



2020

NATUREFRIENDS
INTERNATIONAL

ANNUAL
REPORT

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Dear readers!



What a year! We just started to prepare the activities for the 125th anniversary of the Naturefriends movement full of anticipation and enthusiasm, when Corona threw a huge spanner in the works. Our festive jubilee congress including a jubilee gala and a social programme for the delegates had to be cancelled, and almost all other planned activities had to be cancelled or changed to a virtual form, too.

What we would never have thought possible, came to pass: almost everywhere Naturefriends Houses had to be closed, outdoor activities were – if at all – often only possible in family groups. Our common basis – the shared experience of nature, providing for encounters and leisure activities – has broken away. And unfortunately, it is not over yet.

Even more our values have been in demand: solidarity, justice, and responsible action from all of us! The pandemic has hit our entire society and shows us all too clearly how already existing inequalities are exacerbated by a crisis. Those who already faced precarious conditions had been hit in a particularly hard way – on a small scale in our everyday environment as well as on a global scale.

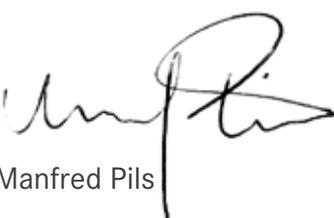
Together with other NGOs we raised our voice for mastering this crisis in solidarity, such as with the joint manifesto “For a Europe that cares for all – during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond” from April 2020 or with our call for a human asylum policy.

Apart from our international Naturefriends meeting in the Gambia, which took place at the beginning of 2020 – just in time before the Corona virus began to spread around the world – our 125-years campaign was mainly implemented on social media. There we displayed the variety of Naturefriends activities that have been contributing and still contribute to a sustainable development – a task that got even more importance during the pandemic. And we managed to touch many people! Our video “Naturefriends – a driving force” has been reaching more than 49,000 persons via our Facebook account so far.

Finally, our anniversary congress took place in a virtual form, too, and – given that it was the first big online event of our bodies – went quite smoothly. And although we missed meeting each other in person, we were glad to welcome some members who normally do not attend our events due to the long travel distance.

A big thank you to our employees, functionaries, and volunteers, who enabled our activities with their great energy, skills and commitment and provided the necessary flexibility in this difficult year, and all our members and funding bodies that supported our work!

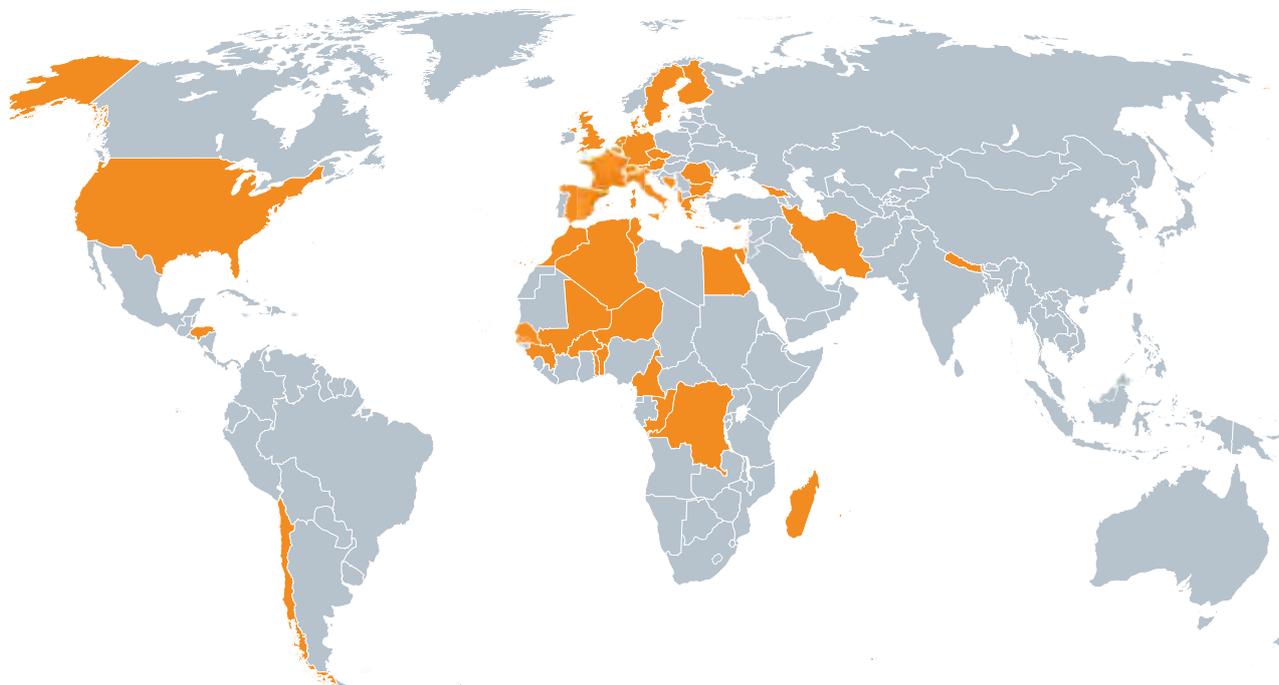
Stay healthy and a cordially “Berg frei”,

Andrea Lichtenecker 
Andrea Lichtenecker & Manfred Pils





Members and Networks



At the end of the year 2020, NFI had 43 members (20 of them with voting rights) from 41 countries with a total of about 350.000 individual members.

NFI represents the interests of the Naturefriends movement in European networks, such as the Green 10 – a network of the ten largest environmental organisations in Europe – and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). We contribute to policy papers as well as to joint political statements and demands and distribute them within the Naturefriends network.



In addition, we are part of different expert groups and thematic networks, as for example the “Roundtable for Human Rights in Tourism”, with which we work together towards our vision of a tourism that effectively contributes to sustainable development.



XXIV NFI Congress

After having been postponed due to the Corona crisis, the XXIV NFI Congress took place in virtual form on 28 November 2020. It set important steps to enable a powerful international Naturefriends network by adopting future thematic priorities, structures, and a new financial scheme for NFI and its youth organization.

The Congress looked back with pride on the achievements of our movement and approved **a catalogue of the following challenges and approaches** which will be in the focus of our activities in the coming years:

- Stopping human-made climate change
- Re-designing tourism
- Promoting sustainable outdoor activities
- Fostering global partnerships
- Boosting an economic and societal transformation
- Securing peace
- Being a driving force for global sustainable development



Re-elected NFI President Manfred Pils at our first online Congress.

NFI President Manfred Pils (NF Austria) and Vice-President Mamadou Mbodji (NF Senegal / ASAN) were re-elected, as well as our Vice-President and Treasurer Urs Wüthrich-Pelloli (NF Switzerland).

Following the retreat of Leonardo Baroncelli, Petra Müller, and Greet van Gool, three new Vice-Presidents were elected: Wilfried Meulenbergs (NF Belgium / ATB), Ursula Vetter (NF Italy / GIAN), and Clara Wengert (NF Germany).

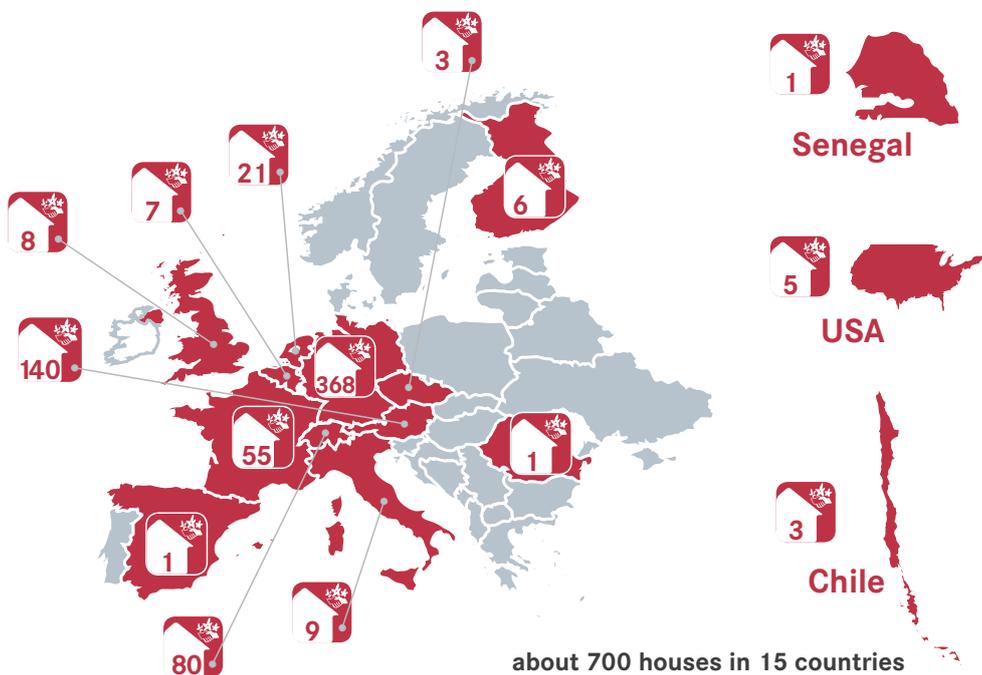
A highlight of the Congress was the presentation of the three best ranked projects of our Anniversary Award, in the framework of which we invited Naturefriends groups to organise activities in the field of sustainable development on the occasion of the first Global Naturefriends Day around the founding day of Naturefriends on 16th of September.



Services, Policy Work & Public Relations

Our various **services** focus on providing information about the international Naturefriends family and our core issues and aim to support networking and exchange of experiences among our members. We provide information on current activities and the developments within our network, send out information on topics relating to EU policies and provide various online tools and educational material.

Our **policy** work focuses on EU topics and is mainly done in the framework of our European networks, such as the Green 10 and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). In 2020, the most important topics were on mastering the Corona crisis in solidarity, a green recovery, enforcing human rights and holding EU business accountable, and on a better regulation regarding environmental and social standards.



Our **website** gives a good overview on current topics and activities of NFI, as well as on news from the Naturefriends network. It also hosts the international Naturefriends houses database presenting about 700 Naturefriends houses worldwide.

▷ www.friendsofnaturehouses.net | www.naturfreunde-haeuser.net | www.maisonsdesamisdelanature.net

Our **monthly newsletter** provides articles about Naturefriends activities as well as current political issues. News from the “Landscape of the Year” and from the Naturefriends network, and interviews with Naturefriends functionaries can be found in special sections.

In addition, we promote and present the topics of the Naturefriends movement and current activities in our networks and via **press releases**. Detailed information for our members is provided via the media-group mailing list.

In 2020 we significantly increased our activities on **social media** with a total of 637 postings on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The highlight was our Anniversary Campaign **#Naturefriends125activities** with 125 postings of Naturefriends activities, that have been contributing and still contribute to sustainable global development. The postings reached more than 160,000 persons via Facebook and Instagram, and many more via our website, where all activities are presented at: <https://www.nf-int.org/en/themen/125-activities>



At the end of the campaign, we produced a short video giving an overview on the variety of Naturefriends activities, which took place in the last 125 years. Shared by many of our members, this video has been reaching more than 49,000 persons via our Facebook account.



As every year, we had our social media advent calendar focusing this year on sustainable tourism. Under the motto **#FAIRtravelChristmasbakery** we invited people to follow our recipes for fair travelling, to comment and to answer questions. From the most active participants, three people were selected and got a voucher for an overnight stay in a beautiful Naturefriends House of their choice.

For all our social media channels, we managed to increase the reach and interactions significantly. Together with our new Facebook and Instagram channels dedicated to responsible tourism (see RESPONSIBLE TOURISM, page 12) we reached a total of about 310,000 persons, which is an increase of nearly 450 %.

NFI online-Media

- ▷ Website: www.nf-int.org
- ▷ Newsletter: www.nf-int.org/newsletter
- ▷ Infomail: nf-int.org/infomail
- ▷ tourism_Log: tourismlog.wordpress.com
- ▷ Facebook: facebook.com/nfint.org
facebook.com/respectNFI
- ▷ Instagram: instagram.com/naturefriends_international
instagram.com/respect_nfi
- ▷ Twitter: twitter.com/Naturfreundelnt
- ▷ Youtube: youtube.com/nfi1895



Projects and Campaigns

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & CLIMATE JUSTICE

Landscape of the Year Senegal/The Gambia 2018 – 2020

Strengthening encounters and exchanges between neighbouring countries, but also between Naturefriends from all over the world – that is one of the aims of the Landscape of the Year. This aim was successfully met by our international Naturefriends meeting in the Gambia at the beginning of 2020 – luckily just in time before the pandemic started to spread. More than 60 Naturefriends from the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland came together for a festive event celebrating two successful years of our first African Landscape of the Year as well as the kick-off for our activities in the framework of the 125th anniversary of the Naturefriends movement. The event was combined with the old, cultural Gambian tradition of the Kankurang Festival with lively African dances and music.



Following the festivities, a workshop for 20 local women on how to build energy-efficient cooking stoves took place. It was held by a trainer from Naturefriends Guinea, who already taught women in Guinean mountain villages in the framework of a Climate Fund project in 2019. Constructed with locally available material (clay), these improved stoves need much less wood and emit much less smoke than the traditional fireplaces and are a simple but very effective tool, that contributes to climate protection, to the protection of trees and woods, and to the health of the local population.



More than 60 Naturefriends from 8 countries came together to celebrate the Landscape of the Year and the 125th anniversary of Naturefriends.

Just a few weeks after the Naturefriends meeting, the pandemic hit the African continent. The people living in the Landscape of the Year, who have already been suffering from the consequences of climate change, had to face another severe challenge. Mobility restrictions led to the collapse of the economy, which was mainly based on the informal sector, i.e. on day-to-day business. Farmers' incomes dropped and grain stocks reduced dramatically. The lack of essential goods resulted in growing food insecurity, with the risk of acute child malnutrition. Tourism stopped from one day to the other.

In spring 2020, individual German Naturefriends from Offenbach am Main and Berlin started a spontaneous solidarity action collecting money for the people in the Landscape of the Year, which was handed over by NFI Vice-President and coordinator of the Landscape of the Year Mamadou Mbodji. More than hundred people, who were involved in the activities of the Landscape of the Year and now were severely hit by the pandemic, benefited from this aid.



Thanks to the donations of European Naturefriends, at least a little support could be provided to the people in the Landscape of the Year, who suffer severely from the Corona crisis.

As it is still unclear when hosting international travel groups in the region will be possible again, we started with organising a virtual trip to the Landscape of the Year. This trip took place on our social media channels in January 2021 and was linked to a fundraising campaign to collect money for a fruit-tree planting project in the region to provide at least a little bit of support and hope to local people.

Naturefriends Climate Fund

Climate change has a dramatic impact on ecosystems, biodiversity, and the lives of people in many parts of the world. It especially affects countries of the Global South, while the population there contributes very little to greenhouse gas emissions. The Naturefriends Climate Fund provides all Naturefriends with the opportunity to support climate protection projects, that are carried out by African Naturefriends – as a compensation for emissions due to trips by plane or car and/or as a personal contribution to more climate justice.

With travel severely restricted in 2020, the opportunity to donate for specific Climate Fund projects became much more important. “Donating climate justice” by paying for a symbolic tree was promoted in our newsletter, in social media and in diverse articles we wrote for our members’ magazines and turned out to be quite successful. However, due to the travel restrictions the total donations received in 2020 lay below the donations from the previous year.

Donations	
2017	€ 3 692
2018	€ 8 802
2019	€ 10 187
2020	€ 8 472,73

Expenditures for Climate Fund projects			
2017/2018	€ 6 680	Trees for Future	Senegal, The Gambia
2018/2019	€ 6 800	Improved Stoves	Guinea
2019/2020	€ 7 090	Food Security	Mali
2020	€ 4 805	Save Zio River	Togo
2020	€ 6 000	Fruit Trees for northern Senegal	Senegal

Overview on donations and expenditures starting with the launch of the Climate Fund in January 2017.

Thanks to the donations, our Climate Fund project, which started in autumn 2019 in Mali, could be finished in spring 2020. In the framework of the project, a storage building for agricultural goods has been constructed and now provides the local farmers with the possibility to store their products in a hygienic and climatically favourable way. As in consequence of climate change the rainy season is less and less regular and predictable and crop failures increase, this was urgently needed.



Official opening of the storage building in Mali. ©Naturefriends Mali



Hundreds of seedlings are grown and will be planted along the Zio river to stabilise its banks.
© Naturefriends Togo

In 2020, two new Climate Fund projects have been initiated in Togo and Northern Senegal, both focusing on tree-plantings.

Naturefriends Togo address the problem of erosion of riverbanks, which is a major issue in many Western African countries. The originally existing riverine forests have been destroyed by bush fires and clearings. In the absence of the trees, which fix the soil with their roots, the embankments are gradually washed away by the river. By planting trees, the banks of the rivers are stabilised, and the adjoining agricultural areas are secured. In addition, the newly planted trees contribute to climate protection and help to preserve biodiversity in the region.

In the framework of the Climate Fund protect an information campaign has been carried out informing the population about the importance of the riverside forests and motivating local people to participate in the project. Tree nurseries

have been established in three selected villages along the Zio river. There the young trees for the plantings are raised. The aim is to plant about 10,000 trees in the first year. The establishment of the tree nurseries shall ensure that the tree plantings will continue after the official end of the project.

Naturefriends Senegal started a Climate Fund project in four villages in the regions of Louga and Saint Louis in the north of the country. Like most villages in the Sahel countries, whose economy depends on natural resources and agriculture, they are strongly affected by the harmful effects of climate change, as rainfall, already scarce, decreases. In addition, forests and tree stands are being cleared for firewood or to gain agricultural land. Both phenomena lead to the destruction of population's livelihoods, resulting in poverty and emigration.

The project aims to establish orchards in each compound of the villages and hand them over to the care of families. At least 2,000 trees shall be planted in the four villages and will consolidate the soil, improve the climate, and provide the families with valuable fruit.

The tree plantations will be accompanied by educational activities to raise the local population's awareness for the sustainable management of natural resources. The project team will continue to visit the villages regularly after the plantations, look after the trees and support the villagers in taking care of them.



Explaining the importance of trees to local people and teaching them how to take care of the plants is a central task for the successful implementation of the project.
© Naturefriends Senegal

We provide detailed information about the projects on the Climate Fund website: www.climatefund.nf-int.org

Moreover, information about the ongoing projects and on the possibility to donate for the Climate Fund can be found in our newsletter on a regular basis. Additional material such as the Climate Fund flyers or graphic material can be obtained from our office.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Launch of respect_NFI Facebook and Instagram accounts

Following the recommendations of an evaluation of our activities in the field of sustainable tourism, that are funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), we launched the two new social media accounts [facebook.com/respectNFI](https://www.facebook.com/respectNFI) and [instagram.com/respect_nfi](https://www.instagram.com/respect_nfi). Both accounts are dedicated to the topic of travelling respectfully and focus on a German speaking target group (the target group of our programme funded by the ADA).



After tourism came to standstill due to the pandemic, we initiated the social media campaign **#tourismusneudenken (re-think tourism)**. The campaign involves quotations from experts as well as practical tips and information on the topic of ecologically sound and socially fair travelling, with selected postings also displayed in English on our NFI social media accounts.

With these two new accounts and some advertising budget we have managed to significantly increase the reach of our social media activities on sustainable tourism: In the course of 2020, 107,003 people were reached (86,378 more than in the 2019), and 7,314 interactions were recorded (4,505 more than in the previous year).

Afterwork Seminars in travel agencies

Employees in travel agencies are important communicators when it comes to convince consumers to choose a responsible travel option. To address this group, we started with our new seminar series “Afterwork in the travel agencies”, where we discuss current topics of sustainable tourism with diverse experts and provide a live broadcast. In autumn 2020, the first two events took place. Facing the positive response of the participants, more will follow 2021.

Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism

We are member of the “Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism”, an international multi-stakeholder initiative promoting human rights, and its contact point in Austria. In 2020, we were involved in various activities of the Roundtable and participated in three webinars focusing on the role of tour operators in assessing human rights impacts and the corporate responsibility of the travel business.



www.humanrights-in-tourism.net

European Tourism Convention

We were invited to present our expertise and visions for sustainable tourism development in the EU at the **European Tourism Convention** on 12. October 2020, which was the launch of a stakeholder dialogue on sustainable recovery and strategic orientation towards a sustainable, innovative, and resilient tourism development in Europe (“European Agenda for Tourism 2050”).

NATURE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

WohlfühlWege (Feel-good Trails) & development of Respect Nature Campaign

Inviting all people to spend meaningful time in the outdoors is a key concern of Naturefriends. This is also the aim of the initiative WohlfühlWege, which was initiated as pilot project together with Naturefriends Austria and Österreichische Bundesforste (Austrian Federal Forests Company) in 2016 and officially ended in December 2020.

The initiative has created a total of 18 hiking trails, many of which are also accessible to people with physical disabilities. The focus of the project was on motivating people to spend a relaxing time in the outdoors – beneficial to one’s health and well-being.

www.wohlfühlwege.at



Naturefriends and stakeholders at the opening ceremony of the Feel-good Trail “Stockerau” near Vienna.

As our sponsoring partner Österreichische Bundesforste agreed on supporting a common initiative in the field of sustainable outdoor activities, we started with the development of the new campaign **Respect Nature**, which is dedicated to respectful and environmentally sound behaviour in the outdoors and to minimise conflicts between outdoor recreation and nature conservation. It officially started as an Austrian pilot project in the beginning of 2021. In the coming years, we plan to internationalise the project and we will try to get some EU funding for joint activities with interested members from other European countries.



People

TEAM



Cornelia Kühhas – responsible for sustainable tourism, development cooperation and public relations.



Andrea Lichtenecker – executive director.



Lisa Schopper – responsible for members, bodies, sustainable tourism development and social media.



Christian Wagner – responsible for NFI's websites, technical support and project work.

BOARD



Manfred Pils - President



Mamadou Mbodji - Vice President



Wilfried Meulenbergs - Vice President



Ursula Vetter - Vice President



Clara Wengert - Vice President



Urs Wüthrich-Pelloli - Cashier and Vice President



Sina Franz - IYNF Representative

Leonardo Baroncelli - Vice President
until 28. November



Greet van Gool - Vice President
until 28. November



Petra Müller - Vice President
until 28. November

