Survey of EFI ThinkForest events, science-policy studies, and social media usage

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1   Introduction

At the end of February 2017, an online survey was sent to 671 persons who had participated between 2015 and 2016 in ThinkForest events, as well as to other 1000 persons receiving news and newsletters from ThinkForest and the European Forest Institute (EFI). The aim of the survey was threefold:

1. evaluating ThinkForest events participants' experiences in attending events in 2015-2016;
2. evaluating views on EFI science-policy publications *and*
3. collect views on the social media presence of the European Forest Institute.

The survey consisted of seventeen questions. Some included sub-items that had to be answered also. The questionnaire distinguished between those respondents that attended ThinkForest events between 2015 and 2016 and those, who did not. Those that attended one or more events were asked to respond to all questions, while those that did not attend any events were asked to answer between eight and five questions depending on their knowledge of ThinkForest and social media.

121 persons answered the questionnaire by end of March 2017. Eighteen answers were non-usable, since they contained no or a highly incomplete answer (e.g. answer to one item only) that could not be included in the analysis. Overall, the response rate (7.3%) was satisfactory for this type of online survey. Compared to the 1st ThinkForest Survey (Pülzl 2014), the response rate is higher in absolute numbers, but a lower in relative terms (in 2014, 83 persons answered amounting to 18 % response rate).
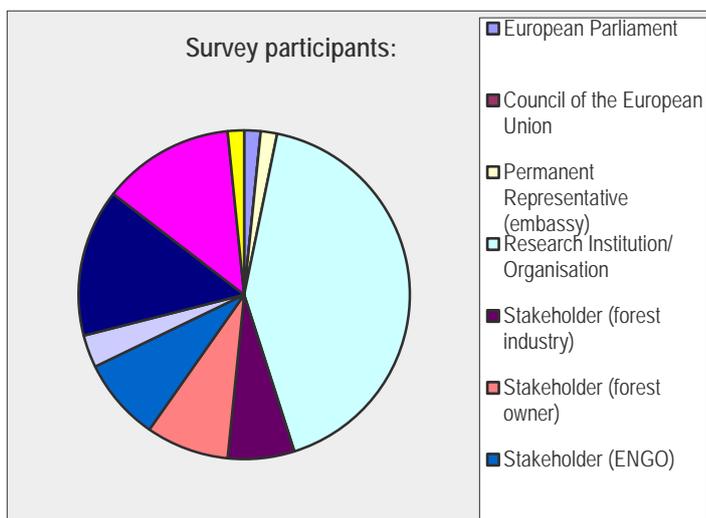
The major part of the respondents were associated with research institutions/ organisations (~56%). Stakeholders (~ 22%) and respondents from national ministries (~14%) represented the second and the third largest respondent groups. Very few persons from the European Parliament, the European Commission and Permanent Representations compiled the online survey (see Graph 1).

Compared to the Survey in 2014 the completion of the questionnaire by respondents group was however very similar in 2017.

Figure 1 Survey participants (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

In addition to the online survey in the beginning of May 2017 ten interviews were conducted in Brussels with representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission and countries permanent representations to the European Union Those results from the interviews were integrated in the analysis.

2   Results

2.1   Part A: ThinkForest events in 2015-2016 – main results

The subsequent sections summarise the results regarding specific event attendance experience, as well as offers insights how the non-participants viewed the ThinkForest and its events. For the first group that attended one or more ThinkForest events during 2015-2015, the analysis covers their satisfaction level with event format, content, administration and the choice of topics. Furthermore, participants insights how to enhance the relevance of ThinkForest events were analysed below.

2.1.1 Event attendance

Out of 102 responses, 51 respondents (50%) had attended ThinkForest events; 46 attended one to four events (46,1%), and 4 persons (3,9%) attended between 5-7 events. None of the respondents attended all the eight Thinkforest events held during 2015-2016 (see Table 1).

The fact that half of the respondents did not have any personal experiences of the events of course means that they have only secondary or very little information about the events. Moreover, the fact that so many did not attend any of the events, is most likely due to the fact that 56% of the respondents were from research institutes. Researchers are not the main target group of the ThinkForest events, and have also generally less possibilities to take part in this type of events (e.g. harder to get funding to attend ThinkForest forum). It should however be noted that those respondents that did not participate between 2015-2016 in ThinkForest events were *not* asked to evaluate those Thinkforest events, but they were referred to a set of later questions to evaluate the eventual previously gathered experience with ThinkForest.

Q1. Between 2015-2016, eight ThinkForest events took place. How many ThinkForest event(s) did you attend?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
none	50,0%	51
1-4	46,1%	47
5-7	3,9%	4
all	0,0%	0
	answered question	102
	skipped question	1

Table 1 Attendance of ThinkForest events between 2015-2016. (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Most of the respondents (20 each) attended the bioeconomy related events in Brussels and Helsinki in 2016. Second most attended events where those in relation to climate change in 2015. The 'Forest Biomass' event and the event in relation to the EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT were both less attended by the respondents of the online survey (see Table 2).

Q2/Q3. Which of the following ThinkForest event(s) did you take part in in 2016/2015?		
Answer Options for 2016	Response Percent	Response Count
´Building an innovative and resilient forest bioeconomy´, 15 November 2016, Brussels	46,5%	20
´Forest biomass sustainability and carbon neutrality´, 12 October 2016, Brussels, ThinkForest Roundtable Discussion	20,9%	9
´Building the bioeconomy: insights from European strategies´, 7 June 2016, Helsinki	46,5%	20
Answer Options for 2015	Response Percent	Response Count
´Climate policy after COP21: Implications for the European forest-based sector´, 15 March 2016, Brussels	37,2%	16
'Climate policy targets: how can European forests contribute?´ December 2015, Paris	45,8%	11
´Science-policy in action: the role of European Forests: Towards Paris 2015: How can the forest sector contribute?´ 13 October 2015, Brussels	70,8%	17
´Assessing the impact of the EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT Action Plan´, 21 April 2015, Brussels	29,2%	7
	answered question	67

Table 2 Type of ThinkForest event attended (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Please note that the "Forest Biomass" Roundtable Discussion event was by invitation only, and the number of participants was restricted to 26. Only members of Parliament (MEPs), the European Commission and government representatives of the nine countries funding ThinkForest events attended this event. Typically other ThinkForest events are free for anyone to attend and gather around 100-150 participants.

It should be kept in mind that those events provided the basis for the subsequent analysis.

2.1.2 Event administration & delivery

In relation to the event administration three sub-question were asked that referred to the meetings and their organisation, the event delivery and the materials distributed at the events.

Most of the respondents were clearly satisfied with the event organisation (42) and location (44). Schedule and timing of events received nearly the same respondents rate (42), while live streaming (23) seems to be less known and used by those that did participate in ThinkForest events, since 20 persons marked the "don't know option". This could eventually be enhanced in the future (see Table 3).

The analysis also showed that those four participants that had participated in 5-7 events were mostly satisfied with the event administration. A separate analysis of stakeholders showed that they were mostly satisfied with the event administration like others. A separate analysis of policy-makers responses showed they were clearly satisfied with organisation, location and scheduling of the events. This follows the general trend showing a good satisfaction level with the event administration.

Q4. EVENT Administration							
Answer Options	Very satisfied	somewhat satisfied	somewhat not satisfied	not satisfied	don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Organisation of events	27	15	2	0	2	1,59	46
Location of events	27	17	1	0	1	1,50	46
Scheduling and timing	19	23	2	1	1	1,74	46
Usefulness of live streaming	15	8	2	0	20	3,04	45
						answered question	46
						skipped question	57

Table 3 Participants satisfaction with event administration (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

With regards to the events delivery (see Table 4), respondents indicated their clear satisfaction with the relevance of topics presented. In terms of speakers, opportunities for dialogue and networking, the participants were also satisfied, but less so. This is also confirmed by the later response to the question as how to increase the relevance of Thinkforest in the future. A little less satisfaction was also indicated by participants with regards to the quality of the discussion and dialogue during events.

Q5. EVENT Delivery							
Answer Options	Very satisfied	somewhat satisfied	somewhat not satisfied	not satisfied	don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Relevance of topics presented	26	16	3	1	0	1,54	46
Speaker(s)	14	26	3	2	0	1,84	45
Opportunities for dialogue	12	22	7	2	2	2,11	45
Networking	14	20	7	0	5	2,17	46
Quality of discussion/ dialogue	10	26	9	1	0	2,02	46
						answered question	46
						skipped question	57

Table 4 Participants satisfaction with event delivery (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Looking into those answers provided by event participants, that took part between 5-7 times, clearly the relevance of topics presented was confirmed by all of them. However, they were not satisfied to the fullest extent with the selection of speakers as well as opportunities for dialogue confirming what was said above. In relation to networking, a majority was very satisfied, but the quality of discussion and dialogue had not reached the full satisfaction level. Again, however no one of this group showed neither form of dissatisfaction with the event content as such.

A separate analysis of stakeholders' level of satisfaction with the event delivery showed that they are mostly satisfied with it.

Also, policy-makers' answers with regards to event delivery showed their full satisfaction with topics presented, while the satisfaction with speakers as well as the quality of discussion/dialogue did not reach their full satisfaction level (here especially respondents from the European Parliament and national ministries where only somewhat satisfied). Again, networking and opportunities for dialogue did not reach the full satisfaction of respondents from national ministries.

Figure 2 Participants satisfaction with event delivery (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Figure 2 compares all event delivery indicators to each other. The green and orange lines (topics and speakers) indicate the amount of highest satisfaction, while the yellow (networking) and the grey lines (opportunities for dialogue) show a less satisfactory level as compared to those other two items. No one was completely dissatisfied with the networking possibilities during ThinkForest events.

Figure 2 shows that most participants were clearly satisfied with the event delivery and very few were dissatisfied (only 6 out of 46 were dissatisfied).
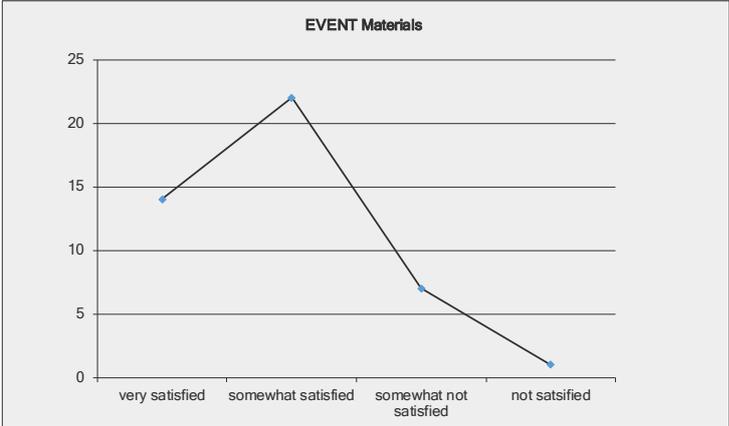
Figure 3 Participants satisfaction with event materials (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Regarding the event materials, (see Figure 3) most participants showed a high level of satisfaction with the event materials. This general trend is also confirmed by a separate analysis of stakeholders and policy-makers perception on event materials.

The additional individual responses included the following critical comments to the events:

– *Visibility of ThinkForest & event*: one respondent indicated that in some cases it was **not clearly visible** that the event **attended was a ThinkForest event**. Instead, it was believed that it was just linked to EFI. [please

note: In order to take part in ThinkForest events, potential participants need to register at the ThinkForest webpage, and it becomes therefore very clear to what event one registers.]

– <u>*Topics*</u>: As regards topics presented, respondents said that there is a certain **tendency of repeating similar issues** over time. Along similar lines, someone indicated that according to this persons' viewpoint well known Northern forest perspectives were dominant during events while other topics in relation to e.g. forest biodiversity, the multifunctional forest management, value of forest ecosystem services were found underrepresented.

– <u>*Networking and opportunities for dialogue*</u>: Furthermore **networking and opportunities for dialogue** seemed to not have been developed to the fullest extent.

– <u>*Event formats*</u>: Finally, it was also said that **closed round tables with e.g. MEPs and scientists** apart from larger meetings are very useful.

Despite the individual critical voices offered, it can be concluded, that overall a large majority of respondents thought that the event administration and delivery works very well. Minor room for improvement does exist with regards to the scheduling and timing of events, speakers, opportunities for dialogue, networking, the quality of discussions/dialogue and materials.

2.1.3   Topics of ThinkForest events

The survey showed that most participants found the ThinkForest events in 2015-2016 very relevant (see Figure 4). Especially the topic "biomass sustainability and carbon neutrality" was found more relevant as compared to other events. This was followed closely by the topic "climate change targets and policies" as well as by the two bioeconomy related ones. The event on the EU Timber regulation and FLEGT was indicated as less relevant as compared to other events.
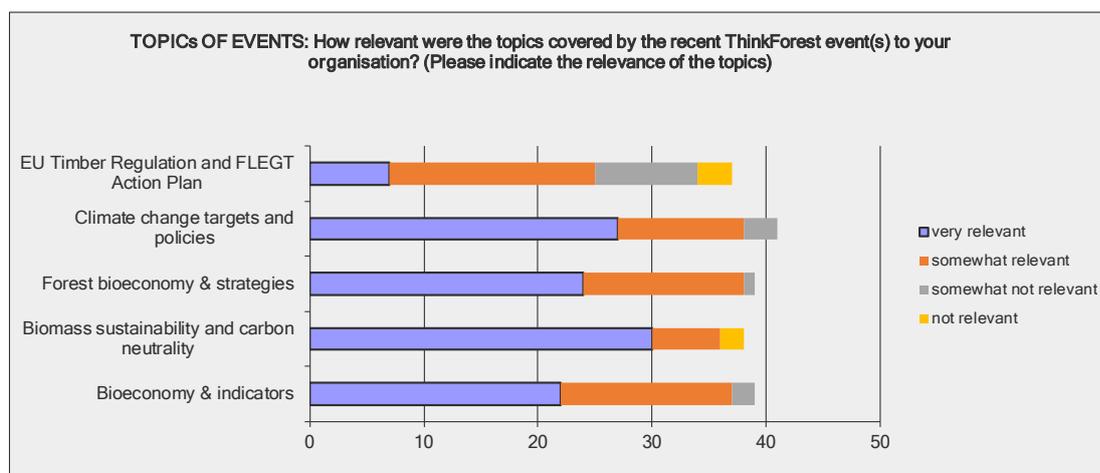
Figure 4 Participants satisfaction with topics of ThinkForest events 2015-2016 (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

The analysis was confirmed by analysing only stakeholders and policy-makers responses. They confirmed the high topical relevance of those events.

2.1.4   Insights generated from ThinkForest

Eighteen answers were received with regards to the following question: In your opinion, please indicate up to three important insights for your work from ThinkForest? Only four respondents said that no important insights were generated. Fourteen respondents choose not to answer the question.

The analysis showed that important insights were generated especially by ThinkForest events on bioeconomy and climate change

In relation to <u>*the most important insights generated through ThinkForest,*</u> the following was emphasised:

– <u>*Science-policy events*</u>: the importance of the science/policy dialogue was acknowledged and ThinkForest events were seen as providing a general update as well as a useful opportunity to expand knowledge.

Furthermore high quality presentations by policy-makers (including the Thinkforest president) and scientists were appreciated, as well as the compilation of most recent scientific knowledge; it was also said that forestry issues are made visible to EU politicians. It was however also said that ThinkForest lacked cross-sectoral perspectives.

– _Bioeconomy_: through topical ThinkForest events it became clear that not one European view on bioeconomy exists and the forest industry has a major commercial stake in the bioeconomy and wants to promote it; Topic wise bioeconomy indicators were highlighted.
– _Climate change_: different viewpoints in relation to forests and climate were heard and this was appreciated.
– _Other topics_: sustainability, cross-sectoral and transformational role of forests and the value of nature where mentioned.

The second most important insights were reported on the following ones:

– _Science policy events_: meeting and discussing with both policy-makers and scientists was understood as utilizing the science-policy interface; the communicative aspect was emphasised as well as it was acknowledged that meetings provided a comprehensive viewpoint with regards to relevant aspects of one topic. It was also appreciated that new contacts could be established. However, it was also learned that interlinkages and connections need visibility for making them usable later. Finally sharing information about European priorities was appreciated.
– _EFI's role and bioeconomy_: EFI policy support role with regards to European bioeconomy became evident.
– _Climate change_: the active contribution and great potential for forestry and the forestry sector to contribute more to climate change mitigation became visible including at the regional level.
– _Other topcis_: biomass and the EU Timber Regulation were mentioned.

The third most important insights reported were the following ones:

- _Science policy events_: the difficulty for reaching out to politicians without previous interest into forestry was acknowledged. Events led to generating insights that mirrored one respondent's opinions.
- _Bioeconomy indicators_: the pioneering work of scientists on bioeconomy questions including indicators was appreciated. However it was also said that ThinkForest seems to advocate a narrow definition of bioeconomy.
- _EFI_: the importance of EFI was emphasised.
- _Interlinkages_: the importance of interlinkages of forests to the bigger policy frame was acknowledged and the forest multi-functionality appreciated.

2.1.5   Future relevance of Thinkforest events

Event participants were asked to share their ideas as how to further increase the relevance of ThinkForest events in the future. A list of options to choose from as well as the opportunity to offer other and additional ideas was given to them. The analysis showed that most respondents asked to invite more policy makers including minsters (50%) to those events. This is quite a surprising result, since a number of ministers participated in those eight ThinkForest events already. In addition, it is rather difficult to invite ministers to those sort of events due to their busy agendas. Second most often it was suggested to increase the discussion time (~42%), to invite stakeholders (40%), diversify event locations (outside Brussels) (40%) and increase social media presence (40%). An increase of materials was less often suggested (~20%) (see Figure 5).

RELEVANCE OF EVENTS: How can we increase the relevance of ThinkForest events further? (Please tick the two most important items for you)
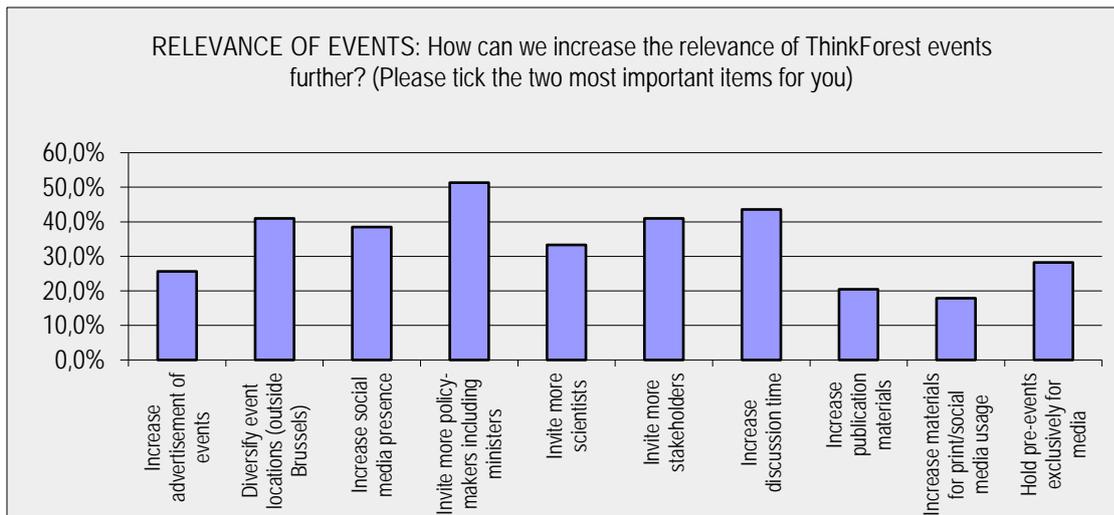
Figure 5 Event relevance in the future (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

A separate analysis of stakeholders answers provided nearly the same response. They suggested mostly to invite more policy-makers including ministers as most important priority followed by the invitation of more stakeholders and an increase in discussion time (instead of diversifying event locations). The analysis of policy-makers responses showed almost the same results: they ranked an increase of discussion time as first, and the invitation of policy-makers including ministers as second. An equal ranking of both an increase of social media presence as well as more scientists and stakeholders invitation followed this.

Event participants offered additional ideas as how to increase the relevance of ThinkForest events in the future:

–   *Event organisations*: usage of few excellent keynotes followed by dynamic panel for general ThinkForest events, but also the organisation of closed events where e.g. MEPs can pose questions directly were both recommended.
–   *Event locations*: a change of the event location at least once per year to engage a different kind of audience was suggested.
–   *Event topics*: environmental issues or biodiversity, water or forest ownership or society engagement issues were suggested as event topics; communication enhancement and usage of challenging titles (e.g. is bioenergy C neutral?) to engage actors from other policy areas and reach out to citizens was suggested.
–   *Invited experts*: engagement of environmental NGOs testimonies and speakers from other sectors were both suggested; it was also said to exchange speakers and invite new ones.
–   *Cross-sectoral exchange*: an exchange with main actors from outside the forest sector including their arguments and scientific findings was encouraged.
–   *Social media presence*: the continuation and provision of live stream as well as access to archived recordings were both recommended.

2.1.6   Knowledge of ThinkForest of non-event participants

Have you heard about ThinkForest and its events? (Please choose Yes or No as an answer to continue)
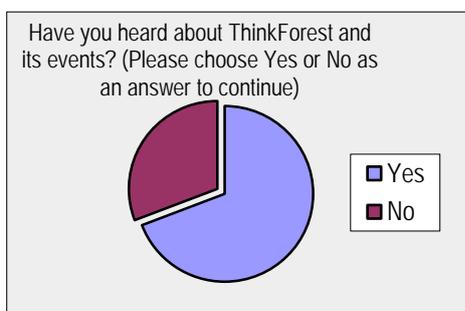
Whenever survey participants indicated that they had not participated in any ThinkForest event between 2015 and 2016 the next question wanted to find out what kind of knowledge they had about ThinkForest and its events (see Figure 6). The results showed that most survey participants knew ThinkForest from before taking the online survey.

Figure 6 Knowledge about ThinkForest (non-event participants) (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

16 out of 52 respondents did not know the ThinkForest forum. Those sixteen people that did not know ThinkForest were asked to continue with the second part of the online survey that related to EFI publications. The answers of those respondents that did not participate in any event, but had heard about ThinkForest were analysed separately from others to avoid a bias in the analysis.

2.1.7 Evaluation of ThinkForest

The question: How do you evaluate ThinkForest?, was answered by 70 out of 103 respondents. Several options were provided for all respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the eight statements regarding the ThinkForest events (see Table 5). Nearly half of the respondents had not participated in any Thinkforest event. There answers are analysed separately below (Figure 8).

Over all most respondents agreed that Thinkforest has created its own identity. 2/3 of the respondents agreed that ThinkForest provided a recognised science-policy forum and enhanced networking between policy-makers and scientists, while one-third disagreed with the last statement. A clear majority of respondents fully or somewhat agreed with ThinkForest providing a way of knowledge acquisition. Respondents were however divided over the question whether Thinkforest was well recognised by policy-makers, scientists and stakeholders. Yet, a larger amount of respondents were more in favour then in disagreement with this statement.

A separate analysis of stakeholder responses showed that they agreed to a lesser extent to ThinkForest having established its own identity and being a recognised science-policy forum. Their other answers were more in conform with the results reported above. Policy-makers responses followed mostly the same trend, besides they somewhat disagreed to Thinkforest being well recognised by policy-makers and stakeholders.

How do you evaluate ThinkForest? (Please indicate your level of agreement with following items)							
Answer Options	Fully agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	strongly disagree	don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Has created its own identity	26	31	8	1	4	1,94	70
Is a recognised science-policy forum	18	32	11	2	7	2,26	70
Well recognised by policy-makers	7	30	16	4	13	2,80	70
Well recognised by scientists	5	32	17	4	11	2,77	69
Well recognised by stakeholders	4	26	23	4	13	2,94	70
Enhances networking between policy-makers and scientists	15	40	7	1	7	2,21	70
Provides new insights and synthesis of scientific knowledge that helps to inform policy discussions	19	32	9	3	7	2,24	70
Provides a way for knowledge acquisition	21	32	7	3	7	2,19	70
Other (please indicate)							7
						answered question	70
						skipped question	33

Table 5 Evaluation of Thinkforest (Online Survey ThinkForest 2017)

Distinguishing between those respondents that participated in ThinkForest events in the years 2015-2016 and those that did only know ThinkForest, the following picture emerges (see Figure 7):
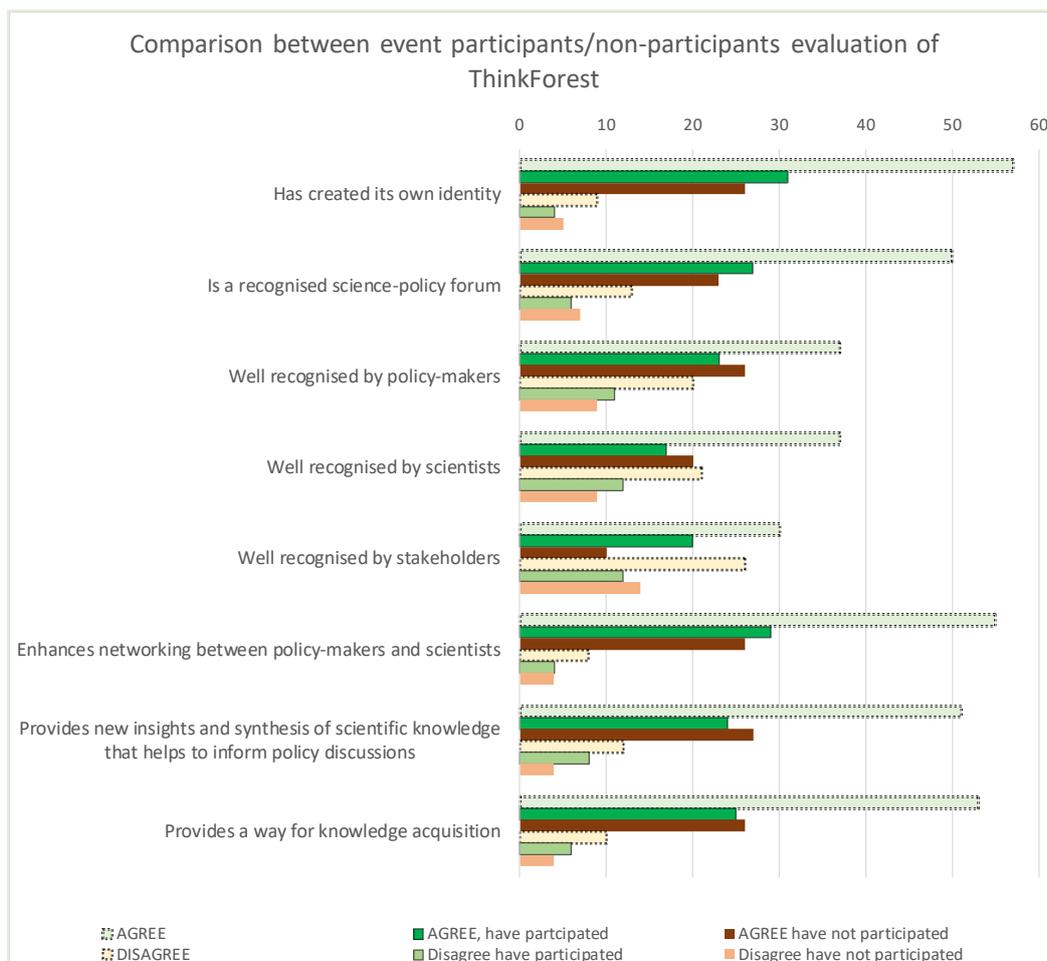
Figure 7 Evaluation of ThinkForest by event participants (Online Survey ThinkForest 2017)

Those respondents that have participated in Thinkforest events evaluated Thinkforest slightly more positively than non participants with regards to the following items: creation of an own identify and being a well recognized science-policy forum as well as being recognized by stakeholders and enhancing networking between policy-makers and scientists (see green and brown columns). Interestingly, those that did not participate in ThinkForest events, but had heard about it, indicated more clearly that ThinkForest was well recognised by policy-makers and scientists. While event participants were more positive with regards to ThinkForest being well recognised by stakeholders, non-participants were more sceptic. With respect to the last three items that attracted a large amount of agreement, non-participants were even more positive with regards to ThinkForest enhancing networking between policy-makers and scientists, providing new insights and synthesis of scientific knowledge as well as providing a way of knowledge acquisition.

Additional ideas were offered with regards to the evaluation of ThinkForest:

Ideas offered by event participants:

– *Outreach and openness of ThinkForest*: it remains unclear as to how ThinkForest reaches out and whether it is open to everybody as some of the same speakers appear in events and publications

*Ideas offered b*y event non-participants:

– *Knowledge about ThinkForest*: it has not diffused fully as e.g. someone indicated that s/he has only heard about it and does not know more;
– *Role of ThinkForest*: it was perceived as being important in the forest sector, but not outside the sector
– *Purpose of Thinkforest and relationship to publications*: it was unclear to someone what the purpose of ThinkForest is and how it links to publications like "What Science can tell us" or "From Science To Policy"

2.1.8 Future Continuation of ThinkForest events

Respondents were asked to provide their views as to whether ThinkForest should continue its events in the future (see Table 6). A majority of respondents said that they wanted ThinkForest to continue. Also, many wanted ThinkForest to continue as currently (39 vs 15), some suggested that small changes should be implemented (45 vs 11). This was confirmed by the fact that more than 50% said that they did not want Thinkforest to continue with big changes.

FUTURE CONTINUATION of Science-Policy events: In summary, how should ThinkForest events be continued in the future? (Please tick relevant item)							
Answer Options	Fully agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	not agree	don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Continue as currently	12	27	8	7	7	2,51	61
Continue with small changes	20	25	5	6	9	2,37	65
Continue with big changes	10	9	11	12	13	3,16	55
Not continue	1	3	2	33	12	4,02	51
					answered question		72
					skipped question		31

Table 6 Future continuation of ThinkForest events (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

The majority of respondents that participated in ThinkForest events also clearly suggested for ThinkForest to continue with small changes. A separate analysis of stakeholders' answers showed that the majority of respondents suggested also continuing with small changes. Only one respondent suggested not continuing. According to an analysis of policy-makers responses, mostly a continuation of ThinkForest was welcomed with small changes.

Comparing event participant and non-event participant responses, the analysis shows a somewhat similar picture. Both mostly suggest continuing ThinkForest, but with small changes (see Figure 8).
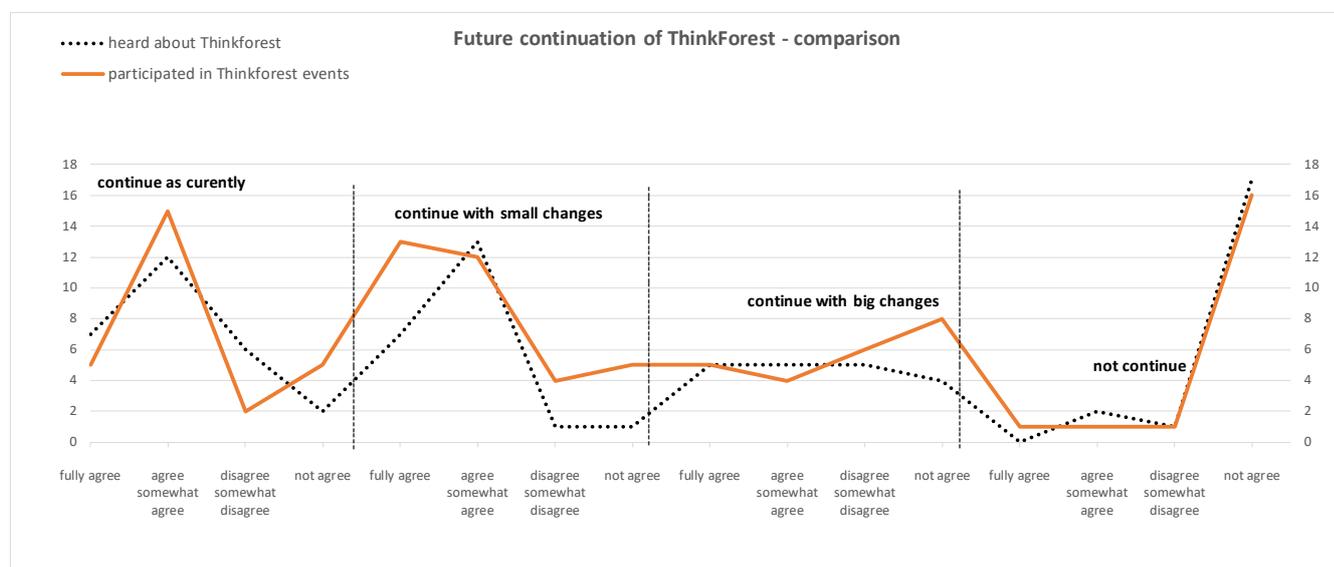
Figure 8 Comparison of what participants and non-participants think about a future continuation of ThinkForest

Additional ideas were offered with regards to the most important things to develop in the future within ThinkForest by event participants. Among them already suggested ideas were confirmed again here:

- _Event format_ : change event formats every now and to adapt to the topic, location, speakers and audience; combine open events with closed ones (invitation only).
- _Speakers_: involve more policy makers in events; identify and involve politicians in relevant policy fields that have no/little previous interests in forest issues; involve stakeholders; bring more top scientists to speak in panels and allow e.g. MEPs to ask questions.

New ideas were generated as well:

– *Event organisation/new methods*: enhance group work and according to a scientist also enhance stakeholder involvement (e.g. eNGOs) and public and policy makers information; use innovative ways to create an open atmosphere to discuss relevant topics by using new methods and approaches for the conferences/meetings.
– *Event topics:* keep up closely to forest-related policy developments at EU level that mostly come from outside the forest sector to also attract a different audience; according to a non-event participant share good examples (transnational, cross-sectoral) to strengthen the role of forests in the future EU climate and energy policies.
– *Scientific publications*: ensure a high level of trust in the scientific reports produced. (in this regards it should be noted that ThinkForest does not do research itself)
– *Information between events:* send more information to stakeholders between events.
– *Media coverage*: increase media coverage.

Non-event participants provided the following ideas for ThinkForest:

– *Speakers*: open up towards a broader spectrum of scientists, especially young ones and avoid perpetuating the same views.
– *Awareness for ThinkForest*: raise it in those countries through inviting policy makers and stakeholders where it is not well known.
– *Virtual presence*: attract wider audience by going virtual; explore web possibilities for meetings.
– *ThinkForest outreach*: foresters from developing countries are not included so far; maybe a platform could be created that involves them too.
– *Translation of outputs*: distribute the publications also in other languages.
– *ThinkForest President:* to continue
– *EFI*: ThinkForest facilitated by EFI, should stay a neutral tool for integrating different stakeholders

2.2   Part B: EFI Publications

The second part of the ThinkForest online survey analysed the views of participants of ThinkForest events and non-participants on EFI publications. The survey wanted to find out which publications were regarded most important, whether respondents have actually read those and applied in their work, or passed on to a colleague (see Figure 9).
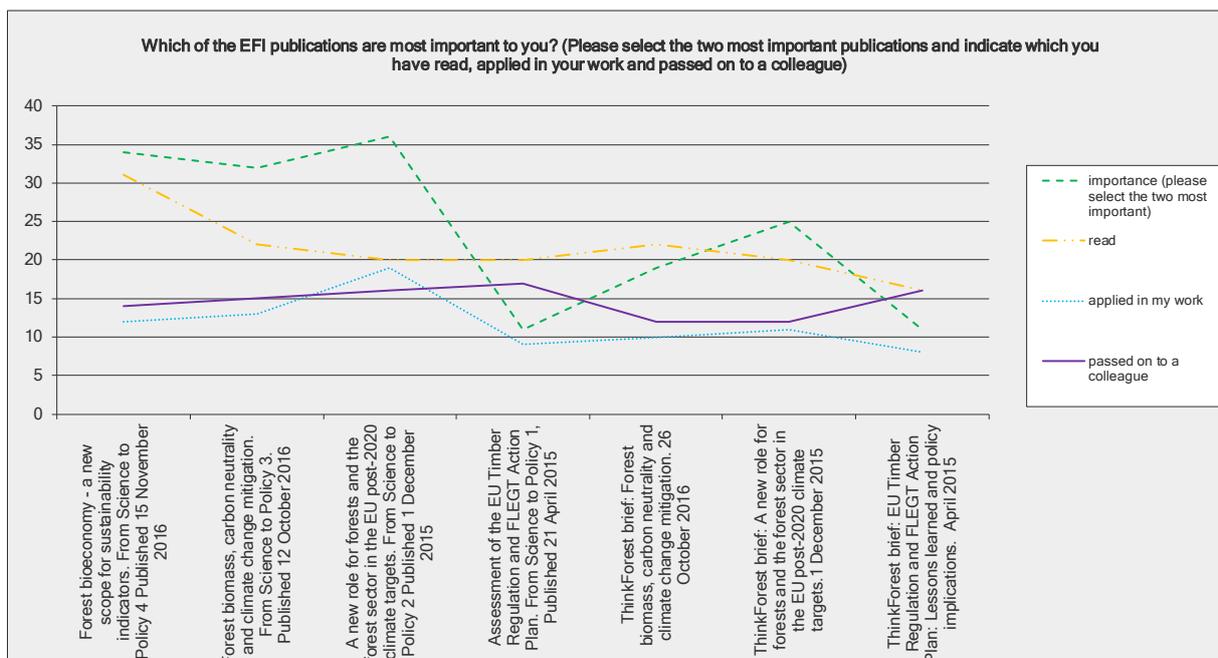

Figure 9 Importance of EFI Publications (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

The analysis found that currently the most important publication is the "From Science to Policy 2" A new role for forests and the forest sector in the EU post-2020 climate targets closely followed by the "From Science to Policy 4" on Forest bioeconomy - a new scope for sustainability indicators and the "From Science to Policy 3" on Forest biomass, carbon neutrality and climate change mitigation. Especially number 4 has been read most, while 3 and 2 have been applied and all others including "From Science to Policy 1" on the EU timber regulation have been passed on to colleagues. ThinkForest briefs have received slightly less attention as compared to the From Science to Policy publications albeit some have been viewed as important, were read, applied in the work and passed on to colleagues (e.g. ThinkForest brief on EU timber regulation).

Furthermore, the online survey wanted to find out as to how important newsletter and news of the European Forest Institute are (see Table 7). The data showed that 87% found the newsletter and 80% the news about ThinkForest very to somewhat important, while only a very small number of respondents showed no or a limited interest in both.

IMPORTANCE OF NEWS and NEWSLETTERS: How important are the following newsletters and news issued by the European Forest Institute for you? (Please indicate your level of importance)							
Answer Options	Very important	somewhat important	somewhat not important	not important	don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
Science Supporting Policy Making Newsletter	30	29	3	6	7	2,08	75
News about ThinkForest	23	29	4	9	10	2,39	75
						answered question	75
						skipped question	28

Table 7 Continuation of EFI News and Newsletter (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

2.3   Part C: Social Media

Since social media seemingly are more and more important, the online survey wanted to learn more about respondents' knowledge and use of social media. In this respect, it was also interesting to investigate as to why respondents don't use social media. These would provide information and understanding how respondents follow, or why they don't follow, the European Forest Institute and policy support activities in social media. This could help to support EFI to develop new ways to increase its reach out (see Figures 10-13).
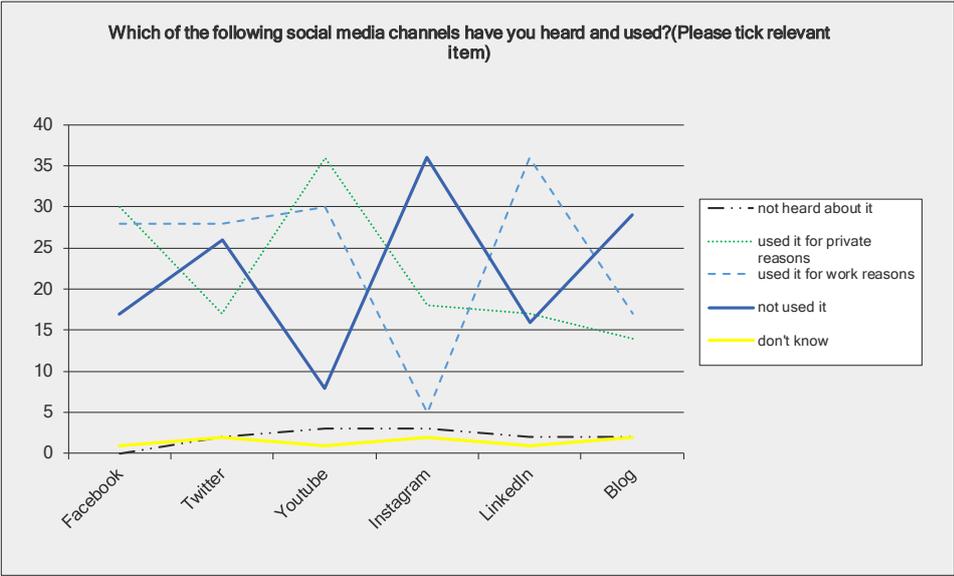
The analysis clearly showed that most respondents know about social media (see Figure 10). Most indicated that they have heared about Facebook and lLnkedIn and used both for work reasons. LinkedIn, Youtube, and Facebook were said to be used for work reasons more than for instance Instagram or a blog.

Figure 10 Knowledge of Social media channels (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

For private reasons most respondents said that they had used Youtube, Facebook and Instagram. In addition other social media means, such as Research Gate and Academia, were listed that were not included in the online survey.
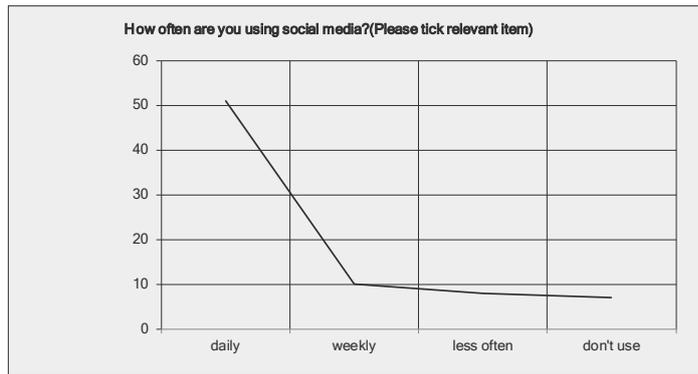

Figure 11 Use of social media (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

Clearly most respondents (67%) use social media on a daily basis (see Figure 11). Considerably less respondents use social media on weekly basis (13%) or less often (11%).
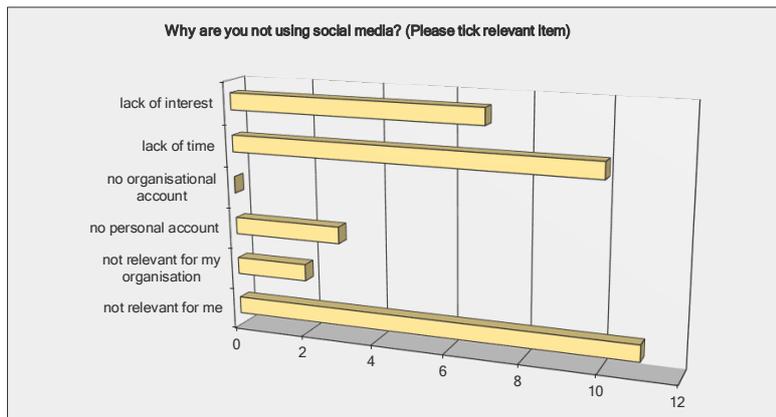

Figure 12 Non usage of Social Media (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

The analysis showed also that non-users of social media think that those are not relevant for them, or they show a lack of time or interest (see Figure 12). Some have no personal account and some stated that it is not relevant for their organisation and neither do they have an organisational account.

The following additional explanations were offered by respondents for not using social media:

One said that social media show a lack of privacy. Someone else viewed communication through email as sufficient, while others saw limitations in their usage of social media due to security reasons or because of disturbance of tools used for work.
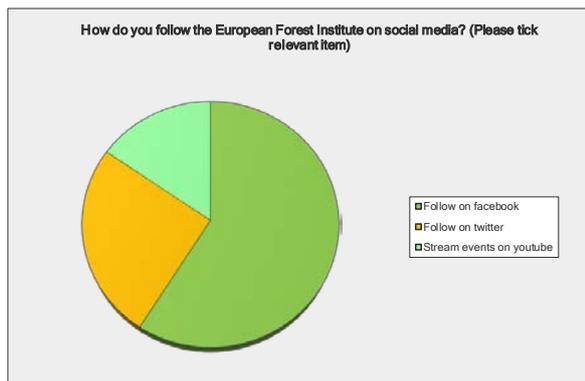
Figure 13 Following EFI on Social Media (ThinkForest Online Survey 2017)

The analysis found also (see Figure 13) that most respondents that use social media and follow the European Forest Institute, they do this through Facebook and Twitter as well as through other channels such as Linkedin, emails and newsletter. Some follow through more means at the same time. Facebook and Twitter were most often mentioned in this regards.

In addition, it was asked as to why respondents don't follow EFI in social media. The following answers were received:

− No knowledge about the possibility of following EFI on social media
− Usage of other means e.g. EFI website, email
− No usage of social media or missing account (e.g. facebook, twitter)
− No time or no interest

2.4 Final comments with regards to ThinkForest events and EFI Science-Policy publications

At the end of the survey, possible additional and free format comments from the respondents were asked for. Fifteen comments were received with regards to ThinkForest events and EFI publications. Most of the comments received related to ThinkForest events.

With regards to ThinkForest events, respondents made the following additional suggestions:

- _Different work streams for ThinkForest_: Differentiation of different work streams within ThinkForest: (a) well-planned and more time-consuming fixed products and (b) short term events that address emerging issues and needs.
- _Communication_: Communication about events should increase including reminders in newsletters to subscribe events
- _Opportunity for young people_: Organization of events with full scholarship opportunity for young people to find great talents who are keen to work for forests
- _Choice of topics_: one respondent said that the general level of seminars is not moving things forward too much, therefore it was suggested to choose items carefully

With regards to EFI Science-Policy publications, the What Science Can Tell Us series was found very useful, while it was suggested to formulate the Policy Briefs possibly in a sharper and more crisp way. The usage of blogs was also suggested in order to use different communication channels.

One respondent expressed high satisfaction with the work done within ThinkForest and the EFI publications and another one suggested to replicate the initiative in other sectors.

Finally according to one national policy-makers point of view EFI's policy support was understood as possibly lacking cooperation and visibility with regional bodies of the United Nations (e.g. UNECE, FAO), as well as at global ones such as the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). More visibility in policy and technical processes was therefore encouraged.

2.5 Supplementing interviews with representatives from European Parliament, European Commission and the countries Permanent Representations to the European Union

Ten interviews with representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the permanent representation to the European Union were carried out during 2-5 of May 2017. Interviews took between 30 minutes and 1,5 hours and took mostly place in the respective institutions.

Regarding the ThinkForest _event organisation_, most interviewees showed a high level of satisfaction. While some explicitly appreciated the event administration including speakers and discussion, others appreciated the professional treatment of the chosen topics in the ThinkForest context. Since many meetings are organised in Brussels, it was explicitly said that ThinkForest stands out in terms of its science-based approach and the provision of solid knowledge. Disagreement as to whether ThinkForest events are too technical or not technical enough was found among those interviewees with a forestry background and those without. While those with a forestry background wished for events based on more technical substance, others with a more political background did not, and instead argued for a less technical exchange to potentially increase for instance MEPs participation and interest. Interviewees clearly welcomed the fact that ThinkForest provides the possibility to have an inter-institutional exchange (between EP, COM, permanent representatives and NGOs) outside the normal decision-making procedures. In this regards it was also said that not so many opportunities arise where forest-related topics are discussed with this kind of participants.

With regards to the _participation of_ members of the European Commission and the European Parliament _in discussions after panel presentations_ it was said that Commission services might refrain from taking part in ThinkForest discussions (outside the panels) as they may not want to take away time from stakeholders asking questions, or they may not want to interfere with colleagues from other services or contradict them publicly. MEPs were however said to not necessarily follow the entire event which upholds other event participants to look for real exchange regarding a given subject area. More high-level persons will on the other side only participate in events in case they are invited to speak or take part in the panel discussion.

Holding both smaller and bigger ThinkForest events were welcomed. In this regards it was said that especially smaller events (e.g. lunch events) were seen as easier to participate in as compared to bigger events. During larger events sometimes the discussion time with the audience was perceived as very limited or rather too short and the audience was thus seen as getting only a minimal opportunity to take part in the discussion. Since those different types of meetings (public vs invitation only events) exist in the ThinkForest context, it was said that some may people feel excluded as they are not invited to certain events and get the feeling of missing out. This was said to on the one side risking of missing out certain groups, on the other side inputs may remain limited as those are excluded.

Finally regarding the *event-set up* it was said that despite a lively discussion and exchange generated during some ThinkForest events, the follow-up of those events remained unclear as for instance no conclusion was drawn (e.g. new scientific studies needed regarding a specific topic, follow-up meeting), nor was it explicitly said as to whether this discussion was to be continued in the future, and if so, how.

In terms of *topics* addressed, many interviewees showed a high level satisfaction with topics addressed in past ThinkForest events. However, it was also said that despite the fact that ThinkForest events follow current political developments and are perceived as highly relevant, it missed out somehow on cross-sectoral issues. In addition, it was said that the possible way as to how forests/forestry contribute to providing jobs, contribute to sustainable growth and may take part in transforming Europe through the use of its materials was not clearly conveyed so far. Finally, it was also said that during some events not the full spectrum of scientific evidence was provided (e.g. climate change related events), but instead it could be clarified more e.g. that different national circumstances matter (e.g. more or less forest) as to what policy choices are preferred. It was also added that it would be preferable to have different viewpoints outlined and their policy implications discussed (e.g. burning/not burning wood that stems from export) to encourage a different kind of discussion.

The *selection of speakers and participation in the audience* was generally well appreciated, but since there is no registration fee, it was said that people register, but might after all not come to the event. In this regards it was also emphasised that high level persons could potentially attract a different audience while at the same time risking to lose those immediately after their talk has finished as they will be leaving to and thus not encouraging a dialogue between people present. Some interviewees voiced the concern that recent events were dominated by speakers from the Northern parts of Europe, others clarified that this has not always been the case, but MEPs e.g. from Slovenia, Greece and Spain have participated in ThinkForest events in the past. In this regards someone said that the panels composition were not always crafted in a way that all viewpoints were covered equally including scientific and political ones. This led to political viewpoints being somewhat side-lined as well as that some scientific arguments were not covered.

Most interviewees found that important *insights* were generated through ThinkForest events. It was said that different actors' positions became more visible to the public thanks to ThinkForest events. Novel arguments stemming from scientific studies were shared that complemented stakeholder studies or information already available and supported closing the knowledge void. Through those events it became also evident that often repeated ideas are not necessarily truer, but that empirical evidence supporting those facts are important to collect and share.

In general, *ThinkForest* was seen as having successfully created its own identity as well as having successfully established itself in creating a sense of trust as the need to double check facts does not apply. ThinkForest is thus perceived as a forum to attend for receiving information regarding forest-related topics, but also as a forum that provides a scientific basis for discussion. It was also said that ThinkForest provides a platform for exchange and builds bridges to other policy-makers as well as it encourages scientific access to knowledge being positively acknowledged in all institutions interviewed. In this regards it was also said that ThinkForest provides a new space for MEPs, Commission services, stakeholders both regional and national ones to come together for discussing forest-related issues. Albeit the fact that ThinkForest successfully created its own identity inside the forestry community, this was not found to be the case outside the forest community in Brussels. Within the European Commission, the European Parliament and permanent representatives it is however well know and mostly appreciated.

Since there are more forest-related topics on the policy agenda of the European Commission, ThinkForest contributed to increasing the awareness for those topics while at the same time its event series gained more

popularity and again raised the amount of awareness in general. This development was seen as evolving well over the past years.

Some shortcomings were acknowledged also by some interviewees, which are summarized next.

Regarding the participation of high-level persons it was also said that Heads of Units and Cabinets of the European Commission as well as Members of Parliament are not necessarily taking part in the audience unless they become invited to participate in the panel. It was also perceived as very difficult to attract persons from the European Commission services that do not necessarily work on forests per se.

It was also said that the purpose of the ThinkForest events per se is not very clear. It was perceived as unclear as to whether the aim of ThinkForest events was to advance the debate in relation to a specific subject, or to present and share scientific results only. This might be due to the fact that event types (discussion or knowledge sharing events) are not distinguished in the ThinkForest context, albeit the size and openness to the public of events differs. Despite the fact that ThinkForest was perceived well known and well respected it was also said that events differed in terms of presented results.

Nearly all interviewees made some suggestions as <u>how to continue in the future</u>:

Regarding the *event location* it was said that it is favourable to hold events in Brussels maybe complemented by (1-2) events outside Brussels. Those could be either held in capitals, or within one hour drive from Brussels e.g. in a wood factory or a forest. Event venues were however said to change now and then.

The *continuation of both smaller and larger events* was very much appreciated despite the fact that some persons not invited might feel excluded. Smaller events were especially seen to encourage discussion and knowledge exchange among participants, while also risking that key politicians might not want to participate. The continuation of larger public events was encouraged and to be linked to ongoing policy processes. Both events should be chaired in a nice and comfortable way.

Since *networking at ThinkForest events* is among the main reasons to participate, it was suggested to use different forms of networking during the event. Among them are: sit in circles without desks to take control of the space; put names on both sides of the name plates to inform neighbours; instead of putting questions to the audience, ask everyone to turn to the person next to it to understand better what one has learned from the presentations or what was surprising. Round tables were found to offer a more interactive set-up that encourages involvement. The ambiance of a room is important as closeness matters. Bigger rooms may be found intimidating and some people might not want to speak up. These suggested event set ups were said to be more difficult to be implemented in lecture theatres that are used for bigger events. Albeit the fact that those events are also intended to be used for networking purposes it was said that around 40% of the time available should be reserved after the meeting to get to know people (max 1 hour). Shorter events were appreciated. In general, it was also said that an increase in *discussion time* was found beneficial in order to allow the highly informed audience to pose questions. At the same time this implies that less time is to be offered for panel discussions is being put.

It was also suggested to *use different ThinkForest event types*: for instance (a) events to present published work where conclusions speak for themselves; or (b) discussion events where good ideas could be shared and the chair draws conclusions at the end of the event which could lead on the one hand to new research activities or on the other hand to activities of policy-makers; or (c) targeted events (round table discussions by invitation only) to discuss proposals in relation to forests for the future after 2019 when the European commissioners get re-elected; (d) scientific exchange events to encourage a different kind of discussion within ThinkForest. This could imply inviting scientists that published different reports (e.g. EEA report, EFI etc.) and contrast their scientific results. These kind of events would showcase different lines of arguments. Someone (e.g. chair) would have to take care that it is well understood as to where areas of agreement/disagreement are and possibly how they can be met.

Regarding the *follow-up on ThinkForest events* it was suggested that the chair draws conclusions as to what the follow up of the event that took place looks like. For instance, further publications or follow-up events could be planned. Even so some events might already be linked to each other, it remained unclear that they were meant to be interlinked.

In relation to *choosing relevant topics* many said that it would be important to follow the European Commission agenda and to hold events in a timely manner. To attract both persons from the European Commission and the European Parliament the following was suggested:

To *attract high-level persons from the Commission* it was said that events should be held during the time the Commission prepares its proposals for action or were it has regulation in place that might change in the future. In addition, global processes (e.g. sustainable development goals) may attract both member states and the European Commission as they are currently implementing them. Outside Europe topics were said to receive less attention so far, but might be important to cover in the future.

To *attract MEPs* that are not already interested in the forest topics it would be beneficial to link up events to their political agenda. Thus linking the events to topics like economic growth and job creation, health issues, combating climate change and the loss of biodiversity respectively nature protection, decreasing health issues etc. Providing those MEPs with scientific knowledge and linking their topics with forest-related ones through the event series of ThinkForest could potentially create synergies and make more MEPs interested in the forest topic. However, it should also be said in this regards that several persons cautioned that, the more technical events become, the less interested MEPs, that are not specialists, will be and that the number of MEP participants might again decrease. It was also suggested to invite experts from member states to encourage their national MEPs to participate in the events.

For both Commission services and MEPs *a repackaging of event topics* might increase their interests in attending events. It was suggested to use catchy names", simplify titles and use sub-title; secondly linking event topics to topics that are important for the Commission service work as well as MEPs constituency and their potential voters (e.g. jobs, tackling climate change, air quality, health etc.) may increase their attendance quote. Too much repetition should be avoided as potential participants might get bored and not wanting to attend again.

To encourage participation of members of the European Commission that might hold an interest e.g. on climate change and forest-related aspects, it was suggest to hold further events that include both member states representatives, members of the European Commission, forest stakeholders and outsiders. Commission personnel might then want to attend to follow the discussion.

Several topics were suggested to be followed in ThinkForest events. Among them were the following ones:

The future of the CAP and as to how forestry is included, the future of the European Union and as to how forest gets placed therein, export-import of wood and globalisation, migration crises (e.g. forest as working place), contribution of forests to meeting wider societal problems, climate change, wood production and forest ownership, renewable energy, bioeconomy and forests, sector innovation, and rural development, new materials and wood construction etc. The issue of EU competence for forest policy was suggested to be addressed as forests/try may play a different role in the future.

Another way to continue ThinkForest events and to encourage a cross-sectoral point of view is to look for *similar initiatives for at least two sectors* and to hold combined meetings (e.g. an innovation event for two sectors). This would also attract a different audience. Overall, however, it was also suggested to distinguish *short-term topics* that are currently being negotiated in Brussels from *long-term topics* and to both address European and outside-European topics that are relevant. In this regards it was also suggested to take a future perspective and also include actors from the business sector as sustainability also forms part of their business.

The *material* provided so far was seen as highly satisfactory. Regarding the material distributed at future ThinkForest events or presented therein, it was said that a clear hierarchy of material was preferable. It was not seen as sufficient to only produce executive summaries, but it was also seen as important to write scientific reports to uphold trust in scientific work as simply a policy brief of 3-4 pages is not thought to be convincing enough. This means that the policy brief and a sound scientific report should be continued to be published and smaller contributions (e.g. 20 pages) were also much appreciated for daily work. It was also suggested to write summaries as "newspapers starter stories" to be able to read them quickly and to also offer e.g. MEPs the possibility to use them for their own work when for instance having to prepare a related newspaper/ magazine article. Longer reports should also be made available for those persons that want to go deeper or experts in the capitals. They should be easy to read and include an executive summary with 1-3 key facts that policy-makers can take up easily. It was however also said that not all the material is necessarily written for expert and contributing authors should craft them very carefully to avoid taking policy sides. Critical voices however should be included (e.g. bioenergy).

It was suggested that *newsletters* distributed before or after the events should provide a short summary of main arguments and some weblinks to follow up instead of including only headlines and refer the interested reader to further texts via weblinks. Video streaming of events was welcomed and it was suggested to promote the fact that events are archived and accessible also later on. Finally, someone suggested to continue using social media to raise the awareness for the event series or to publish event dates. It was however also said that not everybody uses (or is allowed to use social media) and therefore more traditional means such as the use of emails and newsletters to market events should be continued to be used.

In summary, the ten interviews showed that ThinkForest events and EFI science-policy publications became very important and helped to distribute science-based knowledge to decision makers, as well as to facilitate dialogue and networking between science-policy. So far ThinkForest was seen as unique forum as no other forum type in Brussels covers forest related issues in this manner. From the responses it became also clear that it is useful to continue with the two types of ThinkForest events: large public events and smaller by invitation only events. In addition, several suggestions were made as how to improve and/or continue ThinkForest events in the future and activities related to these. Especially new modalities for ThinkForest events could be tried that increase participant interaction and dialogue. It was said that conclusions after each ThinkForest event/discussion could be beneficial to the audience as well as to inform the audience as how the discussion possibly continues after the event. It may be noted, that the respondents also made quite a few suggestions that have already been systematically implemented in the past events.

3   Comparison between 1st and 2nd ThinkForest evaluation

This section compares the results of the first ThinkForest evaluation (Pülzl 2014) that took place from June to August 2014 and this second one. For comparative reasons some questions remained the same in both evaluations while others were slightly changed. Moreover, only the survey conducted in 2017 had questions related to EFI publications and social media, i.e., these were not addressed in the 2014 survey. Thus, for the latter aspects a comparison is not possible.

In terms of survey absolute response numbers, more persons completed the 2017 ThinkForest survey than 2014 survey (121 in 2017 vs. 83 in 2014). Yet, there were less responses from the European Commission and slightly less from stakeholders in 2017 than in 2014. Most respondents replying to both survey have equally attended about 1-2 events and a considerable lower number of respondents participated in more events. In 2014, 68 respondents that replied the survey had participated in events, while this number decreased to only 51 in 2017.

Both in 2017 and 2014 surveys, most respondents were very satisfied with the organisation and location of events. A high percentage of respondents agreed that Thinkforest events provided a way of knowledge acquisition. On average, the satisfaction level with regards to opportunities for dialogue and networking has increased considerably from 2014 to 2017 survey, but room for improvement still remains. In the 2017 survey, more respondents found that Thinkforest events provide networking opportunities, and the satisfaction with speakers was slightly higher, compared to 2014 survey. On the other hand, in the 2017 survey the satisfaction level with regards to the topics presented has slightly decreased from 2014 survey, but still remains at a high level of agreement.
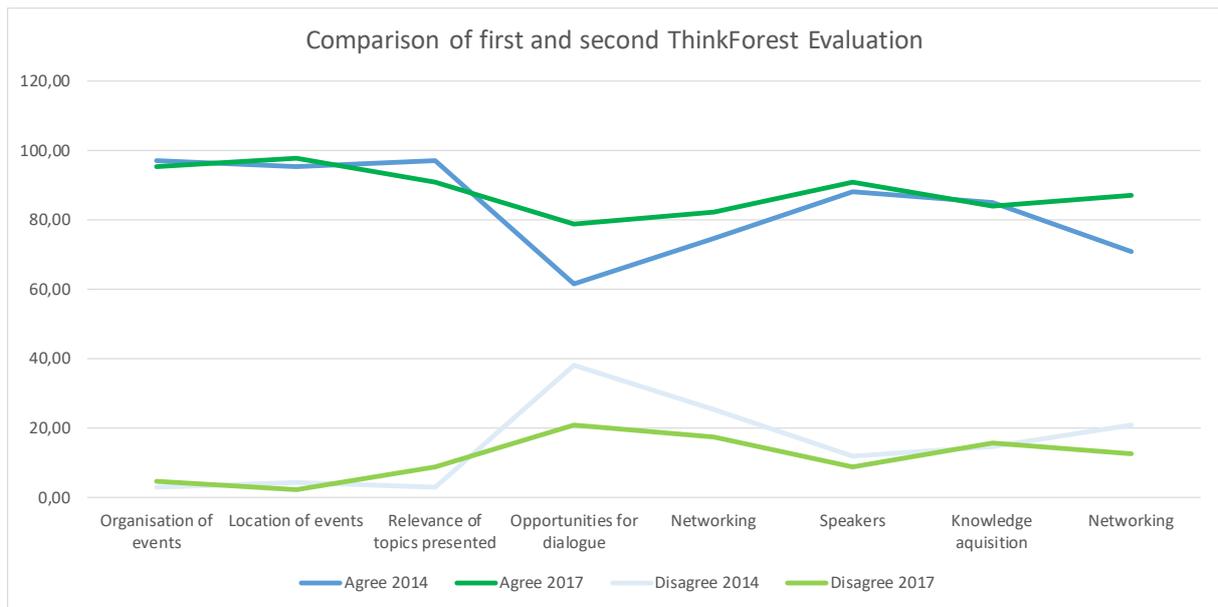
Figure 14 Comparison of first and second Thinkforest evaluation results (event administration and delivery)

As regards insights generated, the ThinkForest evaluation in 2014 showed the following: Events had generated information about topical issues including items higher up the political EU agenda including different viewpoints and knowledge about MEPs and stakeholders point of views. Networking and opportunities for dialogue as well as the importance of the science-policy dialogue became clear. Finally, the dissemination of scientific results was acknowledged.

In 2017, respondents confirmed most of those items already provided in 2014 (e.g. the importance of the science-policy dialogue and the possibility to getting information about topical issues as well as a general update etc.). Compared to 2014 other topical insights in relation to bioeconomy and climate change were emphasised. This can however be explained by the different topical focus of events during both evaluation periods. In contrast to 2014, EFI's science-policy support role was acknowledged having generated bigger attention in 2017 survey. It was however also argued that interlinkages of forests and a bigger policy frame were important, but cross-sectoral perspectives were felt to be more missing in the ThinkForest context.

Regarding the evaluation of Thinkforest, in 2014, it was asked as to how effective Thinkforest was in creating an inspiring and dynamic science-policy dialogue. 67 respondents provided their point of views. In 2017, the survey included a closed question, where more aspects where offered to respondents. 70 respondents answered this question and seven respondents provided alternative ideas for the future of ThinkForest (see Figure 15).
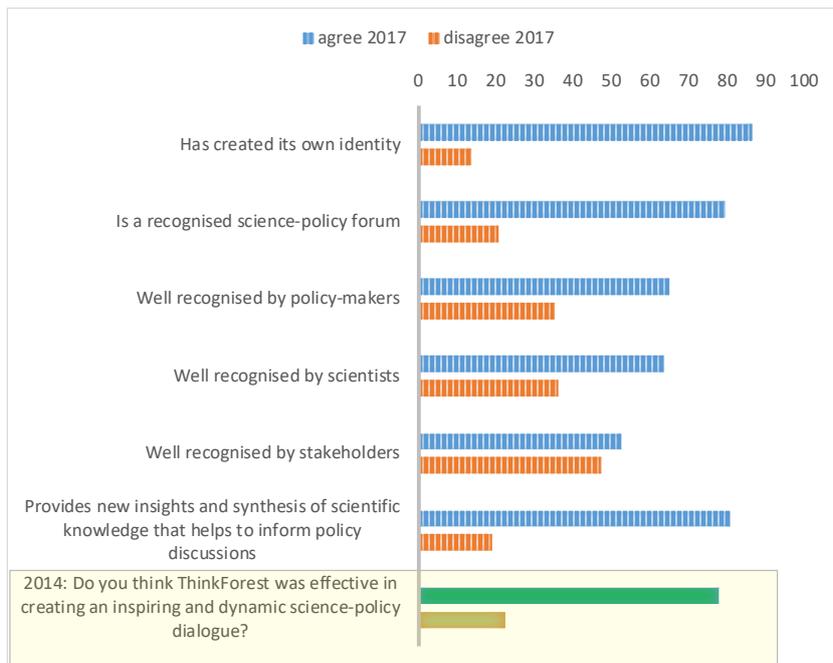
Figure 15 Comparison of first and second Thinkforest evaluation results (evaluation of Thinkforest)

In 2017, 86% of respondents found that ThinkForest has created its own identity and 80% of respondents found that it provides new insights and synthesis of scientific knowledge that helps to inform policy discussions. Furthermore, nearly 80% found that Thinkforest is a recognised science-policy forum and a large number of respondents (over 60%) found that it is well recognised by policy-makers and scientists and a little less by stakeholders. In 2014, respondents were asked to respond to the following question instead: "Do you think ThinkForest was effective in creating an inspiring and dynamic science-policy dialogue?. 77% of respondents agreed, while 23% disagreed. Consequently, in the 2017 survey there was a higher acceptance that ThinkForest has succeeded in establishing itself as a recognised science-policy forum than in 2014, albeit not as well recognised by stakeholders than by others.

Regarding the future of ThinkForest, in 2014, an open question was asked. 47 respondents provided their ideas as what to develop in the ThinkForest forum. In 2017, a closed question with the possibility to provide alternative comments was asked. While in 2014, respondents argued for increasing the visibility of ThinkForest by also setting a clear mission for ThinkForest and rethinking its set-up as well as its event organization, the creation of a continuous dialogue and strengthening of the network were found important.

In 2017, most respondents suggested to continue ThinkForest with small changes. In addition, respondents asked in 2017 to adapt slightly the event organization including speakers and to inform stakeholders between events. Secondly, respondents suggested in 2017 keeping event topics closely related to the developments at EU level. Differently to what was suggested 2014, in 2017 they suggested also to attract a different audience e.g. through the choice of cross-sectoral topics as well as raising the awareness of ThinkForest through an increase in media coverage including virtual presence also outside Europe. In 2017, it was emphasized also that the ThinkForest president shall continue its work and ThinkForest to be facilitated by EFI as neutral forum for different actors points of view.

4   Conclusions

The analysis showed that ThinkForest clearly creates a recognised science-policy forum through e.g. providing a common meeting and discussion space for science-policy dialogue, and for presenting most recent state of the art synthesis of scientific knowledge in a format targeted for decision-makers. Most respondents agreed that ThinkForest has created its own identity. ThinkForest was also appreciated for providing space for creating new contacts and enhancing networking between policy-makers and scientists as well as contributing to the inter-institutional exchange. Respondents where however slightly divided as to how well ThinkForest is recognised by policy-makers, scientists and stakeholders especially outside the sector. Room for improvement certainly exists in this regards, but nonetheless most respondents clearly asked for a continuation of ThinkForest (including its President) albeit with small changes.

High level of satisfaction with regards to the event administration and delivery was reached. Yet, it was suggested to change the event location every now and then, and to use also different event formats (e.g. open and by invitation

only events, event set-ups, possibilities for web meetings, group work) and event types as well as change speakers and invite even more policy-makers to the events. Since ThinkForest has already had two different types of event formats (open and by invitation only), and has changed event locations every now and then, this suggestion is to some extent already incorporated. Various suggestions as how to improve the event set-up were made by interviewees including introducing different event types as well as using different forms of networking already during the event itself and not just to leave room for exchange after the event has taken place including its follow up.

An increase in knowledge especially with regards to e.g. bioeconomy and climate change and the role of forests in topics such as biomass sustainability was achieved in many different ways through ThinkForest events. The event topics were also found mostly satisfactory, but the respondents' were concerned about a tendency of repeating similar issues over time. In this regards it was suggested to also engage in a diversified set of event topics including more environmental ones and sharing transnational or cross-sectoral examples. In case ThinkForest wants to continue event series, it might be helpful to explain to potential event participants or recipients of ThinkForest news and policy briefs that this is done intentionally. Interviewees also suggested to carefully follow the European Commission agenda and either choose topics where proposals are currently being developed or where regulation are in place to attract high-level politicians.

The analysis showed also that it would be appreciated to invite more policy-makers including ministers and stakeholders also from outside the sector, and to increase discussion time to increase the relevance of ThinkForest in the future. However, this result is somewhat surprising, since several ministers have been keynote speakers in the ThinkForest events, and it is perhaps unrealistic to expect to have them for every event, or several of them in the same event. On the other side, it confirms that ThinkForest is right on track by inviting both policy-makers and scientists to events.

A number of stakeholder respondents in 2014 survey, and some stakeholders and scientists in 2017 survey, suggested to include more stakeholders as speakers in ThinkForest events. It should be said here that stakeholders have been included as speakers in ThinkForest events, although less so in the past few events than earlier ones. This is mostly due to practical reasons and requests from the policy makers to focus these events to policy makers (the primary target group of ThinkForest events). Given the large number of stakeholder groups in Brussels and the very limited number of speakers that can be included in a ThinkForest event, there is a logistical problem of including many stakeholder groups as speakers in the same event. Secondly, especially in Brussels, stakeholders and lobby groups have many forums and well organized tools to express their views e.g. towards the European Commission and European Parliament. Because, of this the latter organizations have also indicated that it would be helpful to have ThinkForest events in which stakeholders are not included, to have different kinds of discussions and views presented. Yet, it is important to try to engage the stakeholders in the ThinkForest science-policy dialogue, but there is a need to try to find good ways to do this more effectively and transparently.

The analysis revealed that knowledge about ThinkForest and its events has not fully diffused since e.g. 16 respondents did not know about ThinkForest. Regarding cross-sectoral work ThinkForest was perceived as being important for the forest sector, but not outside. Critical voices were therefore offered with regards to a perceived missing cross-sectoral notion of ThinkForest. As forest-related policy developments at the EU level stem nowadays mostly from outside the forest sector a different audience might however have to be attracted also to come to events. Raising the awareness for forest-related aspects outside the forest sector has been a common concern in the policy community therefore different suggestions to link ThinkForest events to the future activities (e.g. CAP, future of the European Union, social issues etc.) could help overcome this perceived gap. ThinkForests' outreach to other parts of the world was encouraged though for example creating a similar platform for developing countries and/or establishing visibility and cooperation with regional and global UN bodies (such as UNECE/FAO, UNFF).

Reaching out through a different and somewhat more proactive communication strategy including social media as well as the continuation and provision of live and archived recordings were seen as important. Sharing information between events was also viewed as a possible idea for the future. With regards to the latter aspect it should be added that the publications and Thinkforest event materials are accessible online as well as they are cited and used also between events. In addition, Thinkforest news and newsletters inform interested readers. Consequently, it is somewhat difficult to assess to which extent the issue is the lacking of communication, or inactivity from the respondents' side in absorbing the information that is available.

A comparison of results from the 2014 and 2017 ThinkForest evaluations mostly reveal that ThinkForest is well on track and especially respondents in 2017 were seemingly more satisfied with regards to the opportunities for

dialogue, networking and speakers than in 2014, albeit not reaching the highest satisfaction level. Regarding insights generated through Thinkforest events, more or less the same issues where confirmed in 2014 and 2017, while a more cross-sectoral notion was felt to be missing in the ThinkForest context. This is not to say that ThinkForest events do not address forest-related aspects and policies, but most arguably, respondents seemed to have missed speakers stemming from other sectors to generate a cross-sectoral meeting setting and getting in new perspectives. This could be potentially mediated by inviting speakers from outside the forest sector, when possible. Further, comparing results from 2014 and 2017, it can be concluded that ThinkForest has over time established increasingly itself as a recognised science-policy forum. Yet, there is still room to improve in this respect, in order to obtain the highest level of recognition.

EFIs *From Science to Policy* –reports and the *ThinkForest Briefs* were well received by respondents. Large part of the respondents had read these, applied in their work, or passed on to a colleague. The analysis revealed also that the Science Supporting Policy Making Newsletter, as well as the News about ThinkForest, were much appreciated.

With regards to the usage of social media, the analysis showed that most respondents use them on a daily basis and that Linkedin, Youtube and Facebook were mostly used for work reasons. The analysis found also that those that follow EFI through social media use most often Facebook or Twitter or both, as well as Linkedin, emails and Newsletters. Not everybody was however aware about the possibility offered by EFI to follow through social media and this could be improved in the future. Those that do not use social media perceived it as not relevant for them, or didn't have time or interest. Some also indicated that the exchange through email was seen as sufficient.

To sum up, ThinkForest and the EFI science-policy Publications have been evaluated very favourably and most respondents asked for a continuation of ThinkForest as it is now or with minor changes.

However, when interpreting the results, it should be noted that the surveys have had difficulties to reach the policy-makers, and the scientists have clearly been the biggest group of the respondents. Therefore, and to get a fuller picture as to how decision-makers perceive ThinkForest events and EFI publications, the study was complemented by follow-up qualitative interviews with the decision makers. Ten interviews with representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the permanent representation to the European Union were carried out during 2-5 of May 2017.

In summary, the ten interviews pointed out that ThinkForest events and EFI science-policy publications were well on track as ThinkForest reaches out to decision makers, as well as it facilitates dialogue and networking activities which is not makes it a unique forest-related forum in Brussels. The continuation of smaller by invitation only roundtables and larger public events possibly tight to the political agenda to attract both high level politicians as well as a large interested audience was very much appreciated. A number of suggestions were made as how to improve the event set-up, networking and interaction as well as to provide participants with preliminary even conclusions and to inform them about planned future activities. Many of those suggestions were already being implemented systematically during those past ThinkForest events, but since not all respondents had participated in all events, those might have not been aware of this. It does however also show that the organisation of ThinkForest events meets participants' needs while room for improvement does also exist.

Literature:

Pülzl, H. 2014. Thinkforest Evaluation. August 2014 (unpublished manuscript).

Interview list:

Interview 1, European Commission, Interview 2, European Parliament, Interview 3 Permanent Representative to the European Union, Interview 4 European Commission, Interview 5 European Commission, Interview 6 European Parliament, Interview 7 European Commission, Interview 8 European Commission, Interview 9 European Commission, Interview 10 Permanent Representative to the European Union.