Séamus Boland was re-elected President of the EESC’s Civil Society Organisations’ Group in April 2023. He has been an EESC Member since 2011. He has held different roles at the Committee, including the Vice-Presidency of the Civil Society Organisations' Group (2018-2020). His policy and political interests include the eradication of poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Mr Boland currently sits on the SOC, REX and ECO Sections of the Committee as well as on the CCMI. In addition to the Group presidency, he holds several other roles outside the EESC. He has been CEO of Irish Rural Link since 2001, a Board Member of Inland Fisheries Ireland since 2018 and Chair of Peatlands Council since 2012. Mr Boland is a farmer and has worked in civil society for over 40 years, including with young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people living in rural isolation. He is a trained Speech and Drama Educator.

Gabriella Civico is from the UK, but lived in Spain and Portugal for many years before moving to Belgium and becoming a Belgian citizen. She has a degree in Social Policy and Education from the University of Surrey (UK), and a Masters in Education in E-learning from the University of Hull (UK). She worked with CEV in her role as Project Manager for the EYV2011 Alliance from July 2010 until the project’s completion in March 2012, when she became CEV Director.

There, she takes a leading role in advocating for better volunteering policies, contributing her expertise at the European level in various European Union expert & advisory groups, such as EQF, Europass, Mobility of Young Volunteers, as well as in the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre Advisory Group. She also represents CEV in the EESC Liaison Group for European Civil Society Networks and has been further involved in establishing Civil Society Europe in 2014 where she is currently the President.
Pedro Silva Pereira was elected for the first time in 2014, and re-elected for a second term in May 2019. Pedro Silva Pereira is Vice-President of the European Parliament in charge of the “Participative democracy and citizens’ panels, including the European Citizens’ Initiative”, portfolio, among others. Pedro Silva Pereira is full member of the Constitutional Affairs Commission (AFCO), full member of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Commission (ECON) and a substitute member of the International Trade Commission (INTA). Mr. Silva Pereira was Member of the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, following the Working Group on Democracy. He is the S&D Representative in the UK Contact Group of the European Parliament having been the AFCO rapporteur for the Implementation of the UK’s Withdrawal Agreement from the EU. Mr. Silva Pereira was also co-rapporteur of the recently approved AFCO-AFET report on "Deepening the EU integration in view of future enlargement". Mr. Silva Pereira is the standing rapporteur for the Economic Partnership Agreement between the West Africa and the EU. He is a full member of the Delegation for Relations with Japan, having been the standing rapporteur of the European Parliament for the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.

In the Portuguese government, Pedro Silva Pereira was Minister of the Presidency (2005-2011) and Secretary of State for Territory and Nature Conservation (1999-2002). He was also a member of the Assembly of the Republic, elected on the lists of Socialist Party (2002-2014).

Born in 1962, PEDRO SILVA PEREIRA holds a Master's degree in Law from the University of Law of Lisbon (University of Lisbon), where he also holds a law degree (Legal and Political Sciences).

Ambassador Willem van der Voorde will chair Coreper II during the 2024 Belgian Presidency drawing on his experience during the two previous Belgian Presidencies since he started his diplomatic career at the Permanent Representation of Belgium during the 1993 Presidency and was Deputy-Director for European Affairs in 2010.

Ambassador van de Voorde has extensive diplomatic experience, having served in various positions in Brussels and in bilateral and multilateral postings abroad. In 1994, he joined the Royal Palace where he served as the
Secretary to Her Majesty Queen Paola of Belgium for six years. From 2000 to 2004, he was Deputy Head of Mission of the Belgian embassy in Berlin, and after that, he held the same position for four years in Tokyo. In 2008, he worked as the Deputy-Director for European Affairs, where he coordinated the 2010 Belgian Presidency. In 2011, he started as Deputy Chief of Cabinet for European Affairs for the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Subsequently, from 2014 to 2018, Ambassador van de Voorde served as Belgian Ambassador to Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Slovenia, and to the UN institutions in Vienna. Prior to assuming his current role as Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU in 2020, he held the position of Belgian Ambassador to Germany for two years.

The Ambassador holds a Master’s degree in Law from the University of Leuven (KUL) and London School of Economics (LSE), a Master’s degree in Political Science from the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy from the University Faculties St Aloysius (UFSAL) in Brussels. He is married and has four children.

Ambassador Van de Voorde speaks fluently Dutch, French, English and German, and has acquired a basic knowledge of Japanese.

**Pietro V. Barbieri** has held many positions in Italian and European movements of persons with disabilities. He has been president of the umbrella organization representing people with disabilities and their families for 18 years. After that he was president of the Third Sector Forum, the platform that represents more than 90% of Italian non-profit organizations. He represents the latter organization at the EESC. One of his most important experiences was being part of the Italian government delegation to the Ad Hoc Committee of the United Nations to build what will later be called the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the same time, he actively tried to promote adequate services for people with disabilities, including the Center for independent living in Rome, of which he is still president. At the EESC he is Vice-President of Group III and a member of the SOC Section bureau.
**Angela Guimarães Pereira, MSc, PhD**, works at the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre. She leads the Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy and is co-manager of the JRC Makerspace. Her research and interests focus on different ways of knowing about environment and society, speculative “futuring” and citizen engagement institutionalisation(s). Post-normal science inspires her work on governance of and dialogues about policy, science and technology. She advises on, designs and carries out citizen participation activities in science and policymaking.

**Ingeborg Niestroy** is Project Coordinator and Scientific Project Lead of the EU Horizon 2020 project REAL-DEAL “Reshaping citizen deliberations for the European Green Deal”. It is a transdisciplinary research project composed of researchers and CSOs, who together organise deliberative formats in various combinations with citizens, experts and CSOs/stakeholders. Ingeborg is (physical) geographer with a Ph.D. in planning, political science and law. She has worked for more than 20 years on governance for environment policy and sustainable development, at the interface of science, policy and society – in Europe and internationally, mostly based in Brussels. 1999-2012 she was executive director of EEAC, the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils and has collaborated with the EESC ever since in various ways. She has worked in different projects, countries and levels on governance and policies for SDG implementation, and in 2019 joined the RIFS (Research Institute for Sustainability).
Patrizia Heidegger is the European Environmental Bureau’s Deputy Secretary General and Director for European Governance, Sustainability and Global Policies. Patrizia represents the EEB on the board of European Movement International and is Vice-President of Civil Society Europe. She has been working as an advocate for environmental justice, human rights and sustainable development for more than 20 years, mainly with civil society in Europe and Asia. She was previously Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, served as a parliamentary advisor to the Greens in Germany and worked in development cooperation and women’s rights in South Asia.

Marta Arpio Santacruz has worked as a civil servant in the General Secretariat of the Council since December 1987, where she has held various positions of responsibility. Currently Marta is the Director responsible for the follow up of the Conference on the Future of Europe as well as for the internal preparation of the EU in view of a future enlargement (Directorate General for Political and Institutional Affairs). For the duration of the Conference (March 2021-June 2022) she was Co-head of the Conference Joint Secretariat.

Between 2007 and 2014 Marta was Director for relations with the European Parliament and the other Institutions and bodies of the European Union. Between 2014 and 2021 she was Director for agriculture, health and fisheries.

From 1987 until 2007 she was a member of the Council's Legal Service, where she worked for the most part on institutional issues. Marta was a member of the task force which prepared the Treaty of Nice back in 2000. She was also a member of the Secretariat of the Convention on the future of Europe, under the chairmanship of President Giscard d'Estaing, and then member of the taskforce which prepared the Treaty of Lisbon and ensured its implementation.

Marta studied Law at the University of Zaragoza in Spain and she holds a Master of Advanced European Studies from the College of Europe (Bruges).
Dorthe Christensen, who is of Danish nationality, has since 1.7.2018 been Head of Unit in the European Commission’s Secretariat-General, first of the Brexit Preparedness Group and, since 1.12.2019, of the Institutional Affairs Unit. Since 1.11.2020, she is also Deputy to Director Enrico Forti in the Directorate for relations with other institutions. The Institutional Affairs Unit deals with general Treaty issues, is in charge of Commission coordination in relation to the AFCO Committee in the European Parliament and the General Affairs Group in the Council, and coordinates the Commission's policies on delegated and implementing acts, Commission expert groups, and decentralised agencies, including relations with the EU Agencies' Network. Ms Christensen has held several other positions in the Secretariat-General of the European Commission and in the European Court of Justice. She holds a Master of Laws degree from the University of Copenhagen and previously worked as lawyer in private practice in Copenhagen.