


fern

MAKING EUROPE WORK
FOR PEOPLE & FORESTS

2025

ANNUAL REPORT





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. ●

Photo on cover *The Peoples for Forests: Global Gathering held on 20-22 May 2025 in Chaussy, France – brought together over 100 environmental activists, local community members, representatives from allied organisations and forest defenders from 56 countries.*

Credit *Marco Gasparic / Midia NINJA / Flickr*

Report design *by Jane Mery*

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Welcome

By Hannah Mowat
Fern Campaigns Coordinator



Connecting forests to peoples' daily reality

Fern celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2025 against an ominous backdrop. Around the world civil society space is being restricted; NGO funding is being cut; and in the EU, progressive forest policies are under attack.

It was therefore special to celebrate three decades surrounded by many people who have been touched by Fern in different ways. Our anniversary gave us the chance to take the long view: reminding us that real change can take decades, and that the path to achieving it is rarely linear.

Fern helps build large, powerful coalitions from the global North and South, working together for the kinds of long-term change that can't get overturned when corporate winds shift, and companies retreat from environmental and climate commitments – which many are doing. We're after legal changes that are harder to overturn in democracies.

Forest gymnastics

As protecting the natural world and fighting the climate crisis have slipped down the political agenda, Fern has performed 'forest gymnastics'.

Forests are cherished across the political spectrum as they're part of our folklore and heritage – used as inspiration in many children's tales. But in Europe and beyond, many are struggling with daily realities. We must respond by meeting people where they're at.

This means situating forests within a broader set of issues and showing how forests connect to their lives in surprising ways, from energy bills

to cholesterol levels, to modes of transport.

In our bioenergy work, for example, we've linked with doctors working on the health impacts of wood burning; in our meat campaign we've allied with organisations trying to prevent heart disease and diabetes; and in our critical minerals campaign we've joined forces with people working on shared mobility.

All their work is connected to the destruction of forests, which are being razed to burn wood for energy; to produce soy to feed the animals we eat; and to mine for cobalt, lithium, nickel and other raw materials used to power Electric Vehicles (EVs), (as well as for weapons systems and the digital economy).

The choice to build links outside the forest movement and listen to people beyond our bubbles is rooted in our 2023 long-term strategy, which was when we decided to apply a forest lens to critical issues, and open space at the heart of power in Brussels for those who are working in them.

There's increasing anger about rising inequality, decreasing purchasing power, spiralling bills and failing social services. In our own modest way, Fern is willing to meet those challenges, to help address the EU's democratic deficit.

It concrete terms this means raising voices in Brussels that aren't being heard, such as, in 2025, those of Swedish start-ups using close to nature forest management systems. Their opinion of European timber subsidies matters, and it is important to highlight which companies or foresters get them. We also worked on the economics of cocoa pricing, which is leaving Ghanaian and Ivorian smallholders, who produce most of the world's cocoa, in poverty.

Collective strength

In 2025, we mounted another rearguard action to protect the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) from those determined to dismantle it.

The collective strength that civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples and forest communities showed in defending the EUDR - despite coming from places thousands of kilometres apart - is a testament to their belief in its potential impact. Correspondingly, the efforts of industry and others to derail it show they know it is a threat to their destructive practices.

In fact, it has already led to positive changes as governments from Malaysia to Vietnam and Côte d'Ivoire to Ghana respond to the demands of the regulation.

True to our niche

On a personal note, after eight years, 2025 was my last year as Campaigns Coordinator. I saw the role as being in service of the organisation: continuing Saskia Ozinga's vision of Fern as an enabling space for empowered individuals to be able to deliver impactful work. It has been a privilege to work alongside the passionate and skilled people I call the Fernies.

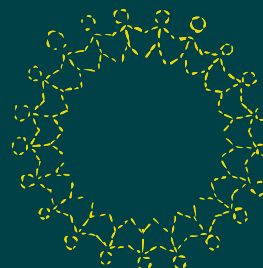
In 2026, two of those Fernies Kelsey Perlman and Julia Christian will take over as Co-Campaign Coordinators, accompanying Fern's campaigns into their fourth decade. We feel exceptionally lucky that this harmonious duo stepped into this important task (see page 26).

I know that Fern will stay true to its ethos: helping raise voices usually ignored in the corridors of power, so as to protect forests and the rights of all who depend on them. ●



HANNAH AND SASKIA AT THE PEOPLES FOR FORESTS: GLOBAL GATHERING. IMAGE BY KATIE MAEHLER/ MÍDIA NINJA / FLICKR

"We must meet people where they're at... [by] showing how forests connect to their lives in surprising ways, from energy bills to cholesterol levels, to modes of transport."



"A massive global majority in favour of forests."

By David Van Reybrouck

Many of Fern's friends, supporters and staff past and present gathered in central Brussels in September 2025 to mark our 30 years protecting forests and rights. Among the speakers was the acclaimed author and 'one of the leading intellectuals in Europe', according to *Der Tagesspiegel*, David Van Reybrouck. In this abridged version of his talk, Van Reybrouck vividly describes the perilous times we live in, and how hope lies in the "global silent forest majority".



FERN CAMPAIGNER TYALA IFWANGA RECITES ODE TO FERN BY MANDY HAGGITH, WRITER AND FOUNDER OF THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL PAPER NETWORK

It's a real pleasure to be here to celebrate with an organisation I've been following and admiring for a number of years. Congratulations on your 30th anniversary. It's an anniversary happening in difficult circumstances. Fighting for forests is always an uphill battle, but 2025 seems to be steeper than the years before. At the very moment humanity should join forces to tackle the biggest challenge we've ever faced, we

"80% of people globally want their governments to do more against climate change and biodiversity loss."

are more divided than ever. We're obsessed with anthropocentric violence, and we forget Anthropocene violence. Seven out of nine planetary boundaries have been

crossed. We're not only talking about climate change, we're talking about water scarcity, ocean acidification, geochemical flows on nitrogen and phosphorus, novel entities entering our environment, microplastics... All this poses existential threats to lives on earth. And I'm sorry I have to tell you this tonight, but I sense an acute and growing syndrome of 'IVF': not in vitro fertilisation, but Indigenous' Voices Fatigue.

At the very moment that USAID is being abandoned, that the Dutch government is forgetting about its aid programs, and just a few days after the Flemish government has decided to stop development work altogether, it seems as if Indigenous' voices are not being heard as they once were. That's the sombre part of my talk.

Trees are the seals of the 2020s

But like Charles Dickens said: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times', and thinking about your work and the admirable efforts you deliver, I see three



FORMER FERN BOARD MEMBER JACQUES LAURUOL AND MALIKA AMMAR

important reasons for optimism.

The first is that what seals were for Greenpeace in the 1980s, trees are now.

If ten years ago you'd told me that books on trees and habitats would become international multi-million bestsellers, I would not have believed it. Yet Peter Wohlleben's The Hidden Life of Trees has sold over three million copies, Robin Wall Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass has sold over two million, and

Melvyn Sheldrake's debut book, *Entangled Life*, sold one million. And if ten years ago you had told me that people in Europe would get a more than four-year prison sentences for cutting down a tree, I would not have believed it. This is what happened two months ago in Northumbria to the two folks who thought it fun to cut down the Sycamore Gap tree along Hadrian's Wall. I would also not have believed that more than one million people would flock to French cinemas to watch the documentary *Demain (Tomorrow)* by Cyril Dion, but it happened. And I would not have believed that in almost every European city there would be protests if the local government started cutting down trees. In polls across Europe, we consistently see that a massive majority want to plant more trees and reinforce ecosystems. So, something has changed in the way that people in the West are looking at trees.

You're not alone

Now the question is - and I think this is why Fern's work is so important, because you realise there's a world beyond the West - does this hold true abroad as well? Indeed it does, and that's my second reason for optimism. We have an incredible poll that was just published a year ago, [The People's Climate Vote 2024](#), which was financed by the United Nations Development Programme and Oxford University. It asked 73,000 people in



FERN BOARD CHAIR MARGARETA NILSSON AND RAPHAËLLE GODTS OF CLIENTEARTH

77 countries if they want bolder climate action from their countries. Together these countries represent 87% of the global population. The figures are staggering. 80% of people globally want their governments to do more against climate change and biodiversity loss. 86% believe that countries should put aside their differences and work together. And 81% say their country should do a lot to protect and restore nature, for example by planting trees or protecting wildlife.

The moments you feel depressed by how politics is developing, please go back to these figures and remember that you're not alone. There is a massive global silent majority in favour of forests: a global silent forest majority is what defines humanity at this stage.

We are entangled

My third reason for hope is that we are increasingly finding ways to let that silent majority voice itself. The Belém, Brazil climate confe-

rence will be the first Conference of the Parties with a Global Citizens Assembly. A sample of several hundred world inhabitants will come together and start a global consultation process. The Global Citizens Assembly should not be a one off, it

"Something has changed in the way that people in the West are looking at trees."

should become a permanent feature. But I think it's really valuable that COP30 is the first one trying to let the world speak on the future of nature. It sounds heroic if you fight for forests - but my solution is the least sexy one imaginable: it is all about governance, and we have to move towards global governance.

Today is a difficult moment to campaign for forests if you look at politics, but it's easy if you look at people. And in that respect, humanity is like a forest. We are interconnected, we are entangled, and we share so much collective intelligence. Thank you so much. Please go on. ●



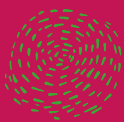
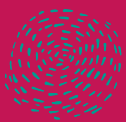
FORMER FERN COLLEAGUE JULIE PAINTING

FERN PARTNER LORETTA ALETHEA POPE KAI,
FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
(LIBERIA) BY KATIE MAEHLER/ MÍDIA NINJA / FLICKR



Partners

*With Mídia NINJA and
Oliver Kornblihtt (Brazil),
Silas Siakor (Liberia)*



Peoples for Forests' Global Gathering

In May 2025, more than 100 environmental activists from more than 50 countries gathered in the French countryside with a common purpose. Over three days they shared knowledge from different corners of the globe in search of solutions to the crises facing the world's forests. There were sessions exploring the forest movement's history; meetings connecting campaigners from countries facing deforestation with those from countries buying the products of that devastation; discussions on the complexity of tackling the seemingly intractable problems of deforestation, a solutions fair showing examples that have worked around the world... and much more.

Peoples for Forests was imagined as an expansion of Fern's annual Forest Movement Europe (FME)

meetings, and was co-organised by BLESS Foundation (Indonesia), Centro Indígena de Acción Integral (CIAI) (Latin America), Fern, Initiatives pour le Développement communautaire et la conservation de la Forêt (IDEF) (Côte d'Ivoire), Mídia NINJA & Climax (Brazil), and TINTA – The Invisible Thread (Global).

While it was a truly collective event, Marielle Ramires, of Fern's Brazilian partner Mídia NINJA, was one of the people whose vision most deeply shaped it.

Marielle believed that *"there is hope, even in the most desolate landscapes"*, but that real change comes through building movements. Marielle didn't see the fruition of her work on Peoples for Forests. She died from cancer, aged 45, three weeks before the event took place, on April 29, 2025.

Here her colleague Oliver Kornblihtt remembers his close friend, her integral role in forging Mídia NINJA's partnership with Fern, and how her legacy reverberated throughout Peoples for Forests, and beyond. ●

***"There is hope,
even in the
most desolate
landscapes."***

Marielle Ramires

THE PEOPLES FOR FORESTS: GLOBAL GATHERING
BY KATIE MAEHLER/ MÍDIA NINJA / FLICKR





MÍDIA NINJA (BRAZIL)

Mídia NINJA is a Brazilian network of communicators who amplify underrepresented voices and social movements, with a growing focus on climate action, community mobilisation, and initiatives such as Floresta Ativista (Activist Forest). Co-founded by Marielle Ramires in 2013, its roots lie in the Fora do Eixo, a group of collectives that organised music festivals and other cultural events. NINJA is an acronym in Portuguese for "independent narratives, journalism and action", and Mídia NINJA follow the principle that journalism should amplify marginalised voices, rather than claim neutrality. With millions of followers across platforms, Mídia NINJA's reach and impact is phenomenal.

*"Marielle was first the person from Mídia Ninja **to connect with Fern**"*

As a child my dream was to be a photojournalist, and I worked as a press photographer for many years. But I was frustrated by the experience: how the editors chose the material, and the distance between the things I photographed and the final product.

Mídia NINJA - which I joined in 2014 - changed my mind about what photography could be, what communication could be, and how to engage with the causes I believed in. I understood that when an image is connected with a cause, and when the people being photographed are also part of the building of the image, it's a whole new world.

Marielle was first the person from Mídia Ninja to connect with Fern, and it was a really special connection. She was helping Sônia Guajajara [executive coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), later appointed Brazil's Minister for Indigenous Peoples] organise an Indigenous' tour in Europe, which Fern supported in Brussels.

When she came back, Marielle told us that Fern was different from other organisations - that she connected with something that we really care about in our movement: respecting Indigenous' leadership, priorities and autonomy, and understanding their needs and political priorities. Marielle

wanted to see how we could keep the relationship with Fern moving. After that, I met PJ [Pierre-Jean Sol Brasier] and many others in Fern. We worked together on two videos [[The EU-Mercosur trade deal: What does it mean for Brazil?](#) and [An activist's guide to the EU](#)] and other EU tours. This combined Fern's experience of advocacy with our knowledge in communications.

We worked together with Fern for a year on Peoples for Forests. It was incredible connecting with organisations from Latin America, Indonesia, Africa, and different regions of the world.

In the middle of it, Marielle got a cancer diagnosis. We knew that the situation was very serious, but she was always fighting. I attended the meetings with Fern, but Marielle kept connected the whole time. Until the last days, she continued working, developing the idea of why we were doing this meeting to bring people together at this moment of crisis for the world. She passed away a few weeks before Peoples for Forests.

The meeting was a way of processing our grief and mourning collectively. The aim wasn't to come out with a strategy document or a manifesto. For us, it was most important to build a space and time where we could be together with fighters for forests from different situations,



Oliver Kornblihtt is an international editor at Mídia NINJA and the founder of NINJA.Foto. He also works with Floresta Ativista to connect communities and build global networks.

Image by Katie Mähler / Mídia NINJA / Flickr

some facing violence from the state, or from paramilitaries. It was a moment to have a connection in person, to understand peoples' struggles, and their different visions for the world. We can then come back to our territories and continue our fight.

For example, when we met with people from Europe who are living through a difficult moment because of the backlash against [environmental] laws, we shared strategies for how we passed through [the challenges] in Brazil under [former President] Bolsonaro.

For us it's important to build relationships organically; to find organic solutions to this artificial crisis. It's the opposite of a monoculture: the organic way shows that there are complex ecosystems that are alive and connect and build bigger networks.

This was Marielle's vision. It was one which was fulfilled at Peoples for Forests, and which will live on. ●



SILAS SIAKOR (TOP ROW, SECOND FROM RIGHT) AT A COMMUNITY ADVOCACY-TRAINING WORKSHOP (PROVOKING CHANGE) HOSTED BY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (SDI) AND ORGANISED BY FERN IN 2006

Liberia: Empowering communities to protect their forests

The European Commission has signalled its intent to end its groundbreaking timber trade deal with Liberia, just as international efforts to protect Liberia's forests appear to be weakening. But Fern's long-time friend Silas Siakor has an inspired plan to save his country's forests.

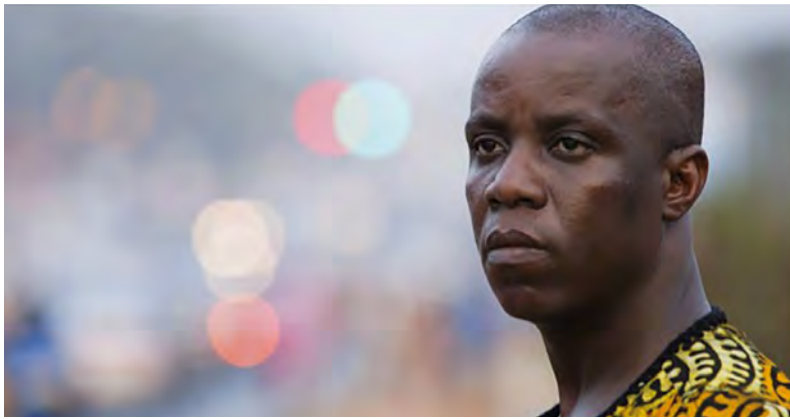
Almost half of West Africa's surviving tropical forests are in Liberia. They're a vital climate sink, a sanctuary for biodiversity, and a source of sustenance for rural communities. (Half of the country's population live within 2.5 kilometres of a forest). But throughout Liberia's history they've been plagued by corruption, illegal logging and land grabs. When Liberia signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU in 2011, there was a chance to break with this troubled past. This timber trade deal was part of Forest

Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Regulation, designed to tackle the root causes of illegal logging. Fern and our key Liberian civil society partners have supported the VPA since its inception. In 2025, however, the European Commission risked more than a decade of progress by unilaterally proposing to terminate the Liberian VPA. At the same time, many foreign donors who supported protecting Liberia's forests are withdrawing, and threats to forests are spiralling, including from gold mining and incursions into protected areas by cocoa farmers from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire.

But there is hope.

Silas Siakor has played a central role in the modern history of Liberia's forests, having been at the forefront of efforts to protect them since exposing how the illegal timber trade

funded the country's civil war, which ended in 2003. A Goldman prize winner, founder of Fern's partner the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), and former Fern Board member, Siakor has worked tirelessly for communities' rights to be at the heart of Liberia's forest reforms. Today, two-thirds of Liberia's forests are owned by rural communities. In 2025 Siakor tried to utilise this by piloting a scheme to incentivise communities to keep their forests standing by paying them cash up front for agreeing to protect their forests from logging, mining or farming. Here he outlines why the EU and others must redouble their support for Liberia's forests, and why economically empowering communities is a solution to the myriad threats they face.



"How do they benefit from the resources around them? How do they turn it into an economic opportunity?"

Silas Siakor

Silas Siakor is a Goldman prize winner, founder of Fern's partner the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), and former Fern Board member. (Image from moviesilas/ Facebook)

"Everyone with an interest in Liberia's forests needs to be aware of three things. One is that the [Liberian] government and a lot of community actors are pushing back aggressively against conservation. There's a lot of disillusionment, and the government is using that. This means that Liberia's forests are at risk like we never imagined. We're seeing an acceleration of land degradation, massive environmental pollution, and forest destruction as a result of an increase in gold mining, driven by the explosion in the price of gold. We're also seeing a dramatic increase in cocoa cultivation that will decimate forests if the situation isn't halted. Two is that, as the EU has turned its back on the Liberia in terms of the VPA, the space that was created, that brought communities, government, civil society, and all of the different actors into one room to talk about forest governance issues, is not as vibrant or as robust as it was.

The third thing everyone needs to be aware of, is that because the logging industry has failed so badly there's a real opportunity in Liberia to show that an alternative development pathway is possible: one which concretely rewards communities for embracing conservation to protect forests in the short, medium and long-term. The international community could

work with well-meaning Liberians and non-state actors to really come together to protect Liberia's forests. If we don't do that now, the logging companies that have failed in different parts of the country, will continue to look for opportunities to cut. Unless standing forests have economic value for local populations, they are going to go for this short-term economic benefit.

Simple. Direct. Doable.

A couple of years ago we [Siakor now runs Liberian NGO, [Integrated Development and Learning](#) (IDL)] worked with communities who registered their customary land rights under Liberia's new land rights' law. The idea was that if we could support them to develop their land use plans, companies could directly engage them to use the land, based on their own needs and priorities. That would have helped eliminate some of the land use conflicts we see. But after working with those communities and jumping through lots of hoops, we couldn't find any private sector that was interested in making meaningful investment.

I thought that if these people have their land rights and these plans but there's no private sector interest, how do they benefit from the resources around them? How do they turn it into an economic opportunity? International conservation efforts to

pay countries and communities to keep their forests standing, such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), have evolved into this bloated, convoluted, technocratic idea that nobody seems to understand or have any interest in taking forward.

We wanted to simplify this and landed on the concept of rewarding communities through direct area-based payments, with direct up-front cash to protect their forests from farming, forestry, or mining. Very simple, direct and doable. Liberia's legal framework now is the best you can ever wish for in any given context.

So, I think it is down to civil society to turn this robust legal framework into a tangible development benefit for communities. And one way to do that is by rethinking our approach: working with communities on the ground, accompanying them on their journey to lift themselves out of poverty. More focus needs to be placed on economically empowering local populations: working with women, for example, to engage in sustainable, local, forest friendly businesses, really helping them to translate the rights they have over the land they control into meaningful economic opportunities.

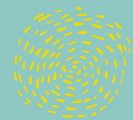
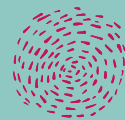
If we don't do that, we will remain stuck in our advocacy spaces waiting for something bad to happen." ●

VIOLA UKKOLA, A 23-YEAR-OLD REINDEER HERDER AND RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND'S ARCTIC CENTRE, IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THAT MINING CAN HAVE ON PEOPLES' LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS. IMAGE BY VIOLA UKKOLA



Campaigns

With Fern's team





EU trade and raw material policies' impact **on forests and peoples**

By Perrine Fournier

Forest, Trade and Mining Campaigner

Growing demand for the critical raw materials needed to power EVs - as well as for wind turbines, weapons systems and artificial intelligence (AI) - comes at a heavy cost for forests and people.

In 2025, Fern, along with Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN), commissioned a study that modelled this cost for the first time: showing that if the EU continues on its current path, it will lead to large-scale forest destruction and human rights violations. It was launched in May at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains.

We didn't just highlight the problem, but potential solutions too - including how using less harmful battery technology and improving mobility and transport measures would dramatically reduce projected deforestation.

One of the report's key messages was reflected in the [European Commission's Automotive package](#)

"We also have to take account of economic realities and support people to find alternative sources of income."

in December, which proposed incentivising the use of smaller cars, which are more affordable and less demanding in terms of raw materials.

It's important that our campaigning is rooted in the experiences of people impacted by mining, and in 2025 we documented the controversy unfolding in the Arctic north of Finland, where the Sakatti project threatens a precious ecosystem for the short-term needs of the car and defence industries [see box].

Part of the reality on the ground - not just in Finland but in many places around the world where these issues are playing out - is that while many local people oppose mining, others rely on it for their livelihoods. That's why when we advocate for restricted mining zones in ecologically rich areas, we also have to take account of economic realities and support people to find alternative sources of income.

We work very closely with partners, including in [Indonesia](#) and the [Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\)](#), where mining for critical minerals has led to widespread human rights violations and environmental degradation. In Europe we're part of [the EU Raw Materials Coalition](#), comprising around 60 NGOs across EU Member States.

At the moment we are developing new narratives and building movements to reduce demand for raw materials, starting with the transport sector, where in 2025 we began mapping organisations to work with who advocate for shared mobility as a way to reduce car ownership. We intend to do the same with NGOs working on AI and the sustainable digital transition to see where we can align.

The greater our collective strength, the greater our chances of moving away from the damaging path we're on and ensuring a just and sustainable transition to a low-carbon world. ●

MINING IN THE ARCTIC: A CRITICAL THREAT

In October 2025, Fern's Perrine Fournier, Anna Muiżniece and Dhany Alfalah (a campaigner with Fern's Jakarta-based partner, Satya Bumi) travelled to Finnish Lapland to document the threats that the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) poses to precious habitats and traditional livelihoods. They found that surging demand for critical raw materials for the short-term needs of the car, defence and AI industries, is threatening a Natura 2000 site teeming with rare and endangered birds and plants, and an ecosystem that's many thousands of years old. The Sakatti mining project is among the 47 EU sites that the European Commission chose as [Strategic Projects in 2025](#). The dangers it represents are far from an anomaly, with similar controversies unfolding at different sites around the EU.

[Read their special report here.](#)

Forests, community rights, cocoa and carbon in West Africa



By Alex Benjamin
Forest Governance Policy Adviser

In the last eight years at Fern I've focussed on illegal logging, deforestation and protecting forest people's rights, specifically in Liberia and Ghana, with a heavy emphasis on VPAs as a lever for change.

In 2025, Ghana became the second country in the world and the first in Africa to launch FLEGT licensing: an historic achievement driven by Ghanaian civil society's incredible movement building.

They overcame huge odds, and coordinated with business and government, to ensure that Ghana leads the way on timber legality and traceability. Their work has also helped improve the lives of forest communities and turn the tide of the illegality and corruption that has blighted Ghana's timber sector for decades.

In November, Fern along with Palladium, an international consultancy which supports forest governance reforms, celebrated Ghana's hard-won achievement by hosting events in Brussels. Fern also co-hosted a European Parliament event with MEPs, Ghanaian government members, civil society and business. Ghana's message was clear: they want other countries, especially from Africa, to also achieve FLEGT licenses.

Yet the EU is moving the opposite way – meaning that, sadly, 2025 was also an historic year for unwelcome reasons.

In September, the European Commission proposed terminating Liberia's VPA - a major catalyst for change in the country, and the first scheme of its kind anywhere to address the root causes of illegal logging. Liberian civil society expressed their dismay at this prospect.

The European Commission is changing its strategy, announcing that it wants to move to a [Global Gateway](#)

private investment-driven model. This model, while incorporating ideas of green growth and sustainability, does not have the creation of civic space at its heart. Liberian civil society, along with Fern, are fighting to ensure Liberia's hard-won gains from the VPA process aren't lost.

We can't turn our back on the accountability and traceability systems, or the civic space that's been built under the VPA. ●

DOREEN ASUMANG YEBOAH, DIRECTOR OF THE RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY INITIATIVES NETWORK, A GHANAIAN RESOURCE-RIGHTS NGO, AT FERN'S EVENT CELEBRATING THE FRUITS OF THE EU-GHANA PARTNERSHIP ON ILLEGAL LOGGING.



"We can't turn our back on the accountability and traceability systems, or the civic space that's been built under the VPA."

EU policies on bioenergy, carbon removals and the bioeconomy

In 2025 my work followed three main lines.

The first was looking at bioenergy in a broader way. An example is the Beyond Bioenergy NGO statement, signed by 82 NGOs across Europe. It articulates why policy incentives for burning trees and crops in the name of climate action is a disaster on many fronts: forests and the climate of course, but also food security, public health, and wood industries who bring value to the EU economy without relying on public subsidies.

"We're always stronger when we start from peoples' realities, and I was inspired by this event where many spoke about their lives and businesses in insightful and non-jargony ways."

The second was around carbon removals, working within an industry-dominated EU expert group to try to ensure that the EU's Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) doesn't worsen the climate crisis. Unfortunately, in the end, the CRCF is geared towards carbon trading, whose damage to the climate and forests has been documented for more than 25 years.

The third was around the bioeconomy: This is important because while increasing European forest robustness, we must also use our limited, precious wood supply in a wiser way. For instance, [we made a video](#) which spelled out the many benefits of using wood to insulate homes rather than burning it.

In May, we helped bring together wood using companies, MEPs, foresters and campaigners to discuss how the EU's Bioeconomy Strategy can protect forests and boost rural livelihoods. We're always stronger when we start from peoples' realities, and I was inspired by this event where many spoke about their lives and businesses in insightful and non-jargony ways.

In February, with the Cool Heating Coalition we organised an event exploring how to support people access affordable and cleaner heating alternatives. There are people

for whom burning wood is still a vital source of heat in winter, even though it damages their health. Helping them access cleaner sources of heating at an affordable price is essential.

Listening should always be the starting point, but you wouldn't guess it from looking at current EU policy debates, where the dominant narrative focusses on destroying legal protections for people and nature rather than ensuring a safer future for all. ●



MEPS SIGRID FRIIS (RENEW, DENMARK) AND VILLE NIINISTÖ (GREENS, FINLAND) AT OUR CLEAN HEAT FOR HOMES EVENT. IMAGE BY CHARIS BRICE / FLICKR



By Martin Pigeon
Forest and Climate Campaigner



The impact of EU cocoa consumption on forests and smallholders

By Pierre-Jean Sol Brasier
Forest Governance Campaigner

After seven years as Fern's Strategic Communications Adviser, in May I started a new role as a campaigner, focusing on how EU demand for cocoa affects forests and smallholders' livelihoods. I had to find my bearings and make sure I didn't lose the networks that the previous campaigners had patiently built. Luckily, I could count on Tyala [Ifwanga] and Julia [Christian], the two brilliant campaigners who I replaced, and who are still at Fern.

I jumped straight into campaign mode because of the endless and mega polarising attempts to sabotage the EUDR, which took up a lot of my time. My work on the EUDR focuses on how smallholders in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, who produce most of the cocoa beans the world consumes, can comply with the Regulation, and benefit from it.

Many smallholder farmers are in desperate straits, following a price speculation frenzy over cocoa beans. The price of chocolate surged, then the market tanked, and many farmers couldn't sell cocoa at the set price, meaning some had no income at all.

The EUDR's traceability imperative would enable smallholders to know exactly who they sell their cocoa to and prevent them from being exploited by middlemen in the supply chain.

Attempts to sabotage the EUDR prevent constructive discussions on how it can support smallholders. It's hard to have a balanced debate on improvements when you have opponents trying to kill it altogether, especially if they use any caveats to promote their narrative.

A highlight of 2025 was teaming up with the Voice Network to launch the Cocoa Barometer. It's published every three years and captures the biggest trends in the market. We organised a session for smallholder farmers, where they raised their concerns, and arranged meetings for them with the European Commission.

Their key message was that by prevaricating on the EUDR, the EU is undermining smallholders who support it in

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, while strengthening its critics' position.

One thing I love about my job is putting people in touch with decision makers who they would never normally have access to because they're not part of the same 'elite': Midia NINJA call this 'hacking the institutions' [see Midia NINJA feature page 10].

I was therefore really proud that in 2025, cocoa smallholders' voices were heard at the highest level of the Commission; that their struggles were given visibility. Opening space for our partners in Brussels, as well as helping them get media coverage, also increases their legitimacy among policymakers in their own countries. Poverty is a root cause of deforestation. By giving a better livelihood to farmers, it will significantly contribute to tackling it. ●



PIERRE-JEAN VISITS A COCOA COOPERATIVE IN MAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

"I was therefore really proud that in 2025, cocoa smallholders' voices were heard at the highest level of the Commission; that their struggles were given visibility."



OBSERVATORIO-SOCIOAMBIENTAL PRESENTS A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW SOCIOENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATORY AT COP DO POVO IN BELÉM, BRAZIL.

"We rallied with other NGOs and partners to debunk false EUDR criticisms and worked with journalists to expose some of timber sector's retrograde dynamics."

Reducing EU consumption of products *that harm forests and people around the world*

In September 2025, the European Commission used the fig leaf of IT problems to propose delaying the application of the EUDR for the second time. In December, it rubber-stamped the decision and agreed that the law should be reviewed by the end of April 2026.

It was a shattering moment. A viable alternative would have been to continue testing the system, suspend fines for a year in case the system was not working properly and iron out the IT issues. Instead, the Commission created never-ending doubt: opening the door to those who want to kill the EUDR altogether.

It's frustrating because we should have been working with partners, supporting them to implement the Regulation, and showing that it has teeth. Instead, much of our year was spent pushing back against attempts to torpedo it.

We rallied with other NGOs and partners to debunk false EUDR criticisms and worked with journalists to expose some of timber sector's retrograde dynamics. We also countered misinformation spread by the timber sector, such as that the EU system required inventorying every tree.

In 2025, I continued to focus on Brazil, and work with our partners there, as the EU is a huge importer of the soy and beef that drive deforestation in the Amazon and Cerrado. I also stepped up my work on China and the EUDR, since it is a major processing and transshipment hub for forest risk products which fall under the Regulation's scope.

People are willing to try to salvage the EUDR because

they know it's a groundbreaking law that shines a light on the core reasons for deforestation and the unfair conditions in supply chains. The reason some companies and countries are fighting against it is because they're worried that it will work. They want business as usual. It's almost the only thing left from the European Green Deal which would have been implemented soon, but as deforestation around the world surges, the EU's will to tackle it is evaporating. It is the EU's most significant attempt to remove the stain of deforestation from its supply chains, and we will continue to try to salvage it. ●



By **Nicole Polsterer**
**Sustainable Consumption
and Production Campaigner**

From a young age I was curious about the world, and I was mostly interested in development across countries, trying to understand why some countries are poor and others are rich, and topics around climate, sustainability and food.

But somehow, after graduation I found myself working as a strategy consultant. While the learning curve was steep, I didn't feel in place. I asked myself: 'What impact am I really making on the world?'

Then I learned about the School for Moral Ambition: an organisation that helps people pivot their careers towards places where they can make the biggest impact, working on areas which they feel are neglected, including transforming our food systems. This seemed exactly what I was looking for, so I applied for a Fellowship, which began with an intensive training before I joined Fern for the following six months.

This opportunity has been a great experience to learn and contribute to promoting policies which drive healthier and sustainable diets, working alongside Julia [Christian, Forests and Agriculture Policy Adviser] who is very experienced in this field.

One of the key things that we're doing, which is also our strength, is coalition building with NGOs, including health and consumer organisations. As well as building connections, we work to ensure alignment: in the end we all share the same goal, but the way to reach it might be different, as each NGO has their own perspective. Fern focuses mainly on forests, as meat is by far the biggest driver of deforestation globally, with Europe deeply complicit because of the huge amounts of soy it imports from Brazil for animal feed.

In the end, this diversity of perspectives is important, as one of our current challenges is that people don't want to talk about sustainability much. But they still care about what's unhealthy for them, including red and processed meat. That's why we're trying to leverage that point more: that eating less meat is not just good for forests and the environment, but also for people. ●



By Mirnesa Ibisevic
Food Policy Advisor (and Fellow
from the School for Moral Ambition)

Reducing industrial meat's damaging impact **on forests, communities and the climate**

"We're trying to leverage that point more: that eating less meat is not just good for forests and the environment, but also for people."

IN NOVEMBER 2025, FERN CAMPAIGNERS JULIA CHRISTIAN AND SYDNEY VENNIN VISITED THE GRAND-OUEST OF FRANCE TO GATHER INSIGHTS FROM FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN ONE OF EUROPE'S TOP LIVESTOCK-PRODUCING REGIONS.



Strengthening rights and forest governance **in the Congo Basin**

And promoting transformative finance mechanisms for rights-based forest protection.



By Tyala Ifwanga
Forest Finance and Governance Campaigner

The finance campaign which we launched in 2025 is the natural evolution of work we've been doing for years: ensuring that European funds support the right mechanisms to protect forests and secure Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights. Despite the evidence linking many market-based mechanisms to social and human rights abuses, and despite their uncertain environmental benefits, these schemes are being revived.

In 2025 we worked on alternative global funding mechanisms, giving a platform to partners such as Silas Siakor in Liberia, who has launched a forest stewardship payment scheme (see page 12). We want to raise the profile of mechanisms which offer alternatives to the false solutions which typically get funded, such as carbon credits, biodiversity credits and offsetting schemes.

A key example is the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), which was announced ahead of the 30th United Nations Climate Conference (COP30) in Brazil. We entered the conversation because civil society organisations around the world didn't have a lot of opportunities to interact with the fund.

In May, following our Peoples for Forests event (see page 9), we organised a big consultation on the TFFF in Paris. There were around 50 participants, including Indigenous Peoples, from more than 28 countries. It enabled people from around the world who didn't have an opportunity to interact with the TFFF Secretariat in their regions to give their take on how the fund should operate, especially as it has a direct funding element for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

A lot of the recommendations in our meeting's outcome document were taken up in the TFFF's subsequent concept note - so this was a very big success.

We will continue ensuring that as the TFFF develops, it's grounded in the needs and realities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. ●

"We will continue ensuring that as the TFFF develops, it's grounded in the needs and realities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities."

European forest governance, monitoring and accounting in climate policy and restoration

By Siim Kuresoo

European Forest Campaigner

In 2025, we published a study which helped shape the discourse around EU forest funding. It showed another way is possible. For the first time it quantified both the harmful subsidies which support damaging forestry practices in Europe - such as clear-cutting, and monoculture plantations for the biomass and paper industries - as well as the costs of funding forestry which would strengthen biodiversity and forests' resilience. It found that €5.8 billion of public money is spent every year on harmful subsidies. This amount would cover the cost of a just transition to a forestry industry that's economically and environmentally resilient.

The report led to lots of interesting discussions with different stakeholders, including meetings with the Commissioners' Cabinet, national governments, industry and foresters. Alternative foresters are often sidelined in European policy debates, so we supported them in getting their voices heard in the European Parliament, such as the firefighter from Spain who also manages a communal forest, who spoke at the height of the forest fires season, and whose message around restoring forests so they are more fire-resistant resonated.

We also did a major piece of work around "nature credits": the idea, promoted by the Commission, of businesses offsetting their destruction in one place by paying for protecting or restoring it in another. We revealed that the Commission's pilot projects were destroying the very biodiversity they were designed to protect. Our research was picked up widely, which helped shift the narrative around these schemes, which are inherently flawed.

More broadly, we worked against a backdrop in which laws designed to protect nature were under attack.

In October, the Parliament voted against a proposed Forest Monitoring Law, which is desperately needed, and would have required Member States to monitor and report on forests more transparently.

The atmosphere is one in which anything can happen at short notice, and some people make decisions as a show of power and with the intention of disrupting. Nonetheless, there's still a huge groundswell of opinion, from foresters, industry and policy-makers, as well as civil society and the public, who know that protecting and restoring Europe's forests is essential, and who are prepared to do something about it. ●



IN OCTOBER, FERN PARTNER CANOPEE TRAVELLED THROUGH FRANCE ON ITS "SAVE THE FORESTS" BUS TO MEET WITH RURAL CITIZENS, FORESTERS AND OTHERS WHO WORK TO PROTECT OUR FORESTS, AND DELIVERED THEIR MESSAGES DIRECTLY TO EU DECISION-MAKERS IN BRUSSELS.

Number crunching



354

**TIMES FERN APPEARED
IN THE MEDIA IN 2025**

*including The Financial Times, Le Monde,
Deutsche Welle, El Pais, The Guardian, BBC,
Politico, Folha de Sao Paulo, Globo, ENDS
Europe, Euractiv, Euronews, Reuters and AFP*

322K

VISITORS TO FERN.ORG



5.7K

**SUBSCRIBERS
TO OUR FOREST
WATCH NEWSLETTER**

Up from 5.2K in 2024



9.4K

**LINKEDIN
FOLLOWERS**

Up from 7k in 2024

1.5K

**YOUTUBE
SUBSCRIBERS**



4.2K

**FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS**

Thirty years of Forest Watch



By Richard Wainwright
Communications Coordinator



From a printed newsletter posted to subscribers around the world to today's digital incarnation, for 30 years Forest Watch has been at the heart of Fern's communications and a vital resource on Europe's forest policies, says Richard Wainwright.

The first issue of Forest Watch came out in July 1996, the year after we were founded. It's been a mainstay of our communications ever since. In 2025 - our 30th anniversary - we published our 300th edition. When I joined Fern 18 years ago, Forest Watch was still a double-sided A4 piece of paper which we stuck in an envelope and posted around the world. People would write letters to us responding to articles. One of the first things I did was to make it electronic, partly due to the cost of sending it out and partly because of the environmental impact of paper, which is something we've always campaigned on.

Free from algorithms' tyranny

Forest Watch's reach isn't controlled by algorithms. The 5,000 plus people who get it every month - which is pretty good for a niche publication on EU forest policies - aren't seeing it because of a billionaire's whims. Everyone on the mailing list requested to be there, which helps it grow in strength and importance and leads to good open and response rates. Our subscribers are mix of policy makers, partners, NGOs, journalists, funders, academics, and others.

While the format has changed, there's continuity in what we cover. The top story in the first issue was on adopting a regulation on tropical forests and there'll likely be an article in next month's edition on the EUDRI!

Opening space

We've gone from trying to be apolitical, to clearly demarcating between the news and our opinion. People want the facts but also want to know what Fern thinks.

Having an opinion is also important to us: we're standing up for forests and forest peoples' rights and the only way to do that is to say something of import about what's happening.

We have an incredible editor, Nicole Gerard, who's been working on Forest Watch for nearly two decades. Every month she asks us what the big stories are, then we have an editorial meeting where people fight to get their pieces in.

Of the four stories we publish, we try to ensure there's one on EU policy, one telling a good news story, and most importantly, one from our partner's perspective, because opening space for others is part of our *raison d'être*. ●

To sign up to ForestWatch [click here](#). If you have ideas for a story, let Richard at richard@fern.org know!

Selected publications



CREATING A PLATFORM FOR COLLECTING AND VISUALISING SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS: LESSONS FROM BRAZIL

A group of Brazilian civil society organisations, supported by Fern, initiated a project in 2023 to develop a pilot Platform to integrate different data about human rights impacts and related conflicts. This initial process culminated in February 2025 with the launch of a first prototype: an interactive 'Social Platform' providing georeferenced data on rural and land conflicts. This report provides an overview of the process behind establishing this Platform.



TROPICAL FOREST FOREVER FACILITY AND INVESTMENT FUND: HOW IS IT MEANT TO WORK AND WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?

This briefing note explains the way the Tropical Forest Forever Facility and Investment Fund are meant to function while highlighting key concerns that must be addressed if it is to achieve its goals.



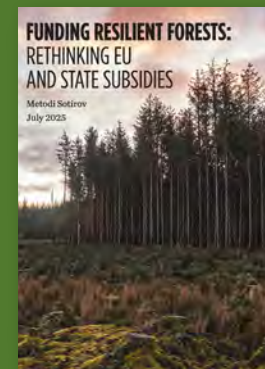
DISCOVERING THE ROLE OF FOOD ENVIRONMENTS IN SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

This briefing analyses the added value that the food environments concept brings to efforts to transition to sustainable food systems and explores how food environments can be improved through policy.



OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES: HOW TO ENSURE VIETNAMESE SMALLHOLDER COFFEE FARMERS ARE READY FOR THE EUDR

Fern's Vietnamese partners, the Centre for Rural Development surveyed close to two thousand coffee farming households in six Vietnamese provinces and conducted in depth interviews with farmers, local officials, enterprises and cooperative about their readiness for the EU Deforestation Regulation.



FUNDING RESILIENT FORESTS: RETHINKING EU AND STATE SUBSIDIES

This report by Metodi Sotirov, Assistant Professor in Forest and Environmental Policy at the University of Freiburg, looks at the current state of EU forest financing and what needs to change to deliver a just transition to a socially, environmentally and economically resilient forest industry that adds value to rural communities.



TROPICAL FOREST FOREVER FACILITY BRIEFING NOTE

This briefing note, developed by a coalition of international environmental, human rights and Indigenous organisations highlights key concerns that must be addressed for the Tropical Forest Forever Facility to be impactful.



DELIVERING ON FOREST GOVERNANCE IN A TRANSACTIONAL WORLD

During 2024, Fern commissioned Tulip, a Geneva-based consultancy, to interrogate external perceptions of the EU's international forest policy. The report was timed to inform the next five-year cycle of EU action on protecting tropical forests.



INDONESIAN PALM OIL SMALLHOLDERS AND THE EUDR: IMPACTS AND WAYS FORWARD

What impact will the EUDR have on Indonesian palm oil smallholders? Fern interviewed companies, NGO experts and Indonesian palm oil smallholders to understand how they are likely to be impacted and how best to support them.



THE HEAT IS ON: A STUDY COMPARING THE USE OF WOOD FOR INSULATION AND FUEL

Fern commissioned scientists from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences to evaluate the respective benefits of using wood for insulation and fuel.



HOW THE LIBERIA-EU VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT HAS IMPROVED FOREST GOVERNANCE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN LIBERIA

Poor forest and other governance has hampered Liberia's development and perpetuated conflict. There is therefore a critical need for strong, local civil society organisations to establish proper oversight.



DRIVING CHANGE, NOT DEFORESTATION: HOW EUROPE COULD MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ITS TRANSPORT TRANSITION

A study commissioned by Fern and Rainforest Foundation Norway, and conducted by WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, and the think tank négaWatt has found that the EU's reliance on critical raw materials for the transport sector could be significantly decreased by prioritising soft transport solutions, using innovative battery technology and limiting car and battery size.



BEYOND BIOENERGY: A CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON EU BIOENERGY POLICY

Eighty-two civil society organisations and networks from Europe and beyond launched 'Beyond Bioenergy', a statement calling the EU to stop rewarding burning trees and crops in its renewable energy policy.



+ www.fern.org/publications-insight

Julia Christian and Kelsey Perlman: Fern's new Campaigns Co-coordinators



After eight years' outstanding service as Fern's Campaigns Coordinator, in 2025 Hannah Mowat decided to step aside from the role and return to campaigning. After a rigorous selection process, in March 2026 Hannah was succeeded by Kelsey Perlman and Julia Christian. Julia has been at Fern since 2014. Kelsey joined in 2018. Both are steeped in Fern's ethos, and have long records of successful campaigning, building partner networks and fundraising for the organisation. This is the first time the Campaigns Coordinator role has been shared, and Julia and Kelsey will be only the third and fourth Campaigns Coordinators in Fern's 30-year history, after co-founder Saskia Ozinga and Hannah. Julia and Kelsey briefly outline why they believe sharing the role can help Fern navigate these tumultuous times, and some of the practicalities involved:

"With the less favourable climate for environmental NGOs – and as the actual climate worsens – we both clearly felt that having two eyes on political developments, fundraising and our next long-term strategy was the most obvious choice to ensure reinforced strategic energy and organisational resilience in the role that Hannah has so brilliantly delivered on these last years. When we discussed the job description, we were pleasantly surprised to see a natural division emerge across the responsibilities, which played to our strengths. Broadly (although not exclusively), this split can be characterised as being between outward-facing and inward-facing coordination, with Julia taking on some of the more external aspects and Kelsey taking on some of the internal. This split offers advantages: for example, it makes sense that the person taking the final decision where a compromise between campaigns cannot be reached is not the person in charge of facilitating internal strategy discussions. This offers more neutrality."

Co-sharing mimics a key component of biodiversity - the presence of multiple actors performing overlapping functions. It beautifully demonstrates that resilience of ecosystems and organisations is enhanced when we design roles to be shared. ●

"The less favourable climate for environmental NGOs – and as the actual climate worsens – we both clearly felt that having two eyes on political developments, fundraising and our next long-term strategy was the most obvious choice."

BOARD MEMBERS

FERN'S ANNUAL BOARD MEETING WAS HELD IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM.



● **Fred Pearce (United Kingdom)** Author and journalist who has reported on environment and development issues from 89 countries. His books have been translated into 27 languages and won a number of prizes. Specialist in communications and environment, science, and development issues.

● **Heidi Hautala (Finland)** A recipient of numerous awards and widely recognised for her outstanding contribution to European and Finnish environmental and social law, Heidi's work has focused on human rights, women's rights, global justice, environmentally responsible legislation and sustainability. She is a former Vice-President of the European Parliament, representing the European Greens, during which time she authored many reports and oversaw varied dossiers and committees. She established the cross-party Responsible Business Working Group and took part in drafting key legislation such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the Deforestation Regulation. Throughout her career, she has also served as a Finnish Member of Parliament, and was the country's Minister for International Development and State Ownership Steering.

● **Lucía Carrasco Scherer (Mexico)** *Treasurer*, Lucía is an independent consultant and human rights practitioner with a focus on gender issues. She leads the Financial Innovation and Resilience programme at Spring Strategies, supporting organisations and networks around the world in building greater mission-aligned financial strength. She has helped corporate foundations inform their philanthropic strategies in East and Southeast Asia, and was the Director of Programmes at the Prospera International Network of Women's Funds, working with dozens of women's funds worldwide. She serves as the Treasurer of Fern's Board.

● **Mardi Minangsari (Indonesia)** Has over 20 years' experience in illegal logging and forest governance issues. She coordinated Indonesian civil society groups working in FLEGT issues and has been actively involved in developing and improving Indonesian Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS). She is the 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.

● **Margareta Nilsson (Sweden)** *Chair*, Margareta is a Senior Advisor on Learning and Knowledge Development 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. She maintains a deep interest in ways of communicating and is a trained artist and printmaker. Margareta chairs Fern's Board.

● **Mireille Kayijamahe (Democratic Republic of Congo)** Mireille is a founder of Terra Mucho, an organisation which empowers women and makes their efforts to improve social and environmental justice more visible. She specialises in strengthening civil society capacity and leadership development. She has 10 years' experience in the Congo Basin and maintains a deep interest in decolonising partnerships and improving localisation.

● **Penny Davies (UK)** Penny has worked for the Climate and Land Use Alliance, the Ford Foundation and the UK Department for International Development. She has lived and worked in diverse geographic locations across Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and North America. She is passionate about partnering with people, especially in the global South.

STAFF

- **Aislin Ryan**
Finance, Administration and Mentoring Officer
- **Alexandra Benjamin**
Forest Governance Policy Adviser
- **Anna Muiżniece**
Communications Project Manager
- **Bertrand Grietens**
Finance and Human Resources Officer
- **Cristina Díaz Paradedá**
Partner and General Finance Officer
- **Giorgia Bruzzese Del Pozzo** Finance, Administration and Mentoring Officer (until March)
- **Hannah Mowat**
Campaigns Coordinator
- **Indra Van Gisbergen**
Mining & Agriculture Campaigner
- **Jennifer Kwao**
Strategic Communications Adviser
- **Julia Christian**
Forests and Agriculture Policy Adviser
- **Kelsey Perlman**
Forest and Climate Campaigner
- **Mark Olden**
Media and Press Adviser
- **Martin Pigeon**
Forest and Climate Campaigner focussing on bioenergy
- **Mirnesa Ibisevic**
Food Policy Advisor
- **Nicole Polsterer** Sustainable Consumption and Production Campaigner
- **Perrine Fournier**
Forest, Trade and Mining Campaigner
- **Pierre-Jean Sol Brasier**
Forest Governance Campaigner
- **Raphael Koenig**
Finance Manager and Administration Manager
- **Richard Wainwright**
Communications and Change Coordinator
- **Saskia Ozinga**
Co-founder and Adviser
- **Sonia Carreño Sanchez**
Communications Intern (July to December)
- **Siim Kuresoo**
European Forest Campaigner
- **Sydney Vennin**
Forest Campaigner
- **Tyala Ifwanga**
Forest Governance Campaigner
- **Yael Fernández-Dávila Rondelez**
Finance, Administration and Human Resources Management Intern



GRANTS

High Impact Fund

In 2023, Fern launched a High Impact Fund Initiative (Hi-Fi). Its aim was to use some of the funds we received from the Ford Foundation's Building Institutions and Networks (BUILD) initiative to support unfunded but urgent, high impact activities. We created our own internal grant-making mechanism, whereby staff with unfunded ideas could request cash from our reserves to turn inspiration into reality. The approval process was staggered, depending on the amount requested. We were only able to undertake the initiative thanks to flexible core funding. **Vital activities that the Hi-Fi enabled include:**

- Fern commissioned a consultancy to interview rural populations about their alignment (or lack of) with the environmental pushback that emerged around the European elections. We later published a report on the results, which paved the way for a series of targeted meetings with Cabinet-level officials in DG ENV, DG AGRI, and Ursula von der Leyen's Cabinet. This work was critical while we were waited for a grant from the European Climate Foundation to come through, and it helped us achieve a clearer understanding of inaccurate political narratives among these communities, while also cementing stronger engagement with ProSilva and other alternative foresters. This was such a successful initiative that another funder stepped in to cover the costs once the project had started.
- Continuous Cover Forestry training to help staff understand realities on the ground and improve communications and advocacy work.
- New Meat-reduction campaign. Hi-Fi money seeded a new campaign targeting the reduced consumption of meat, an area that Fern had previously identified as part of our long-term strategy but had not yet worked on. The

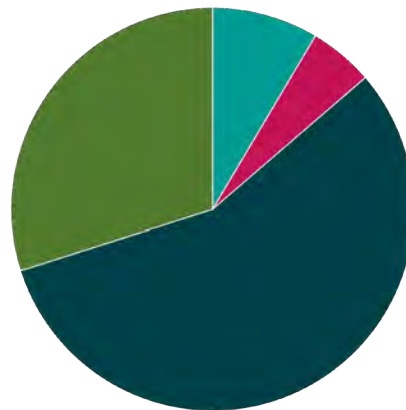
funding allowed Fern to find new allies and help build a coalition of health NGOs (the Food Environments taskforce) campaigning for EU policies to promote healthier diets (including reducing consumption of meat), as well as a strategy that combines environmental concerns with health.

- Peoples for Forests. This project started off much smaller with an initial budget of €95,000 but quickly elicited so much interest it snowballed as more funders became involved. By the time it finished, it had more than doubled in scale.
- Ebo Forest, Cameroon. The funding supported field research, enabling our partner Centre for Environment and Development (CED) and communities to work together and coordinate and organise a joint press conference to fight destruction of Ebo Forest, Cameroon.
- Blue Carbon, Liberia. We hosted a media webinar to brief journalists on the proposed Blue Carbon deal.
- Camera Purchase. We purchased a new camera to allow the comms and campaign team to shoot footage when on field visits, at events and other actions. ●

FINANCIAL RESULTS

SOURCE OF INCOME

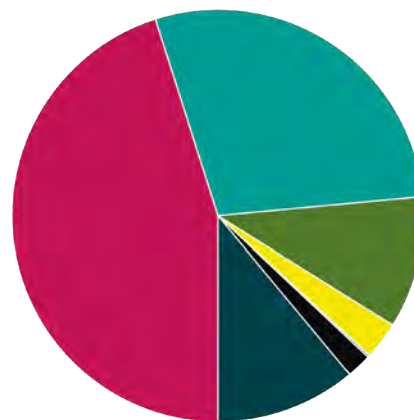
TOTAL INCOME
4,633,334 EUROS



- 30%** Third Country(s) Public Bodie(s)
- 9%** European Commission
- 5%** EU Member State(s) Public bodies
- 56%** Other(s)

EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY

TOTAL EXPENDITURE
4,410,878 EUROS



- 45%** Staff
- 29%** Grants to partner organisations & networks
- 10%** Travel and meetings
- 3%** Administration and other costs
- 2%** Publications
- 11%** Consultants

EXPENDITURE BY CAMPAIGN

TOTAL EXPENDITURE
4,410,878 EUROS

CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS

MEAT REDUCTION

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

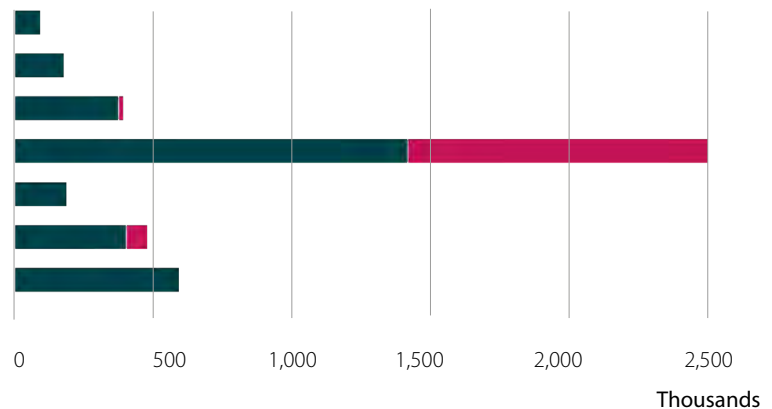
INTERNATIONAL FORESTS GOVERNANCE

BIOECONOMY

EUROPEAN FORESTS GOVERNANCE

ORGANISATIONAL (CORE COSTS)

■ FERN
■ PARTNERS



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"Our 30th anniversary gave us the chance to take the long view: reminding us that real change can take decades, and that the path to achieving it is rarely linear."

Hannah Mowat, Campaigns Coordinator



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Fern is a non-governmental organisation created in 1995 with the aim of ensuring European policies and actions support forests and peoples. Our work centres on forests and forest peoples' rights and the issues that affect them such as aid, consumption, trade, investment and climate change. All of our work is done in close collaboration with social and environmental organisations and movements across the world.

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