the struggle to protect people and the planet.



The exact story behind this photo has been lost in the mist of time, but Saskia thinks it was taken in Ghana in the 1980s when she was in her 20s.

The threat to the world's forests has intensified and evolved in Fern's quarter century existence. In this absorbing, wide-ranging discussion, Fern's campaign coordinators during that time, [Saskia Ozinga](#) and [Hannah Mowat](#), reflect on how we should navigate the crisis facing the world's forests, and by extension, the planet.

HM: The biggest changes since I've been working on forests, are that they're capturing people's imagination, particularly since the Amazon fires in 2019, and that we now have maps showing where forests are. We can use that data to prove that forests remain standing, at least in some continents, when people have rights to their land.

Indigenous Peoples are now seen as a solution to climate change, and specifically to efforts to protect forests.

SO: Indigenous Peoples are very well organised in a way they weren't 20 years ago, when their voices weren't even heard. Now they have a formal position in



most international conventions, and the United Nations has adopted its declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

There's also much more technology: simple things like GPS (Global Positioning System), which means communities can monitor deforestation in real time.

But what hasn't changed is that to stop deforestation you need to find a way to use these tools to influence policies.

The fact that you can't solve the climate crisis without addressing the forest crisis has really sunk in now in a way that it hadn't even five years ago. If we lose the forests, it's the end of story. But if we don't get emissions to zero, it's also the end of story.

HM: Do you think we've seen the turning point away from market solutions? There's much more appetite, at least in the European Commission, to regulate. The US has published a bill on illegal deforestation, and there's a sense we can't leave it up to the market to tackle deforestation.

SO: I think that's true. The willingness to regulate is definitely bigger than it's ever been. I find the cocoa scene really interesting, because you have Barry Callebaut, Mondelez, Nestlé and others, all saying they want regulation. That's the first time, as far as I can remember, that the market leaders in one product group say 'We want regulation'. That's big. And the interesting thing is that they said they want regulation in combination with a sort of VPA approach, working with producer countries to find a solution.

HM: Maybe this is being driven by a sense of urgency, which is pushing unlikely people to question capitalism?

Hannah Mowat: "I would be very happy if in five years burning bioenergy is taboo, and if there's an EU regulation on imported products which is actually making countries like Indonesia and Brazil ask questions around how they allocate land. I would also love to see massive forest regeneration projects all across Europe. We'd benefit in so many ways from allowing nature to run wild."

SO: We're never going to solve the climate crisis with the economic system that we have. We need something different. You've got the Economist and the Financial Times talking about the need to change capitalism, which is saying something. The problem is that the change needed is so fundamental that it's not clear if societies are willing to make them.

HM: Given how urgent things are, and that the change needed is so big, how should the forest movement respond?

SO: The forest movement should respond by linking with other movements. When you're talking about this kind of social and economic change, it goes way beyond forest issues.

HM: If you want to get that fundamental change quickly though, you have to go on a war footing. But we're far off getting something like rationing accepted politically. When people are used to unjust policies they don't trust their governments to make changes that would affect all in a fair way. For example, when the French government introduced a carbon tax that led to an increase in fuel prices it led to a massive backlash (the 'gilets jaunes') precisely because the way they implemented it meant the price increase would not affect all in a fair way.

We live in countries with strong civil society where people fight back, and you can't bring in policies unless people support them, unless people see the urgency.

SO: But that's the question. Look at Australia's fires. Things are urgent, but we're not acting as if they are, despite the fact that an area the size of England has been affected. You have floods in the streets in New York, which you would think people would treat as urgent, and they still don't. That's the worrying thing.

HM: In the last year we've seen this big push to reforest, but there's the conundrum that we actively need to suck up more carbon dioxide, while making



sure that it doesn't distract from the need to reduce emissions. We also need to be wary of the dangers of the current tree planting craze.

SO: I think it's really tricky. Of course there are cases in which you have to plant trees, but in most cases you have to regenerate what's already there, and let it grow by itself rather than re-plant. Now the whole focus is on the replanting, and I think it's really dangerous.

HM: **I think one of the key things that Fern learned, before my time, is to enquire whose land it is, to not make the presupposition that land where trees will be planted isn't being used.**

SO: That's true. Now people realise that land does belong to somebody in one way or another. Indigenous Peoples have done a lot to get that shift in thinking.

HM: **So how do we shift thinking around other issues, such as burning trees for energy – one of the worst ideas the EU ever supported. Will we have to spend the next 30 years digging our way out of this new problem?**

SO: Bioenergy is definitely one of the worst, but don't forget, there were a lot of environmental NGOs who pushed them in that direction. We said you need to really think the whole thing through. I'm still very proud of Fern for fighting that battle.

HM: **I would be very happy if in five years burning bioenergy is taboo, and if there's an EU regulation on imported products which is actually making countries like Indonesia and Brazil ask questions around how they allocate land. I would also love to see massive forest regeneration projects all across**

Saskia Ozinga: *"The fact that you can't solve the climate crisis without addressing the forest crisis has really sunk in now in a way that it hadn't even five years ago. If we lose the forests, it's the end of story. But if we don't get emissions to zero, it's also the end of story."*

Europe. We'd benefit in so many ways from allowing nature to run wild.

SO: I agree with all that, but I think that the future really looks quite dark if you look at how little time we have to turn it round.

HM: **So you think we're going to be in defensive mode?**

SO: Well that's what I fear.

HM: **Or that we will all stop being forest campaigners and become campaigners for refugee rights?**

SO: I don't know. If climate change starts hitting everywhere then we have mass displacement of people. And then things become really unpredictable, and it won't be pretty. That's what I really worry about.

HM: **Everything you're saying speaks to focusing much more on working with communities so that there are strong forms of resistance, strong forms of collective organisation.**

SO: Well I see a need to resist the forces that are out there destroying things, the likes of Trump and Bolsonaro. How do we switch to political leaders who are bold, democratically elected, and powerful enough to make the decisions that are needed?

HM: **The school strikers, Greta Thunberg, Extinction Rebellion – they are all showing us that leadership can come from anywhere. Maybe you're more pessimistic because you've seen big commitments made that don't translate into anything?**

SO: Yes, it's true. You always have to be hopeful.

Saskia Ozinga was Fern's campaign coordinator from 1995 – 2017, when she was succeeded by Hannah Mowat. This is an abridged version of a discussion that took place in London in January 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe.

2019: at a glance



Ghana edged closer to becoming the first African country and the second in the world to issue FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) licences. Officials from the EU and Ghana's Ministry of Land and Natural Resources and Forestry Commission announced that Ghana would continue to the last stage of implementation of its Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), a bilateral trade agreement on timber and timber products.

Fern was among 46 NGOs and networks from 19 countries who wrote to then French Environment Minister François de Rugy urging her government to rule out granting permission to convert the Cordemais power station or any other coal plant to biomass. "To convert Cordemais to biomass, large quantities of wood pellets from regions such as the southern US, or Estonia, will have to be imported, causing irreversible losses to wildlife and reducing communities' quality of life," said Katja Garson.

Fern supported a landmark lawsuit filed against the EU to stop the damage caused by biomass. The claim, by plaintiffs from the USA, and five EU member States, centred around the devastation to forests caused by the 2018 Renewable Energy Directive (RED), and how it promotes burning forest wood as renewable. "The revamp of the RED was the EU's chance to deal with some of the most egregious problems associated with biomass bioenergy... On this, they largely failed, so it is now up to citizens to take the EU to court," said Hannah Mowat.



On Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's 100th day in office, Fern was one of an international coalition of NGOs – including a group representing more than 300 Brazilian indigenous groups – calling for the EU to end its complicity in the assault on indigenous rights and the destruction of the Amazon. "The EU already has laws to stop illegally logged wood, illegally sourced fish and conflict minerals entering its markets. The unfolding destruction in Brazil shows the glaring need for similar laws for agricultural goods," said Nicole Polsterer.

A YouGov poll commissioned by Fern, and other environmental organisations found overwhelming support among the public for regulating products that drive deforestation, with 87 per cent of those polled indicating that new laws are needed to ensure that products sold in the EU don't contribute to global deforestation.

After 23 years of negotiations the EU and the South American trading bloc known as Mercosur reached a free trade agreement, which sacrificed human rights and forests on the altar of trade. Perrine Fournier said: "This trade deal is a double whammy for the planet: it will exacerbate deforestation and encourage the production of big, dirty cars."

This followed the call by more than 340+ civil society organisations for the EU to use its influence to prevent a worsening human rights and environmental situation in Brazil by immediately suspending trade talks with the country.

January	February	March	April	May	June
<p>The EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed to establish a working group to examine sustainability issues around palm oil, at the 22nd Ministerial meeting between the two parties. Issues around palm oil have caused increasing division between the EU and ASEAN.</p>	<p>The European Commission closed submissions for its consultation on a coherent approach to deforestation and agricultural expansion. "The long campaign for regulations [to tackle the EU's role in driving global deforestation] is at a critical juncture," wrote Nicole Polsterer.</p>	<p>More than 50 NGOs and forest experts and defenders from around the world signed Fern's Forest Pledge, asking future MEPs to pledge to promote policies to protect and restore forests worldwide and recognise and secure forest peoples' territories and their rights, including the rights of women, for generations to come.</p> <p>Fern was deeply saddened by news of the passing of Patrice Passe Sanand, former coordinator of our partner in Central African Republic (CAR), the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment (GDRNE). Patrice, a wholehearted, committed and passionate activist, made a big contribution to advancing local community rights and forest protection in CAR.</p>	<p>Fern joined civil society groups, academics, donors, governments of the Central African region and development partners in Bonn as part of the CAFI Dialogues: two days of debate to strategize and coordinate activities for Central African rainforests at events hosted by GIZ and BMZ: Fern made a presentation on community forestry.</p>	<p>The Netherlands passed a new law requiring companies to ensure that their supply chains are free of child labour.</p>	<p>Finland's new government's policy programme revealed that it would start developing a national human rights due diligence (HRDD) law and promote such a regulation at European level. This would require companies to conduct due diligence to ensure there are no human rights violations in their supply chains.</p>



During her research for Fern's **Our Forests Our Lives** report, **Indra Van Gisbergen** discovers a consignment of timber in the Port of Antwerp exported from Gabon by the notorious Chinese company **Wan Chuan Timber Sarl (WCTS)**, who had been described as "the worst offender of crimes against the forests and people of Gabon", by the **Environment Investigation Agency (EIA)**. Belgium's Customs subsequently blocked the timber and the Competent Authority launch an investigation.



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Images of the Amazon burning caused global outrage. Fern was among 26 NGOs who sent an urgent letter to EU leaders calling on them to end European complicity in the destruction. "It would horrify many EU citizens to know they are unwitting accomplices to the shocking scenes unfolding on social media and their television screens," wrote **Hannah Mowat**, before outlining the concrete steps their governments could take to end it.

Ahead of the hearings of the Commissioners designate of the **European Parliament**, Fern issued a briefing, along with **ClientEarth**, the **Forest People's Programme (FPP)**, **EIA and Transparency International (TI)**, calling for the new Commission to take decisive, effective action against illegal logging through the **FLEGT Action Plan**

Marie-Ange Kalenga gave a presentation at a pre-climate conference workshop on integrating human rights into countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and international climate negotiations. The meeting, which took place in San José, Costa Rica, was organised by the UN Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and the Centre for Environmental Law (CIEL). Fern helped draft a blueprint on integrating human rights into NDCs and was subsequently invited to the panel on an international dialogue on human rights and the climate organised by the UN.

Fern joined 42 other NGOs in condemning the killings of two Romanian forest rangers found dead within the space of a month, calling on Romania's President to ensure that those defending Romania's forests are adequately protected. **Liviu Pop** and **Raducu Gorcioaia** were the latest victims of the ongoing violence against Romania's forest defenders.



Fern hosted a webinar linking NGOs working on bioenergy with anti-coal campaigners, to enable us to achieve our shared goals and understand where these issues crossover.

The **European Commission** publishes its long-awaited proposal for a **European Green Deal**. Fern welcomed it as a potential springboard for ambitious action on forests, while cautioning that the Commission faced several hard choices to turn words into action.

Some of the world's biggest chocolate manufacturers, including **Barry Callebaut AG**, **Mars Wrigley** and **Mondelēz International** called on the EU to strengthen human rights and environmental due diligence requirements of companies in global cocoa supply chains. It was "a potent sign of the urgent need for regulations to end the deforestation and human rights abuses that have disfigured the cocoa industry for decades," said **Julia Christian**.

July

Building on extensive media pick-up of her call for Liberia's pioneering **Land Rights Act** to be effectively implemented in order to help enfranchise the nation's women, Fern partner **Loretta Pope Kai**, programme director of the **Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI)**, visited the UK. She informed policymakers, academics and other NGOs, on the centrality of strengthening Liberian women's land rights in the overall struggle to protect the country's natural resources. This resulted in multiple NGOs engaging with FCI to implement the **Land Rights Act**.



August

Fern called on the EU to rethink how it uses land and forests in the fight against climate breakdown in the wake of the release of the special report on Land and Climate Change by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**. "The IPCC has cast a shadow on the EU's climate strategy which relies on tree farms to produce dirty bioenergy," said **Kelsey Perlman**.

September

Fern's civil society partners from Africa and Asia visited the EU to sound the alarm over accelerating forest loss in the **Congo Basin, West Africa** and the **Lower Mekong** regions. They met with members of the **European Commission**, the **European External Action Service** and Members of the **European Parliament**, among others, and urged them to step up efforts to fight illegal logging and reward progress in countries implementing **Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs)**.

On **September 20** Fern closed our offices in solidarity with the **#GlobalStrike4Climate**.

October

November

Fern presented a position paper on a regional roadmap on NDCs in Central Africa at the **Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)** civil society day on December in Douala. The recommendations from the note were included in the NGO statement and presented at the CBFP council meeting on 19 December.

Fern supported the **Indigenous** leaders from Brazil who toured the EU highlighting the crimes being committed against their people, and the systematic weakening of environmental protections under **President Jair Bolsonaro**. With the number of deforestation alerts and assaults on Indigenous Peoples' land rising, they called on EU Member States to end their complicity in the violations.



December

EU Member States released their official reaction to the **Commission's** Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests, in which they requested that the **Commission** "expeditiously" assessed regulatory measures in order to "reduce the EU consumption footprint on land". **Nicole Polsterer** commented: "We are also pleased that EU governments recognise the importance of a partnership approach that reinforces supply-side measures."

Forests, Consumption and Trade

“We feared [the Commission] wouldn’t have the guts to put this out there... But they did.”



Nicole Polsterer Sustainable Consumption and Production Campaigner

“July 23, 2019 was a huge moment in our campaign.

The European Commission published a Communication which finally opened the door to regulating imports of the agricultural goods which drive deforestation globally: commodities like beef, palm oil, soy and cocoa.

We really feared that it wouldn’t have the guts to put this out before the new Commission took office. But they did. In the end it was a big relief that it happened, and it was formally placed on the Commission’s work channels.

The Communication raised the prospect of regulatory options to tackle the devastation and human rights abuses these goods are linked to. It also validated our campaign and the work we’ve been doing for years. Parliamentarians, companies, and NGOS all started to take deforestation seriously.

The next step is turning options into concrete action.

The Communication followed two other important moments.

In May, a [poll](#) by YouGov, which we commissioned along with other NGOs, showed that 87 per cent of Europeans polled across 25 Member States agreed that legislation was necessary to protect forests.

This followed our [Forest Pledge](#), asking future MEPs to promote policies which protect and restore the world’s forests. It was supported by more than 50 NGOs and forest experts and defenders.

In August, the [Amazon fires](#) really drove the threat to the world’s largest rainforest – and the EU’s role in it – into the wider public consciousness.

We helped organise [an open letter](#) to European leaders urging them use legislation to end European complicity in the fires, and to suspend the Mercosur Free Trade Agreement. On the one hand, the EU is making commitments to protect forests through the New Green Deal and its Communication, and on the other it is doing trade deals with Brazil, who are destroying forests and trampling over Indigenous Peoples’ rights.

The policy choices of the Bolsonaro government are not only threatening forests, but putting our partners under increased pressure [*see our interview with Paulo Barreto on page 11*].

In November, we supported a tour by Indigenous leaders from Brazil, who came to Europe to alert the public and EU policymakers about crimes being committed against their people, and to call on the EU to end their complicity.

A positive sign is that Frans Timmermans agreed to institute a dialogue with [Indigenous Peoples](#).

A sign of just how far we’ve come came in December, when some of the world’s biggest chocolate companies, including Mars, Mondelez and Barry Callebaut, all called for EU legislation to regulate supply chains. This was a real game changer.”

In November, there was a full house at a Fern co-organised European Parliament [event on deforestation and supply chains](#) with speakers from the Brazil’s Indigenous People Articulation (APIB), EU policymakers and business representatives.



A day in the life of a Fern partner

Paulo Barreto

“I study the drivers of deforestation to understand how to avoid deforestation and move to more sustainable land uses in the Amazon.

My connection to the Amazon goes back to my childhood, when my family migrated there.

My parents tried to be ranchers but didn't succeed. After we moved to the city, I would return to my grandparent's ranch. We used to cross the forest by horseback, which was an amazing experience, seeing all the creatures and feeling the mystery. Then I saw the transformation of the landscape over the years, the rivers becoming shallower because of erosion, the water become muddier. It was a major formative experience, which still drives me in my work today.

Since the advent of the Bolsonaro government, and its efforts to weaken environmental protections, as well as the Amazon fires last year, there's been a big increase in questions about what's happening here. As well as journalists and filmmakers, we are also hearing from the private sector: businesses contact us because they are concerned about policies, not only because of consumer demand and the harm this can do to their business, but because of concern about climate change.

The government often uses arguments about sovereignty over the Amazon. But the Amazon is influenced by foreign consumption and investment. These things affect deforestation there. So foreigners have a role to play.

The government and the President have very negative narratives against the civil society, and especially people working on environmental issues. The Minister of Environment has attacked Imazon both on TV and in Congress. The President even sacked the head of Brazil's space agency over deforestation data. This creates tension for us, so we have invested more in communicating what to do and paying attention to security when we're in the field.

Our relationship with Fern is mutually beneficial: we've worked together for several years. From my side it's important to understand the EU policies that affect demand for the agricultural products [soy and beef] that drive deforestation here, and the impact of any new EU regulations aimed at stopping it.



Paulo Barreto is a senior researcher at Imazon, an independent non-profit organisation based in Belém, Brazil, which promotes conservation and sustainable development in the Amazon.

Fern has been working with Paulo and Imazon since 2017: each bringing their expertise to the goal of trying to end consumption of agricultural products that are destroying the world's biggest rainforest, which is also home to one million Indigenous Peoples.

Paulo has published 117 articles, a book, book chapters and reports.

The government often uses arguments about sovereignty over the Amazon. But the Amazon is influenced by foreign consumption and investment. These things affect deforestation there. So foreigners have a role to play.

“The Mercosur trade deal leaves the EU at a crossroads in the battle to protect tropical forests.”

Perrine Fournier Forests and Trade Campaigner

“The links between trade, deforestation and human rights abuses are glaringly clear. And the EU – for example, in its 2015 Trade for All strategy – has pledged to use trade agreements as levers to promote sustainable development and human rights, rather than fuel environmental destruction.

Yet as the EU reinforces its commitment to open trade by negotiating and signing a host of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with highly forested countries, it’s in serious danger of following a path which leads to the latter.

The most high-profile example of this is the FTA that – after 20 years of negotiation – the EU finally agreed with the Mercosur trading bloc, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, in June 2019.

Coming against the backdrop of the Brazilian government ripping up environmental protections, increasing land grabs of Indigenous areas, and followed shortly after by the devastation of the Amazon fires, the consequences of the deal were widely spotlighted.

Fern along with more than 340 civil society groups – including Brazilian Indigenous groups and others from Mercosur nations – called for the deal to be halted, highlighting that opening EU markets to more beef imports from countries where ranching is the main cause of deforestation, while favouring the export of EU cars, especially high fuel-intensive Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) represented a “double whammy for the planet”.

Yet as striking as this example is of the EU’s commitment to protecting the planet and human rights being trumped by its trading ambitions, the FTAs it is negotiating with other forested countries, including Indonesia, are also loaded with risks.

This is why it remains essential that we continue to ensure that EU trade and investment policies are negotiated in a transparent, inclusive way; that they respect human rights, protect rather than destroy forests, and don’t contribute to the climate crisis.”

Fern’s partners

Imazon, Brazil’s Indigenous People Articulation (APIB), VOICE network, Centre for Environment and Development (CED), Cameroon, Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), Vietnam.

Key reports

Towards Sustainable Cocoa supply chains: Regulatory options for the EU

Europeans consume more chocolate than anyone else in the world. But the cocoa production sector is plagued with child labour and deforestation. Following decades of failed voluntary efforts to address these problems, there are growing calls from civil society, industry and governments for the EU to regulate its cocoa supply chains. This report by Duncan Brack looks at different forms regulatory action could take, drawing on the experience of supply chain regulation in other sectors.



Indonesian-EU Palm Oil Trade and Consumption: Improving coherence of EU actions to avoid deforestation and human rights abuses

Indonesia, the world’s largest palm oil producer, has lost 27.5 million hectares (ha) of forest over the last 35 years; 7.5 million ha of this was for agriculture, and of this 2.9 million ha was due to palm oil expansion. This report by Saskia Ozinga and Hugh Speechly documents initiatives and policies in relation to the palm oil trade between Indonesia and the European Union (EU).



100 Days of Bolsonaro – ending the EU’s role in the assault on the Amazon

On the 100th day of Jair Bolsonaro’s presidency, Fern, with the support of 20+ organisations, published this new briefing detailing how the EU and Brazil are economically entwined, and calling on the EU to use its trade, investment and diplomatic leverages to ensure it is not complicit in Bolsonaro’s policies which threaten forests and Indigenous Peoples.



Forests and Climate

“[Bioenergy] is something that impacts energy, people’s lives, communities and Indigenous rights...”

Katja Garson Forest and Climate Campaigner



“It’s not like we’re focusing on a niche area that no one needs to worry about. The destruction of forests for bioenergy is happening on a shocking scale, and it’s deeply embedded in the climate debate.

It’s something that impacts energy, people’s lives, communities and Indigenous rights. But a lot of people don’t really know this, so I feel a responsibility to make sure that our messaging is clear.

The Renewable Energy Directive essentially claims that bioenergy is carbon neutral. And that’s a very simple message that the European Commission is clinging onto. There’s a lot of support for it, because there’s a big push for the so called bio-economy and the idea that we can move away from fossil fuels by using natural resources which are seen as clean.

The policy side of my work is interesting, but we need to ensure it is rooted in the reality on the ground. That’s why we support national campaigns. For example, in Estonia, people are concerned about what’s happening to their forests, so we’ve been able to help them make the connection with what’s being decided in Brussels.

Our **Forests in Danger** report brought forward voices from people who have been on the front line dealing with the impacts of the bioenergy industry on forests. And its follow-up report, **Forests of Hope**, showed the positive side of how forests can be protected, how they should be managed, and the benefits this can have for people and biodiversity.

Civil society is increasingly concerned about coal plants being converted to burning biomass when they should be being shut down. This was demonstrated when 46 groups from across the EU came together to stop Cordemais power station in France from being converted.

In November we brought together anti-coal campaigners with NGOs working on biomass and forests, for a webinar on coal to biomass [power station] conversions, so we can have a stronger, coordinated response to the threat they pose.

We also supported an unprecedented legal case to stop the EU counting burning biomass as a renewable energy source under the Renewable Energy Directive. The case is being brought by people whose lives have been affected by the policy.

In 2019, there was a lot of discussion about the role that forests, as natural carbon sinks, can play in the climate emergency. People want to protect forests. They want to protect biodiversity. And they want to stop climate change. There’s still work to make them understand how bioenergy is part of this.

But the message did get through to some.

One of the most positive developments last year was in December, when two members of the EU delegation at the Conference of the Parties (COP)25 climate summit said that the carbon neutrality designation

given to biomass was under critical review, because of the science showing that biomass burning produces significant carbon emissions.

We also shouldn’t forget that in 2019 two forest rangers in Romania, Liviu Pop and Raducu Gorcioaia, were murdered within a month of each other. Their deaths showed the dangers that people trying to stop illegal logging and environmental destruction can face right on our doorstep.”

Still from the documentary “Le temps des forêts” by François-Xavier Drouet



“It’s not about planting trees, it’s about the health of existing forests, how they’re managed, protected and restored.”



Kelsey Perlman Forest and Climate Campaigner

“In 2019 we focused on how forests can help the EU reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

To achieve this, we must end Europe’s destructive forest management practices. While forest cover has remained steady, EU forests are degrading. We showed the reality of these threats, with our **Forests in Danger** report in February.

This was followed by a technical analysis of the EU’s National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). It identified the same worrying trend: that EU forests are storing less carbon and that instead of keeping forests standing to fight climate change, we’re cutting them down and burning them. This is the legacy of both climate and energy regulation.

But as well as identifying the problems, we highlighted solutions.

First, our **Forests of Hope** report highlighted foresters with an ecological vision for how to keep their land healthy and diverse – while still using their forests to provide for themselves.

And second, by embarking on a campaign for a novel approach to getting ecologists and climate scientists to work on solutions that will benefit carbon stores, biodiversity and people. As part of this, we produced a report showing how France could move from plantations to continuous forest cover. We’re trying to change the discussion so it isn’t environmentalists versus foresters. That’s an artificial dichotomy. This work is nascent, but we built a lot of momentum in 2019.

We also reached out to other groups to talk about the pressures of bioenergy (see Bioenergy Campaign) and kept fighting to ensure forest protection and restoration is part of Paris climate targets.

Our message – that it’s not about planting trees, it’s about the health of existing forests, how they’re managed, protected and restored – was echoed in the Commission’s proposal for a European Green Deal.

We asked for a natural carbon removals strategy. We asked for a law on restoration. We asked to review the Renewable Energy Directive. We asked for funds for nature. All these elements are in the deal.

This is huge in terms of influencing the narrative that healthy forests are more important than tree planting.

Increasingly people understand that forests are under threat in the EU and we need to protect and restore them. The climate emergency is real, and we need to change the way things have been done if we are to protect forests for the future.

Of course, the fact that there is more understanding doesn’t mean all the battles are won, but it means that there are new allies coming out of the woodwork.”

Fern’s partners

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Estonian Fund for Nature, Dogwood Alliance, Partnership for Policy Integrity

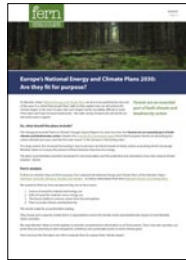


EU Forests of Hope presents positive stories of communities protecting and restoring their forests. The photo shows the Teis community in Spain planting native tree species.

Key reports

Europe's national energy and climate plans to 2030: Are they fit for purpose?

Fern conducted an analysis of the National Energy and Climate Plans of five Member States – Sweden, Denmark, Slovakia, Romania and Germany – to evaluate their transparency and to find out how they see the role of forests in climate action. Overall, the plans make for uncomfortable reading.



What's next for forests and rights?

In July 2019, Fern brought together ten distinguished thinkers in the fields of forests, Indigenous and community rights, and EU policies. This discussion document explores the most salient points. As the meeting was under the Chatham House Rule, the identities of those who made the comments aren't disclosed.



EU forests in danger: Forest protection starts in your backyard

Trees cover 182 million hectares of the EU. That's six

times the size of Italy. Yet as this report shows, European forests are under threat, and rapid and committed action is required to save them. We all – citizens, policy-makers, civil society organisations and political leaders – have a responsibility to protect our forests, and to make sure they are managed in a way which respects biodiversity, Indigenous and community rights, and natural resource limits.



EU Forests of Hope

EU Member States are debating how to transform their economies to fight climate change. Most agree that forests play an important role, but many are unclear about the activities that could enable forests to help deal with the climate and biodiversity crises. We need to both absorb carbon AND make forests more resilient and able to support life. This report reveals the options to protect and restore forests that already exist: The positive stories of communities showing how we can work for forests and how the forests can work for us. *An extended version was released in April 2020.*



2019: number crunching

20 – number of reports and briefing notes published by Fern.

87 – percentage of Europeans polled by YouGov across 25 EU countries, who indicated that new laws are needed to ensure products sold in the EU do not contribute to global deforestation. The poll was commissioned by Fern and other NGOs.

250 – prospective Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who signed Fern's Forest Pledge, promising to promote policies to protect and restore forests worldwide and recognise and secure forest peoples' territories and their rights, including the rights of women, for generations to come. They came from 6 different European political parties, 21 different Member States, and 75 of them were subsequently elected as MEPs, 10 per cent of the European Parliament.

269 – number of times Fern appeared in the media in 2019 (including The Financial Times, Le Monde, BBC, Reuters, the Guardian, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, El Pais, Deutsche Welle, the Daily Telegraph, Climate Home, Politico, the Ecologist, Euractiv, Libération and ENDS Europe).

29,000 – number of impressions of our tweet on polling showing EU citizens want new laws to stop global deforestation.

309,000 – times Fern.org website was visited (by 140,000 visitors).



Forests and Development

“In Liberia land is power – but women’s rights to accessing and controlling it are limited.”

Alexandra Benjamin Forest Governance Campaigner



“In 2019, as in the past, we’ve worked very closely with our partners in **Liberia** and **Ghana** to raise their voices.

In Liberia, land is power, but women’s rights to accessing and controlling it, are limited.

To rectify this, we’ve been working with the Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI), building on our previous work around the Land Rights Act.

This innovative law, which was signed in 2018, is the first Liberian Act to recognise women’s rights, and one of Africa’s most advanced land rights laws.

We’ve been trying to utilise its potential to strengthen women’s rights through training community members in rural areas to understand their rights to land and forests, and also to help them seek office in their communities.

I’ve been working closely with FCI’s Program Director Loretta Pope Kai, who is emerging as one of the key people fighting for women’s rights and against deforestation in Liberia. We were able to support Loretta to speak at international conferences for the first time.

In Ghana we’ve been primarily helping our partner Civic Response to strengthen and respond to the VPA with the EU, which they’ve been working on for 10 years.

We’ve also been supporting their ground-breaking work documenting and verifying the financial and other benefits that forest communities are getting

from logging companies, under Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs). They’ve created a portal where this information is publicly accessible for the first time – a significant moment in creating more transparency in Ghana’s forest sector.

Part of our role is also to make sure our partners’ views are heard in the EU. One way we did this, was by organising for our partners to come to Europe to tell key policymakers, including in the UK, France, Belgium and Spain, that they wanted a ‘green lane’ for FLEGT-licensed timber, stronger enforcement of the EU Timber Regulation and more support for VPAs.

As well as working directly with partners, I work through coalitions: the Liberian NGO coalition, Forest Watch Ghana, and the UK NGO Forest Coalition, which I help manage.

Working with our partners is what I’m most passionate about. Loretta, for example, gave me goose-bumps because she’s been through everything you could imagine in Liberia. She’s experienced the entirety of the war and kept so much hope, resilience, and determination.

And so to see her communicate so powerfully, and her work to support women to overcome their challenges – to get their land rights and to fight deforestation – gives me hope.

I’m happy that Fern really presents partners’ interests above our own.”



This land is ours.” Loretta Althea Pope Kai (far left) and the women of Gbonyea, Liberia

Forest and Development Campaigner Indra Van Gisbergen on the novel way Fern has found to communicate about forests

“Working with partners in countries where illegal logging and forest conversion is rife and forest community rights are under pressure, is at the heart of what we do. So it seemed logical to extend this to supporting journalists in those countries to report independently from the frontlines about deforestation and the communities affected by it.

In the past, we would fly European writers to tropical forested countries to do reports. But there are so many advantages to working with local journalists. They have perspectives and understandings that outsiders don't. They speak local languages, understand the cultural mores and political contexts, and have better access to local communities, as well as to others with the power to shape the future of forests.

As well as cutting down on flight emissions, it's also important that reporters – who face severe challenges in countries with poor governance – are supported to write about issues which are so important for us all.

The first journalist we worked with was a dynamic young Cameroonian reporter, Madeleine Ngeunga, who I met in 2017 when she won a Cameroonian Forest Media Award (ForMA) for exceptional reporting on forest governance.

In 2018 we commissioned Madeleine, along with journalists in Liberia, Honduras, Indonesia and the Central African Republic (CAR) to write articles for our report **Voices from the Forest**, which told stories from countries who had either signed or were in the process of signing VPAs with the EU. As well as commissioning them and editing their work, we placed the articles in the media.

Afterwards I worked with Madeleine on a report exposing the terrible impact of palm plantations on women in Cameroon. Then in 2019, we did a follow-up to the Voices report, called **Our Forests Our Lives**, which looked at the different tenets of forest governance using concrete examples from communities in forested countries.

As well as producing articles by journalists from Guyana, Ghana and Congo, the report contained a powerful piece by Alexandra Benjamin, which graphically showed how women are denied their land rights in Liberia, and the great work one of our partners is doing to tackle it.

The journalists we work with don't confuse the role of NGOs with journalism: we commission them, discuss



Indra Van Gisbergen with Cameroonian journalist Madeleine Ngeunga.

The journalists we work with don't confuse the role of NGOs with journalism: we commission them, discuss the areas to write about, help with logistics (and sometimes training) and place their work. But we're always transparent about our role in the process.



Bienvenu Gbello interviews villagers in CAR for Fern.

the areas to write about, help with logistics (and sometimes training) and place their work. But we're always transparent about our role in the process. In the future, we're striving to support more women journalists as they can often access inspiring stories which will help empower other women.

It's great to see the profiles of the people we have worked with being raised: Madeleine has won more awards and been commissioned by other people, while fine reporters like Bienvenu Gbello from Central African Republic are gaining overdue recognition."

A day in the life of Fern partner

Nina Cynthia Kiyindou

“Initially, Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l’Homme (OCDH) wasn’t interested in forestry issues. Its mandate was solely to promote and defend ‘classical’ human rights. But our work on Indigenous Peoples’ rights began when we published a report in 2006 in which the extent of the problems communities faced – particularly from the forestry companies – was strikingly evident.

Since 2018 we have worked with Fern, using the space created by the FLEGT VPA process to influence domestic laws related to Indigenous Peoples and community forestry.

One big challenge for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, is that they cannot effectively participate in forest management and forest processes. Securing customary land rights is another big hurdle. Beyond customary rights, the law requires registration [land titling] and imposes various conditions. The challenge for communities facing complex and unjust laws, is comparable to the land grabbing phenomenon, which emanates from forestry projects, as well as mining, agro-industrial and infrastructure ventures.

Women’s opinions often do not count. They are marginalised in the community, relegated to the background. This means that they are often absent in forest governance as well as in the governance of all resources.

Women’s opinions often do not count. They are marginalised in the community, relegated to the background. This means that they are often absent in forest governance as well as in the governance of all resources.

They are excluded, even though they are the most impacted by forestry activities. OCDH helps build the capacity of forest communities in a number of ways, including helping communities know their rights. The better a community knows their rights, the better they will defend them.

We also support communities when community members are prosecuted by helping them build the capacity to defend their rights, especially when they are facing companies who do not involve them or listen to them.

If we strengthen the rights of communities, it will improve many things: we will strengthen the means of survival instead of destroying them. It would also improve living conditions, such as drinking water, natural resources, housing, and access to public lighting, school and health.

Conservation policy, for example, does not consider the human dimension – it protects animals more than forest communities. There must also be greater involvement of local and Indigenous communities in forest management, regardless of the type of project (whether logging or conservation). There is no framework for consultation: communities are not listened to or informed.”



Nina Cynthia Kiyindou is a community lawyer, and leads the Natural Resources and Forest Community Rights work at Fern’s partner, Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l’Homme (OCDH).

OCDH was created in Brazzaville in 1994 by a group of journalists, lawyers and teachers, with the aim of promoting human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Republic of Congo. Nina works with forest peoples and Indigenous communities promoting their collective rights and has been with OCDH since 2008. OCDH has won several human rights prizes including the French Republic Human Rights Prize in 2015. Before joining the organisation, Nina was a consultant and researcher specialising in Indigenous Peoples’ laws, with the support of Rainforest Foundation UK.

“Accountability and transparency eradicate the corruption which drives illegal deforestation.”

Marie-Ange Kalenga outlines how Fern and our Central African partners strengthened these crucial forest protection tools in 2019.

“At nearly two million square kilometres, the Congo Basin rainforest has the second largest reservoir of carbon stored in vegetation on Earth. It’s also home to 80 million people, whose survival and livelihoods depend on the forest. Yet deforestation in the Congo Basin is accelerating, and is strongly linked to both a lack of genuine democratic space, and the transparency and accountability that helps curb corruption.

When corruption goes unchecked, it’s easy for the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to be violated or to go unrecognised. And it’s easy to deny them justice when they don’t have access to all they need to make informed decisions about their lives.

The impact of this is particularly acute on women living in the forested areas in the Congo Basin, as shown in our 2019 study, Community Forestry: Opportunity of mirage for women in the Congo Basin, which detailed how women’s traditional roles and responsibilities

– such as producing the majority of food and collecting water and firewood – left them especially vulnerable to deforestation’s harmful effects.

In the Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, I work with our partners Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l’Homme (OCDH), Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l’Homme (RPDH) and members of local civil society platforms that advocate for forest protection, community rights, and natural resource transparency. Together we pressed for greater transparency and accountability in the forest sector throughout 2019 – using the VPA timber trade deals these countries have signed with the EU.

These efforts have already produced concrete successes. Many logging companies are sharing more information with the communities who live near their concessions than ever before.

And last September OCDH and RPDH, among other civil society groups, were able to influence the letter of Intent the government of Congo signed with the



Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l’Homme (OCDH) visiting a forest community in Congo.

Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) Board. The letter pledged to take measures to minimise deforestation while encouraging sustainable and inclusive economic development.

It refers to important milestones such as the FLEGT VPA, and the revenue transparency achieved through the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), which Congolese civil society organisations had pushed for. The EITI secretariat regularly consulted with Fern and our partners. They agreed to push for stronger representation from forest civil society organisations in EITI structures and discussions about who gets forest revenues.

In practical terms, this means that forest and Indigenous communities' chances of receiving the benefits they are owed from the companies who log their forests, are much greater and that their ongoing demands to ensure that these are just and proportional to company and state revenues are addressed.

But increasing transparency and accountability, and curbing corruption, is also the responsibility of EU Member States, whose companies import illegally sourced timber from the Congo Basin.

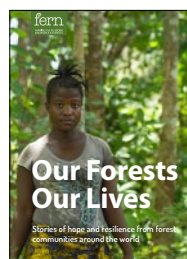
Fern's partners

Centre for Environment and Development (CED), Cameroon, Civic Response, Ghana, Lao-CSO FLEGT network led by the Lao Biodiversity Association, Laos, Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI) and Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), Liberia, Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH) and Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (RPDH), Republic of Congo, VNGO FLEGT network led by Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD), Vietnam.

Key reports

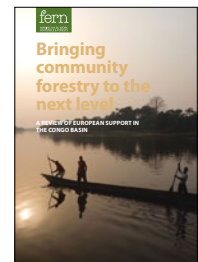
Our Forests Our Lives

From the Liberian women fighting for the right to own and govern land that's rightfully theirs, to the Guyanese Indigenous Peoples resisting companies attempting to seize their forests, these stories (written mostly by local journalists) come from different parts of the globe, but are bound by a common thread. It is the principle that to protect forests, the rights of those who manage and live in them must be strengthened. They are the ultimate guardians of the forests, and have been at the heart of efforts to improve how they are governed.



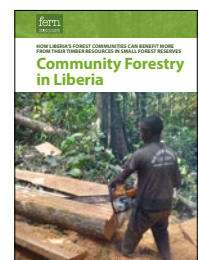
Bringing community forestry to the next level: A review of European support in the Congo Basin

In the past two decades, community forestry has yielded uneven results in the Congo Basin. The initial goal – enabling local communities to benefit directly from forest management – is not yet a reality. Community forestry has nonetheless become established and its potential to strengthen communities' livelihoods, protect forests and meet climate objectives is widely recognised. This report concludes that it is time to act – the Congo Basin forests and communities shouldn't wait when solutions are already at hand.



Community Forestry in Liberia

In a world where communities have less access to and ownership of land and forests, what happens when forests are too small to commercially log? This report by Adam Manvell documents three community stories, showing how they have tried to benefit from their forests. Each case study helps showcase small-scale forest management whilst revealing that it is often not in line with national and formalised legislation and processes.



Community forestry: Opportunity or mirage for women in the Congo Basin?

This French language briefing note **“La foresterie communautaire : Opportunité ou chimère pour les femmes du Bassin du Congo ?”** is also available as an English language abstract. It considers the extent to which community forestry in Central Africa, particularly in Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo, can benefit women, taking into account the regional, local institutional, legal and cultural context.



Why communities are key to protecting Congo Basin forests

This briefing by Marie-Ange Kalenga describes how Fern and its partners engaged in the CoNGOs project to improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities in the Congo Basin through better forest governance and practice. The



project has also influenced policies in the Congo Basin and in the EU (European Union).

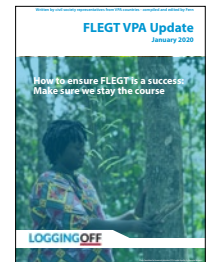
VPA update, June 2019 – Deepening and expanding multi-stakeholder participation in VPAs to achieve greater impact

In many countries, the VPA process is at a crossroads. At this critical time, this briefing outlines how those moving towards FLEGT licensing should focus on sustaining effective civil society participation.



How to ensure FLEGT is a success: Make sure we stay the course

The message of this briefing was clear: FLEGT won't be able to achieve its promise if we don't stick with the VPAs until the end



Daan van Beek has designed Fern's reports since the start. Here he reflects on his key role in defining Fern's visual evolution over the past 25 years

"Throughout my career I've worked for everyone from commercial companies to environmental and developing NGOs, and trade unions. I designed all sorts of printed matter like magazines, campaigns, posters, leaflets, books etc.

I worked with Saskia [Ozinga] when she was at Friends of the Earth Netherlands. When she founded Fern [with Sian Pettman] she got in touch, and I've been designing most of Fern's reports ever since, including every annual report.

As you can imagine, a lot has changed in the last 25 years.

At first, the recycled paper we used was fairly grey and we printed in black with sometimes one supporting colour. Now the recycled paper is of much greater quality and full colour is standard.

I used to receive huge chunks of text back at the start. With different type-faces, boxes, and quotes we tried to make appealing pages. Open white parts were seen as waste of paper and needed filling up. People seemed willing to read much longer articles then, but these days the articles are getting shorter, and the images are more important.

Saskia always thought design was important, and that if something wasn't visually appealingly fewer people would read it, but when Richard [Wainwright, Fern's Communications Manager] came on the scene, there was an even greater emphasis on design, and it really improved.

Fern's use of images is also so much better now. If you



have images that tell the story, it helps the publication make an impact, even if they aren't technically the best pictures.

Designing a publication is like doing a Sudoku puzzle: you get a number of facts, text, images, and also have to meet the expectations of the people you're working for. Somehow you make all these things work in the required number of pages, while bringing your own creative influence to the process you find the solution.

I've always enjoyed working and the 25 years for Fern have been fun."

Forest Movement Europe

Julia Christian outlines her role coordinating the Forest Movement Europe (FME) and the solidarity and inspiration it fosters



"Campaigners go to a lot of conferences and meetings, but the annual Forest Movement Europe (FME) meeting is unique.

It's always held with a different host organisation in a different country in a rural setting, and it's much more than a conference: it's a gathering of a community.

It's very personal, social and definitely doesn't feel like work. You're taking time away from the city, policy discussions and the busy scenes that we're part of, to step back and look at the bigger picture, with other people who really care about the same issues.

Coordinating it means being responsible for making sure that it happens, and putting together the agenda, which is set collaboratively.

In 2019 the meeting was in Eastern Slovakia, near some beautiful old growth beech forests in the Carpathian mountains. We also made a trip over the border to Western Ukraine, to go see the forest that some Ukrainian activists were protecting from a big ski resort, and to participate in the community meeting they organised. It was magical. The forest was amazing and the Ukrainian activists were

inspiring. I think it was my favourite thing that I did last year.

I've worked on a lot on forest policy in the global South – in West Africa, and Latin America – so I've seen NGOs work with communities in those places to protect specific forests. But I'd never seen it in Europe, and I was amazed by how similar the dynamics are. Whether people are protecting their forest from a ski resort or a palm oil plantation, the false promises companies peddle to poor local communities to get them to accept a project that's not in their interest are often mostly the same.

The FME is a community where people connect with each other, and share solidarity, which helps them work together to campaign more effectively.

Attendance is really on an individual and personal basis, and this is a movement of around 200 people not a formal membership organisation, which I think is important because we're not there to exchange official positions or communicate on behalf of our organisations. We're there to take a step back from our normal working lives, to talk and learn from each other."

Julia Christian (centre, in light jacket) in Western Ukraine with other 2019 FME attendees.



Fern's finances

(January - December 2019) – all figures are in Euros

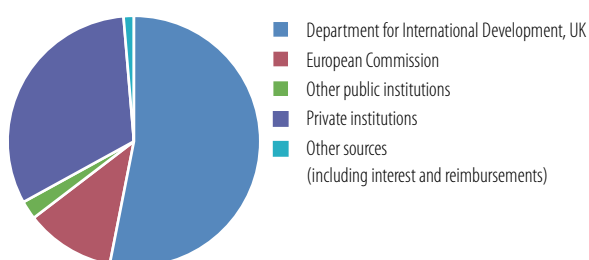
INCOME

	2019	2018
Department for International Development, UK	1,333,427	1,228,694
European Commission	288,820	273,598
Other public institutions	60,000	142,432
Private institutions	796,682	838,692
Other sources (including interest and reimbursements)	33,186	77,809
Total income	2,512,115	2,561,225

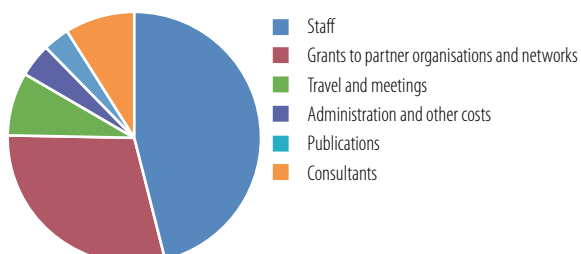
EXPENDITURE

	2019	2018
Staff	1,148,717	1,102,971
Grants to partner organisations and networks	729,253	467,880
Travel and meetings	202,597	249,913
Administration and other costs	106,801	120,197
Publications	84,089	112,277
Consultants	222,179	394,230
Total expenditure	2,493,636	2,447,469

Source of income



Expenditure by category



Expenditure by campaign



To see a complete version of Fern's audited accounts, please visit: www.fern.org/about-us/audited-finances

Acknowledgements

Fern would like to thank all our funders and partners without whom none of this work would have been possible.

In 2019 our funders were:

- Department for International Development, United Kingdom
- Ford Foundation, United States of America
- David & Lucille Packard Foundation, United States of America
- Delegation of the European Commission in Laos
- European Commission (EASME)
- Waterloo Foundation, United Kingdom
- European Climate Foundation, Belgium
- Arcus Foundation, USA
- Tropenbos International, The Netherlands
- Partnership for Policy Integrity
- Environmental Funders Network



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Brazil's Indigenous People Articulation (APIB), Fern and Greenpeace coordinated an action in front of the European Commission Berlaymont building to help raise Brazilian Indigenous People's voices in the EU media.

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