



# Conference

# Building Together the EU We Want

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**16/04/2024** | 9.30-13.00 CEST | EESC, 2 Van Maerlant Street, 1040 Brussels,  
room VMA 23 & online



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## **Biographies of the speakers:**



**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.



**Philipp Schulmeister** is Director for Campaigns in the European Parliament's Directorate General for Communication. Austrian by nationality (born 1969), lawyer by education and communicator by passion, he has been working in different roles in the European Parliament for over twenty years. After over a decade as press officer, campaign strategist and committee advisor in one of Parliament's political groups, he served in the Cabinet of the EP Secretary General (2011-2017) and recently as Head of the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (DG COMM, 2017-2022).



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Leading a team of six units, he today is responsible for Parliament's institutional communication activities directed at citizens. He is developing, coordinating and implementing communication strategies and campaigns with the objective of informing citizens, creating a positive attitude and trust vis-a-vis the European Parliament – and inviting them to actively engage with Parliament in a multitude of ways, the most important being voting in the European elections



**Ioannis Vardakastanis** was born on the Greek island of Zakynthos in 1957. Throughout his life he has been a human rights campaigner, active at national, European and international level. He has been a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) representing the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (N.C.D.P.) in the Civil Society Organisations' Group (since 2010). Currently he is the President of the Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO), which is one of the six specialized sections of the EESC. Also, he is the President of the N.C.D.P., which is the umbrella organization of the Greek disability movement, and the President of the European Disability Forum (EDF), which is the umbrella organization of the European disability movement.



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**Janis A. Emmanouilidis** is Director of Studies and Deputy Chief Executive at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels. He has published widely on the EU's overall political and institutional development, citizens' participation, the EU's 'poly-crisis' and 'permacrisis', the perspectives of differentiated integration, the Union's foreign, security and defence policy, and on EU enlargement. He has been an advisor of various governments, EU institutions, European and national parties, as well as NGOs and foundations on a broad range of issues related to European integration and has commented widely on EU affairs in the media. Between 2007-2009 he was Stavros Costopoulos Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in Athens, Greece. Between 1999-2007 he was a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Applied Policy Research (C·A·P) in Munich, Germany. Before that he worked at the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) responsible for the research area on the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Janis has studied international relations and strategic studies in the UK and economics in Germany.



**Anne van Lancker** is president of the board of SOLIDAR. She holds a master degree in sociology from the Catholic University of Leuven and a master degree in social law from the Free University of Brussels. She works as coordinator of the Belgian team of the European Social Policy Analysis Network, an independent think-tank that advises the European Commission on social policy in Europe through research. As member of the European Parliament, she was engaged in European social and employment policy, gender equality, migration and asylum. She is also president of



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Refugee Work, an NGO that advocates for the rights of refugees in Belgium.



**Kahina Rabahi** is the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at EAPN Europe. She has previously worked as Director for the European Network on Religion and Belief and as an Advocacy Officer at the European Network Against Racism and the Collective Against Islamophobia in France. Kahina has a strong background in Economics, Public Policy, and International Security. She is interested in human rights and advocacy for equality and justice, using a radical intersectional compass.



With a people-centred, science-driven, and optimistic approach, **Raymond Gemen** seeks to make the world a bit healthier, greener, and just. At EPHA, he oversees the organisation's policy work across the seven public health Policy Clusters, to strengthen cross-cluster collaborations, knowledge sharing, and overall efficiency. Raymond holds a BSc degree in Biology and an MSc degree in Nutrition and Health, and has previous experience in science communication at EUFIC and science-based policy support at the EC Joint Research Centre. He enjoys spending his free time outside, preferably active and with the family; running, cycling, walking (listening to podcasts or thinking how to tackle inequities and climate change), and gardening.



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**Alejandro Moledo** leads and coordinates EDF's advocacy and policy work at EU level and supports the work of the European Parliament Disability Intergroup.

Among other areas, Mr. Moledo has developed policy positions and recommendations regarding political participation of persons with disabilities, accessible Information and Communication Technologies, Assistive Technologies and different standardisation activities.

Mr. Moledo holds a Bachelor's degree with honours in Journalism from University of Valencia (Spain, 2005-2010), including one year at York University (Canada), as well as a Master's degree in political and corporate communication from University of Navarra and George Washington University (Spain and US, 2011-2012). During his bachelor's studies he worked as communication officer for a political group within the parliament of the Valencia Region (2009 and 2010). After working as a journalist in digital media and a communication agency in Andorra, he started working in a European public affairs company (Madrid) in 2012, before joining the European Disability Forum in 2013.

Mr Moledo is also member of the Spanish Blind Organisation (ONCE), for which he worked as a journalist and regional representative of young visually impaired people inside the organisation (2008-2011).



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**Maciej Kucharczyk**, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe. Responsible for the implementation of AGE strategic objectives and the development of the network, **Maciej's** work aims to ensure an ever-stronger voice for older people to influence policies on ageing in EU and globally. AGE seeks to combat ageism, promote human rights throughout the life course, reduce inequalities and enable everyone to live a full and dignified life.

From 2014 to 2020, Maciej was Vice-President of Social Platform, the largest European network of rights-based NGOs active in the social sector. Between 2006 and 2016, he was also a member of the Executive Committee of EAPN - European Anti-Poverty Network. Maciej holds a master's degree in international economic relations and postgraduate degrees in European affairs and public administration.



**Piotr Sadowski**, who considers himself to be first and foremost a European, is Secretary General of Volonteuropé. He has over 15 years of experience in developing and implementing strategies and policies for active citizenship, participatory democracy, human rights, and social justice across Europe. He advocates for European values on behalf of organised civil society vis-à-vis political institutions, social partners, and business interest groups, in the EU and the Council of Europe. Former President of Social Platform, he is currently Vice President of Lifelong Learning Platform, Board Member of Civil Society Europe. He is also active in the Council of Europe INGO Conference, with a particular remit on safeguarding social rights throughout Europe. He is a member of the European socialist and democratic family, and partners with other progressive European political movements. He identifies



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himself as a gay man and is an activist with the LGBTQIA+ community across Europe.



As Director General of BEUC, **Monique Goyens** represents 45 national consumer associations in 31 European countries, acting as a strong consumer voice in Brussels, ensuring that consumer interests are given weight in the development of policies. Monique is a member of the Euro Retail Payments Board, as well as of the European Commission's Consumer Policy Advisory Group, Monique is Co-Chair of the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) a network of EU and US consumer organisations.



**Petri Salminen** is President of SMEUnited and Chairman of the Federation of Finnish Enterprises (FFE). He has over 15 years of experience within FFE in several different leading roles locally, regionally and nationally. Prior to becoming Chairman, Petri Salminen has specialized in internationalization, growth entrepreneurship and migrant entrepreneurship issues.

Petri Salminen is entrepreneur in Salminen & Tikka Ltd providing business and sales development services. He is also partner in family-owned enterprise AJ-Tools Oy Ltd operating in metal industry.

He studied marketing, leadership and commercial law in Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics.





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**Sibylle Reichert** became Executive Director of AIM, the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies, in June 2019. AIM has 50 members in 27 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. AIM promotes and defends its members' interests in European and international institutions. Based on its values, such as solidarity, not for profit and democracy, AIM strives for cost-efficient and high-quality health systems, strengthened health mutual and social benefit societies, recognised as such for their value in social economy as well as health and social protection for all without inequalities. Before joining AIM, Sibylle worked as Head of the Brussels Office for the Federation of Dutch Pension Funds from 2009 to 2019. From 2003 to 2009, she was Director for the Relations with the European Institutions of the European Association of Paritarian Institutions (AEIP). She started her career in international companies as a Marketing and Project Manager. Sibylle holds a master's degree in French and Spanish Philology and in Business Administration



**Katharina Schobersberger** is 25 years old and works at a rural education institute in Vienna, while residing on a farm in Upper Austria. The farm specializes in breeding sows that are fed with cereals from their own production, which is characteristic of Austrian agriculture.

Additionally, she has pursued studies in organic agriculture systems and is currently completing her Master's thesis on the potential effects of probiotics on the behaviour, health, and productivity of piglets. She also gains valuable knowledge through hands-on work on her family farm. In her local area, Katharina observes that rural youth uphold and innovate traditions, foster connections among individuals from diverse backgrounds, and



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bring added value to the countryside. Following her involvement with Landjugend Österreich, Katharina was elected Vice-President of CEJA in June 2023.



**Emilie Tricarico** is policy officer for system change in the Economic Transition team at EEB. She is an ecological and heterodox economist with a background in climate and economic transition campaigning, having worked with different initiatives across the UK and Europe. Her expertise is in advocating for progressive and just transition economic policies. She has a particular focus on bridging labour and environmental concerns.



**María Rodríguez Alcázar** is the President of the European Youth Forum, where earlier she was responsible for the Social and Economic Inclusion of young people. María became an activist and advocate for human rights at 14, when participating in student organisations from the local to the European level. Since then, she has been representing young people in various capacities, including being Vice President of the Spanish Youth Council (CJE). Currently, she is also a PhD student at Ghent University and the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies.



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## Biography of the moderator:



**Jacki Davis** is an experienced journalist and moderator of high-level events; a regular broadcaster on television and radio news; and a Senior Adviser to the European Policy Centre think tank. She has been based in Brussels for more than 30 years, and was previously the EPC's Communications Director; editor-in-chief of the EU magazine E!Sharp; launch editor of European Voice, a Brussels-based newspaper on EU affairs owned by The Economist Group (now Politico); and Brussels correspondent of a British national newspaper.