



European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)

Phase V (2015–2019)

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT 2019

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In this report, the results of communication activities are presented against the objectives and indicators of achievement of the communication strategy and action plan for 2019 and evaluated based on the actual outcome.

Objectives for 2019

- Increase focus on reaching policy-makers
- Collaborate with EFI communications team for synergies
- Integrate EUFORGEN communication activities in the EFI communications strategy
- Strengthen media presence
- Continue feeding the established channels (website, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia) with new contents seeking innovative formats

1. Website

1.1 Website traffic

In 2019, the website had approximately 90 visitors per day and an average of 4,134 visitors per month (figure 1). This represents an increase of 51,9 % compared to 2018. This is a significant increase that provides evidence of a growing visibility beyond the core EUFORGEN community. The peak of daily page views was reached in the beginning of December 2019 with the highest number of views recorded on 9 December.

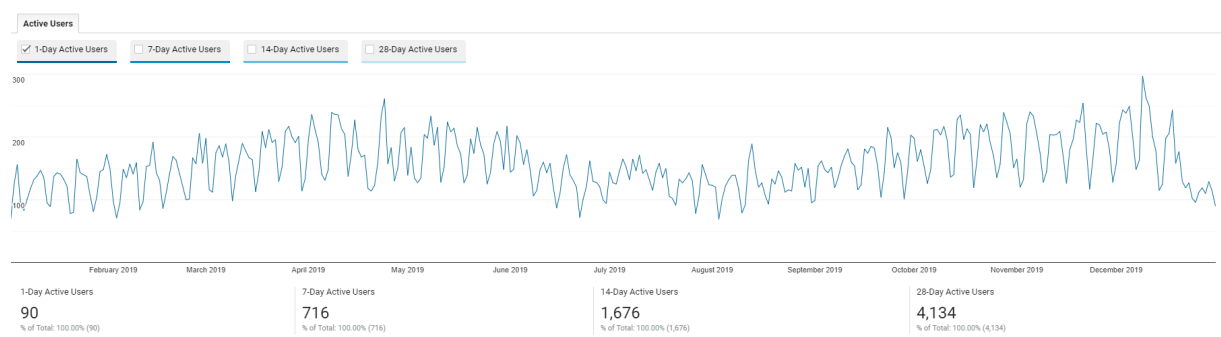


Fig.1 Average monthly visitors to the EUFORGEN website.



Examining the most visited pages of the website, the 'Species' page remains clearly, similarly to previous years, the most popular of all with almost 19,000 pageviews for the Species List. The second most popular page was the section "About Us" which contains general information about EUFORGEN (Almost 10 % of all pageviews). The high number of pageviews indicates an increasing interest in EUFORGEN.

The number of non-bounced sessions for the 'Species' page was very high in comparison to the pageviews. This is an indicator that people found the relevant information on the website they were looking for.

Most traffic in 2019 came from organic search – 69,8 %. (fig.2), meaning that viewers arrive at the website by searching for keywords related to the EUFORGEN website and subsequently clicking on the link to the page in the search results.

Top Channels

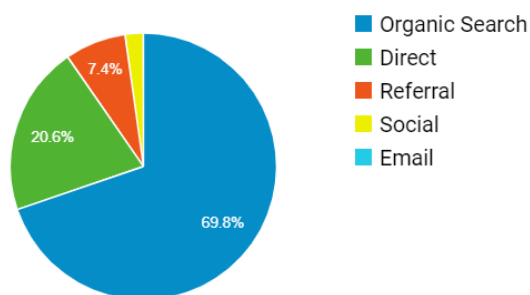


Fig. 2 Acquisition to the EUFORGEN website

The species page of *Pinus sylvestris* was searched for the most out of all species and hit 1,809 pageviews. Out of all the visitors of the website, 82,14% were new ones, showing a continued interest in the EUFORGEN website. This species was further promoted through the EUFORGEN Twitter channel at the end of March in the context of the weekly #ForestFacts, in which different tree species are highlighted usually every Friday of the week.

2. News

2.1 Newsletter

According to the communication action plan for 2019, the target was to increase the number of subscribers to the EUFORGEN newsletter by 20 %, which was achieved. In January 2019, the newsletter had 398 subscribers, which increased to 650 subscribers one year later, representing an 88 % increase. Newsletters were sent out in March, July, October and December.



2.2 News stories on forest genetic resources issues in Europe

The following articles related to forest genetic resources (FGR) issues in Europe were written and published in 2019 in the 'News' section of the website and further highlighted in the Newsletter. The variety of different articles focused on FGR issues in Europe illustrates the multitude of different topics addressed within the EUFORGEN network

- First genetic conservation unit in the UK to protect Scots pine
- Native black poplars now available from commercial nurseries in France
- On the move – forest tree seeds and seedlings in trade
- Adapting to climate change in Iceland
- Safeguarding seeds in the deep freeze
- Bioacoustics recording and systems thinking to help journalists report on complex science
- Happy 25th Anniversary, EUFORGEN!
- Prioritizing a nation's tree species for genetic conservation

At least two of the news items were posted back to back on the EFI Resilience Blog.

According to the analytics, the article with the most views in 2019 was "Greening Iceland", an article that was originally published in 2017, but still remains the most viewed article on the website with 1,400 total views. The content of the article is still a current topic, which explains the continued interest by new website visitors.

Another article 'Why active forest management is necessary', published in 2016, was also very frequently viewed. Many readers referred to this article in order to engage with the topic of forest management and understand why it causes controversies in a public discourse.

EUFORGEN published on several digital platforms such as the EFI website to promote the a campaign for its 25th Anniversary, and advertise upcoming events, such as the joint event in Brussels, on December 13th.

3. Social media

Social media channels were actively maintained and used to promote relevant materials and attract the attention of new stakeholders.

3.1 Twitter

In the start of 2019, the EUFORGEN Twitter channel had around 980 followers. Towards the end of 2019, the profile grew to 1,336 followers (36 % increase). The number of new followers totaled 356, an average of 29.6 new followers per month. This channel is a stable and important mechanism to reach and maintain a wide network.

25th Year anniversary

The topic that gained the most attention on the EUFORGEN Twitter channel in 2019 was the celebration of EUFORGEN's 25th anniversary. Blogposts on the EUFORGEN website, the EFI



Resilience Blog, and the Twitter campaign “EUFORGEN turns 25!” promoted the work of EUFORGEN in general and attracted more followers (38 in one month) of the account during this time. The account also reached its highest amount of “impressions” within one month. Impressions indicates the number of times a Tweet has been seen. This includes not only the number of times it appears in one of the followers’ account timeline, but also the number the times it appeared in a search or as a result of someone liking the Tweet. In December 2019, EUFORGEN tweets were viewed 41.9K times.

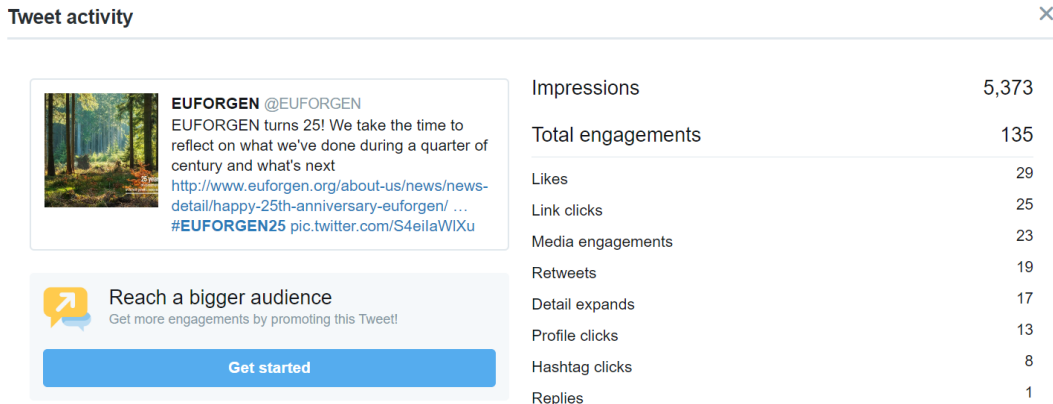


Fig 3. Example of a tweet of the “EUFORGEN turns 25” campaign

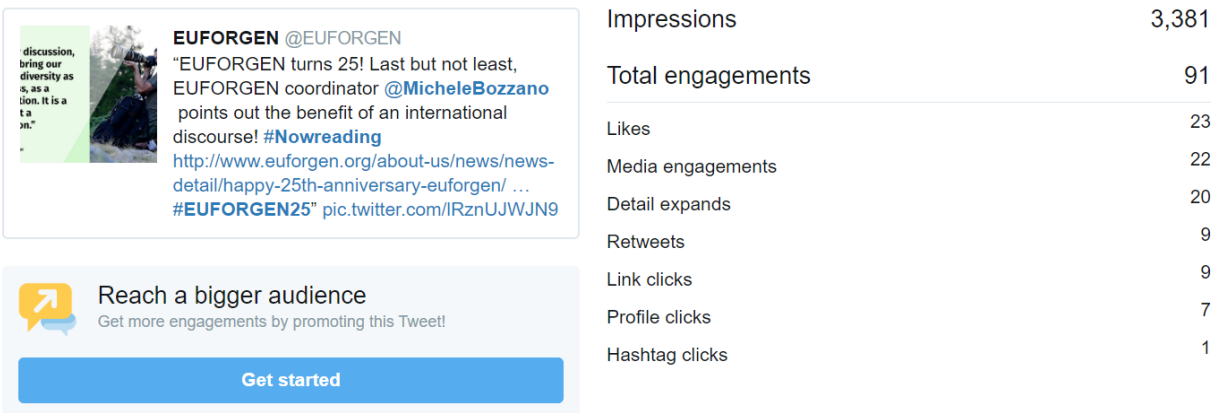


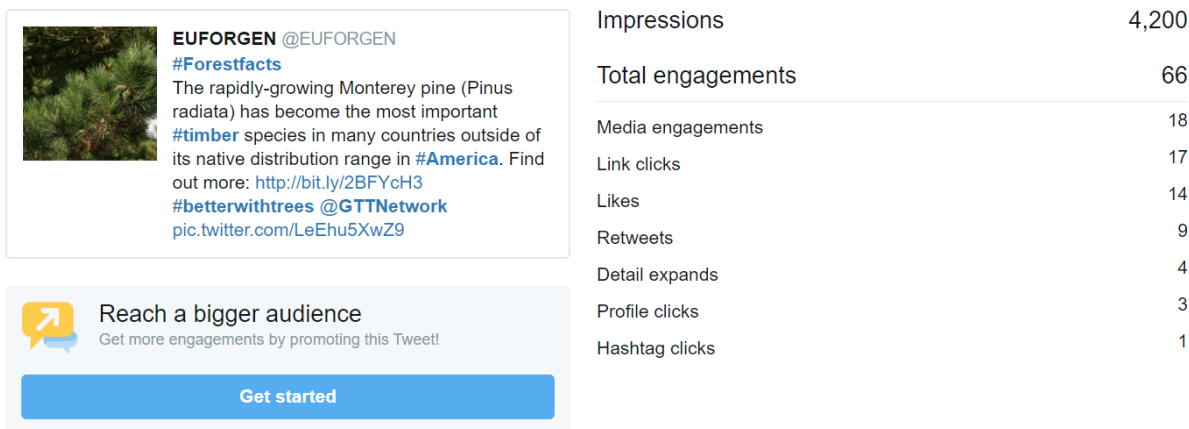
Fig 4. Example of a tweet of the “EUFORGEN turns 25” campaign

#ForestFacts

Throughout the year, a ‘Friday Species’ campaign was continued on Twitter and Facebook to promote a species of interest by EUFORGEN usually every Friday of the week. The examples below show the engagement on Twitter related to a ‘Friday Species’. The engagement varied greatly from



week to week, and depended on the tags used and the relevance of the species. These Tweets are often linking to the technical guidelines of the species on EUFORGEN website.



Tweet activity



Figure 5 and 6: Examples of 'Friday Species' Tweets and the related engagement rates.

Twitter is an excellent tool to report live from events to raise visibility, connect, and showcase the types of events that the EUFORGEN community is participating in. It further allows for highlighting - in rather non-scientific ways - the different news and publications regarding EUFORGEN. Therefore, it attracts people outside EUFORGEN network.

3.2 Facebook

At the end of December 2019, the profile was followed by 821 people and liked by 771 people. The Facebook profile allows EUFORGEN to promote its overall activities and share among others, the



'Friday tSpecies' campaign. Through these posts, the number of followers constantly increased, resulting in a total of 32% from the beginning of the year.

3.3 YouTube

In 2019, the YouTube channel was mainly used for sharing the recordings of the webinars in preparation to the Steering Committee meeting (unlisted). The channel gained 300 new followers thanks to the continuous interest in the film 'Afforesting Iceland' published in Sep 2017.

3.4 Flickr

The Flickr account was updated with several images throughout the year, including the ones taken at EUFORGEN meetings. The account serves as an image bank which displays tree species and botanical tree illustrations used for the technical guidelines. The image bank also serves as source of pictures to choose from for the 'Friday Species' and other pictures used in the context of EUFORGEN. All images shared on Flickr account is also under the licence of Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike, which allows for the free distribution and use of the pictures.

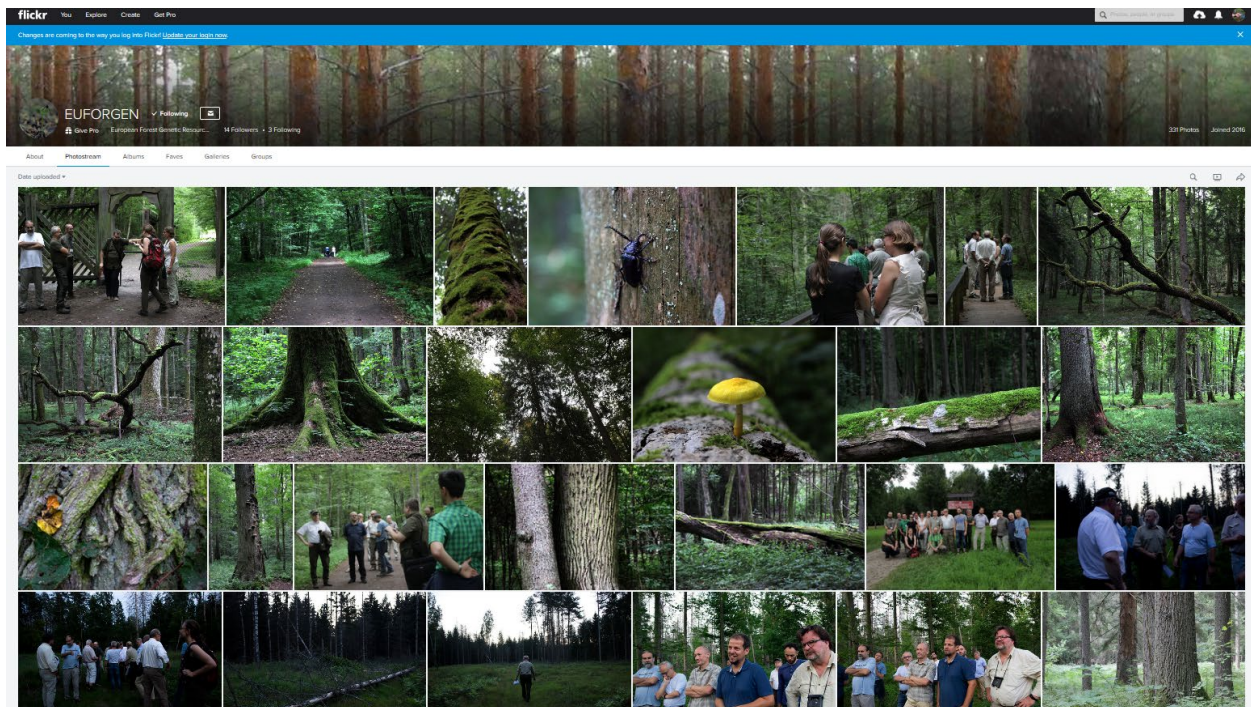


Figure 7: Photostream on the EUFORGEN Flickr account.



4. Publications

4.1 Scientific publications

Five technical guidelines were published and added to the publications catalogue in 2019. and available online and to download.

5. Media and other websites

Moving EUFORGEN under EFI enabled new opportunities in the area of media engagement through collaboration with EFI Lookout Station project. EUFORGEN started to build alliances with media houses that invest in science and environment journalism. This was done through Sound Reporting Co-Lab bootcamp of the Lookout Station, 8-13 July 2019 and resulted in greater awareness of the importance of genetic resources among journalists and general public (*see Annex 'Sound Reporting Co-Lab Evaluation' for more information*).

6. Engagement in policy processes

During 2019, the Coordinator, Michele Bozzano, attended 17 events that created awareness about recent outputs of the Programme and introduced EUFORGEN's work to new audiences. Nine of these forums and international conferences were attended by policy-makers. The Coordinator actively contributed with presentations and/or interventions in all of them. The Communications Officer, Ewa Hermanowicz, attended three events during which EUFORGEN was presented in relation to the programme's science communication activities (*for details, see section 6.3 of the technical report*).

7. New communication partnerships

In 2019, a few new partnerships were initiated, mainly with journalists from major international media houses participating in the activities organized in the context of the Lookout Station project and Bialowieża Science Initiative led by EFI.

8. Collaboration with EFI communications team for synergies

Favoured by the spatial proximity and the trustworthy and positive cooperation between EFI and EUFORGEN Secretariat, several EUFORGEN outputs were presented and distributed during international events on a local level. For instance, at the Bonn UN Day, where EFI distributed Technical guidelines of local tree species to the visitors. Further examples are: the federal "Forest conference" (Waldkonferenz) in Düsseldorf as well as several international lectures held at EFI Bonn office. Especially the technical guidelines were very well received and strengthen the visibility of EUFORGEN on a local scale.



9. Conclusion

All communication activities rolled out as part of the Action Plan 2019 to implement the Communications Strategy led to increased interest and engagement in EUFORGEN's work by researchers, international organizations, forest-related associations policy-makers and journalists, which can be demonstrated by the fulfilment and surpass of targets outlined in the Communication Activity Plan for 2019:

- increase in website traffic by 52%,
- increase in newsletter readership by 88%,
- increase in twitter followers by 36%,
- increase in facebook followers by 32%

The move to EFI and engagement in the Lookout Station project and strong presence on social media resulted in very high media interest reaching the highest levels in EUFORGEN's history. The website statistics demonstrate a growing interest in EUFORGEN's work and continuous efforts to share knowledge through Wikipedia make it a top referral page – something to bear in mind for future planning of communication activities.

Sound Reporting Co-Lab

Evaluating the effectiveness of a science-media initiative

Introduction

The Sound Reporting Co-lab offered scientific and technical support for journalists to explore the complexity of science, the power of sound in our nature, and develop a science-based bioacoustic story. The project was co-organised by the EFI's Lookout Station and EUFORGEN, and was supported by MDTF, SURE (European Forest Risk Facility), the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Instytut Badawczy Leśnictwa (Polish Forest Research Institute), University of Warsaw, and Eco Location Sound.

The project lasted for one year and covered a period of preparatory meetings, a bootcamp in Białowieża, Poland (July 2019) and a series of follow-up online meetings.

The bootcamp focused on the bark beetle spread that is transforming not only our ecological systems but also socio-economic systems in the Northern hemisphere. It included training on elements including technical sound reporting, storytelling and forest science including forest genetics and different perspectives on biodiversity conservation.

A total of 10 journalists and producers working for six media houses took part in the project along with two professional radio producers, communication experts, and six scientists providing the forest science elements. The project was coordinated and facilitated by two communication professionals from EFI.

This brief is based on responses from all journalists and scientists who took part in the project and shared their feedback and commentaries (April 2020). **The aim of the evaluation was to specifically understand if a programme like EUFORGEN should invest resources in similar initiatives in the future** where forest genetics plays an important role as a part of a much broader forest-related topic, that is of interest to the media.



Key takeaways

The evaluation results indicate that EUFORGEN has:

- generated not only the **media's awareness** but also **interest in the topic of forest genetics**
- put **the topic of forest genetics on the media's agenda** by inspiring them to explore further about the issues when reporting about forest-related topics
- helped the **media ask more pointed questions** such as "is the high degree of genetic diversity the best state of a forest?" which would not have been asked without EUFORGEN's interventions
- developed **direct access to the European media** which help EUFORGEN further understand the media's approaches and mindsets
- identified the topics and angles that do not resonate with media, as well as the questions they ask about forest genetics, which **helps the organisation be prepared when being in contact with the press** in the future
- gained not only media contacts but also **advice and feedback to generate future media coverage around forest genetics**


Summary of the findings

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of EUFORGEN's involvement in the project, the following questions have been asked to the participants.

1. Would you reach out to the EUFORGEN Secretariat in case you decide to explore story options or research about forest genetics? (journalists, scientists)

All respondents confirmed that the EUFORGEN Secretariat in case they were doing a related story or scientific research where forest genetics could be linked. Some journalists added that the contacts, network and expertise they were given access to were really invaluable and if they needed an authoritative and trusted voice for any story involving forest genetics, they would consult EUFORGEN. Moreover, two persons said there might be a chance to connect to forest genetics in their bark beetle stories once the brunt of the pandemic passes.





Some of the quotes from the participants:

“Of course. Based on the quality of the information presented during the EUFORGEN session at the EFI/Lookout Station Sound reporting co-lab if I needed an authoritative and trusted voice for any story involving forest genetics I would consult EUFORGEN.”

“Absolutely. I will keep you posted on our plans for a bark beetle story, might be a chance to connect on that, once the brunt of the pandemic passes.”

2. Did the session on forest diversity make the topic of forest genetic resources (FGR) clearer to you?

All journalists confirmed that they found the session informative and enjoyable. Some journalists added that the presentation on the topic definitely helped them to realize the problem that could arise in future if we let the quality of our forest genetic material go unaddressed.

Some of the quotes from the participants:

“When covering the topic again I’ll definitely start with a much greater breadth of knowledge on the subject and resultantly be able to set out and balance any future piece in a much more informed way.”

“The perhaps most important message from the session is that it’s important that we keep as much of the diversity going on that we conserve it because it is something that allows the species to adapt to changing conditions. But then the question is, is the highest degree of genetic diversity always the best state of a forest? And is that always the same as the most natural state? I mean, are the two goals (most natural and most genetically diverse) always the same, and if not, which goal is more relevant? Would have been nice to have more concrete examples of how genetic diversity is important”.



3. Do you have suggestions on how to make forest genetics more prominent in the media?

The journalists provided several entry points for forest genetics in the mainstream media. Adaptation to climate change, pests and diseases, and drought offer good starting points to discuss the possible role of forest genetics.

Some of the quotes from the participants:

“And with a greater focus on climate change worldwide, there are increasingly fertile grounds for coverage of forest diversity in the media, alongside deforestation, city and rural planning, a more green understanding of the industry that all come into play.”

“It would definitely help if the subject was less surrounded by jargon, as the 'forest genetics (FGR)' sounds like a specialist subject. Other than that, opinion pieces are a good way to grab attention and it might help to have a dedicated page on your website for the press, so they can quickly find the info they need to contact you.”

“Storytelling is key. Complex science is hard for most people, so finding ways to talk about how amazing your work and world is is essential. It's not always about little advances in science, but the bigger picture -- our understanding of the natural world, how our way of looking at it and being in it is changing, especially now because of COVID and climate. A strong story through which you can show the problem help.”

4. From the point of a science/research organisation, do you consider investing the time and resources to science-media initiatives like the Sound Reporting Co-lab useful? If yes, why?

This question has been asked to the scientists and partners who were involved in the project. All of them indicated that this project was worth the time and efforts to increase better media engagement of science.

Some of the quotes from the scientists/partners:

“It was a very informative and inspiring experience. It allowed looking at the issue of forest science from a completely different angle. The close contact of scientists with media representatives certainly allowed both parties to better understand how they perceive many issues.”



“I am very happy to take the time to engage with journalists. There is an enormous amount of work that goes into research. Until the results are shared, scientific research is essentially an expensive hobby. Journalists often have a limited scientific background and little time for distilling and reporting scientific work. When there are mistakes and omissions at this stage of scientific communication, it eliminates much of the value that was created through the research. I consider it a good investment to spend time on training and conversation that allows journalists to convey information quickly, accurately, and effectively.”

“In my opinion science without communicating its results to a wide public does not make too much sense. Thus, learning how to do media work, what expectations do journalists have, what they need for successful dissemination of information is of paramount importance for scientists and research organisations. We need to reach a wide audience to 1) communicate what for we are spending public money; 2) promote ourselves, which helps to find research partners, funding sources, etc.; 3) disseminate the knowledge to decision-makers and practitioners; 4) educate the society.”

List of participants in this evaluation

The following journalists, scientists and partners have been surveyed for this evaluation.

Andreas von Bubnoff is an award-winning science journalist and multimedia producer, as well as a professor at Rhine-Waal University in Germany. His work has appeared in the anthologies *Alice and Bob Meet the Wall of Fire* (MIT Press, 2018) and *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*; in many American and European media outlets and on RiffReporter, where he is a member of the Anthropocene team. Important multimedia projects include the VR project "[Songbird](#)" (The Guardian, 2018), and "[Symphonien der Natur](#)" (FAZ, 2015), a multimedia journey around the globe featuring its soundscapes that shows how natural sounds are increasingly lost as a result of human activity. Honors for his multimedia projects include winning the German Grimme Online Award, nominations for the GOLDENE KAMERA Digital Award and the Georg von Holzbrinck science journalism award, and being named an official Webby Award honoree.



Anne Preger is a German science journalist. At [Riffreporter](#) she reports on environmental topics. Apart from that she also works for public broadcasters like WDR and Deutschlandfunk Nova doing everything from hourly science radio news to live talks and radio documentaries. Anne has a degree in Geoecology and worked as a soil scientist before leaving science for a radio/online/TV traineeship at WDR. After five years as a staff editor & reporter at WDR Anne decided to go freelancing in 2014. In 2016 Anne won the Award for Environmental Reporting by Environmental Action Germany.



[More](#) about Anne. Twitter: [@apreger](#), Instagram: [@hoerweiten](#) Some of Anne's work: [The forgotten oil spill: What we could have learned from Ixtoc 1 for Deepwater Horizon](#) (Riffreporter), [Follow me onto a cargo ship and listen how the MARPOL convention helps to safe oceans from ship pollution](#) (Radio documentary, WDR ZeitZeichen) and Listen how scientists wire meerkats in the Kalahari to find out more about their communication ([Radio documentary](#) and [gallery](#) on WDR 5 science program)

Jan Cibulka is a data journalist at Czech Radio. He is also a GIS analyst, Python programmer, FOIA advocate at work, and birder in free time. He has run a number of innovation projects at Czech Radio

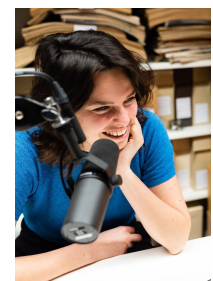
project including [this one](#) to explain physical abilities of best Czech (and probably worlds) boulder climber Adam Ondra, by using the motion capture technology to reconstruct and visualize his skeleton when climbing, also we used some sport testing technology to describe his heart rate, strength and oxygen consumption; [this story](#) on the loss of biodiversity due to Czech practice in farming; and [this one](#) on the controversy on high priced weather data in Czech Republic.



Vojtěch Koval is a reporter for the Czech radio, only public radio in Czech republic. Two year ago he and his team prepared a miniserie about the top medicine in Czech republic and the reaction was very positive - both from the doctor etc. and from our audience and we realised we want to have some kind of "expert" show on our radio. So in january 2018 we started a science & technology show called "Experiment" - we try to cover a wide range of topics from medicine through industry 4.0, AR+VR, innovations, startups etc. Last few months I covered some topics from the "radio" world, such as the future of DAB or atomised news, so this workshop about different ways of storytelling using a different approach to sound recording which is highly interesting for him.



Simone Eleveld is a Dutch journalist, podcast maker and multimedia producer for Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant. She is the co-host, editor and producer of science podcast 'De Grote Vragen Podcast' and producer and editor of 'Van Twee Kanten', a podcast that tells love stories from both sides. She has produced audio for several multimedia productions for the newspaper's crossmedia desk, such as the VR installation 'Over Grenzen'. In 2015 she released her documentary debut Urban Tides, a film that investigates the impact of bottom up communities on city development. The film enjoyed a long festival tour, often combining screenings with lectures and debates organized by bottom up communities throughout Europe.





Peter Mellgard is a features editor at [The WorldPost](#), a partnership project between The Washington Post and the Berggruen Institute, where most of his work focuses on climate change and natural resources. He was previously a reporter and editor on the foreign desk at the Huffington Post. In 2014 he was an Arthur F. Burns Fellow at Süddeutsche Zeitung in Munich.



Cormac O'Brien has been working across film, journalism and factual television for the past 10 years, creating pop-television, art-film, human rights film, observational documentary and print publishing. With a focus on LGBT issues and human rights, he currently works in Thomson Reuters Foundation on their Multimedia team; shooting, editing and producing short video documentary and social video, while also working across special projects and photography.

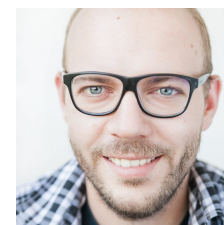


His previous work includes stints at the Overseas Development Institute where he was part of the Design and Publications team; busy media company TCOLondon, home of film magazine Little White Lies, alternative culture bi-monthly HUCK magazine and the 71a Gallery; POP4 (Irish language channel TG4s pop television show); tech innovation festival 'Digital Biscuit' (for the Screen Directors Guild of Ireland); Liz Mermin's (Horses, Amazing Azerbaijan and CERN People); as well as video art that's been shown at the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

Anna Górnicka is the co-founder of [Outride.rs](#) and a journalist, editor, communications specialist. Anna worked in "Wprost" weekly, PWN Publishing House, Sage, and PZU. She studied journalism, social communications, political marketing, and editing. Together with Jakub, she created a top-rated blog about travelling called [Podróżnicy.com](#).



Jakub Górnicki is the co-founder of [Outride.rs](#), and also a blogger and reporter, passionate about new media, interactive storytelling and reporting projects. He studied journalism at Warsaw University, specialised in Reportage Laboratory. He started Outriders to bridge cultures and societies by original reporting and providing a global perspective through innovative storytelling. As a C.O and board member of ePaństwo Foundation, he developed it into a global leading open data/transparency NGO. He started Code for Poland, worked there for six years and transformed it into Code for All together with Code for America. Jakub was named a 2014 New Europe Challenger.



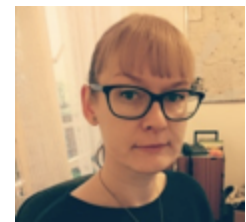
[Bill McQuay](#) of Eco Location Sound is a multi-award winning audio producer and sound engineer whose work with NPR and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has been honored with a Grammy Award, the National Academy of Sciences Science Communication Award and Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University journalism award and others.



[Dr. Laurel Symes](#) is Assistant Director of the Bioacoustics Research Program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Her research focuses on understanding how communication and decision-making is shaped by ecology and evolution. In addition to her many scientific publications Symes's work has been featured in stories on NPR's prime time news magazines Morning Edition and All Things Considered and KBOO radio. She was a featured scientist and consultant on the award winning NPR series Close Listening: Decoding Nature Through Sound.



Dr. Izabela Sondej graduated with a Ph.D. degree at the University of Szczecin in 2015. She is assistant professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Natural Forests of Forest Research Institute in Białowieża, Poland. Her experience and achievements include: forest ecology, plant-animal interactions, biology and ecology of wood ant, air pollution, ecology of forest soil seed bank.



Prof. Jacek Hilszczański has 26 years of experience in research on forest insect ecology, including bark beetle management, natural enemies of bark and wood boring insects, biology and taxonomy of parasitoids. He has coordinated many scientific projects, and participated in several international projects.. Currently leading the Polish Forest Research Institute.



Dr. hab. Bogdan Jaroszewicz is an associate professor at the University of Warsaw, Head of the Białowieża Geobotanical Station. He graduated from the Faculty of Forestry of the Agricultural Academy in Kraków, defending MSc thesis in the field of dendrochronology. His doctoral dissertation examined taxonomic status and ecology of the chequered skipper - one of the Białowieża Forest's butterfly species. In 2013, he achieved a scientific degree of habilitated doctor, based on the research carried in the field of plant-animal interactions (seed dispersal by large ungulates). Recently his research focuses on forest ecology, with special emphasis on ecology of natural forests, functional ecology, ecology of seeds and influence of global warming on changes in species composition and range limits of plants.

