



European Economic
and Social Committee
Civil Society Organisations' Group



LIVE
STREAM

Conference

Protecting Europe's most vulnerable through sustainable and affordable housing

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21/11/2024 | 9.30-13.00 | EESC, Rue Belliard 99, 1040 Brussels | room JDE 62

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.



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Marcos Ros Sempere is a Member of the European Parliament for the Group of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) since February 2020. He has also been a member of the committees on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), Culture and Education (CULT) and Regional Development (REGI). He has been co-rapporteur of the initiative report on the new European Bauhaus, an initiative that brings together interdisciplinary solutions in urban planning with measures such as the decarbonization of buildings to integrate the ecological transition into the life of EU citizens. Before his responsibility as a Member of the European Parliament, Ros Sempere worked eleven years as a professor of Urban Planning at the School of Architecture of Cartagena. He holds a doctorate in architecture, specializing in urban planning and has extensive experience in the rehabilitation of architectural heritage.



Thomas Kattning started his career working in the energy sector. He has been Vice-President of the Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society (TEN) Section of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) since 2020. He is also Vice-President of the EESC Workers' Group. In this role, he recently played a leading role in the preparation of EESC opinions on various energy issues, including the hydrogen bank. Mr Kattning is a member of *Die Daseinsgewerkschaft*, an Austrian trade union representing more than 145.000 members mainly working in local and regional government, including the energy sector. Moreover, he is a Member of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). As Vice-President of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and Vice-President of Public Services International (PSI), he represents the interests of public sector employees not only at national, but also at European and global level.



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Agnieszka Maj is an economist at CASE, with expertise in analysing social and climate policies as well as sustainable urban development strategies. She holds a Master's degree in International Economic Relations from the University of Economics in Kraków and has previously worked as an International Cooperation Specialist at Riga Technical University. Her research focuses on projects at the intersection of social policy and sustainable development, with an emphasis on climate resilience, the green and blue economy, and supporting vulnerable communities to promote inclusive and sustainable growth across Europe. Selected research projects include: E.ON Foundation, Climate-Resilient Warsaw: The Sponge City Concept (2024-2025) and European Committee of the Regions, Disaster Management: Anticipatory Governance and Disaster Risk Management from a Local and Regional Perspective (2024).



Sorcha Edwards is General Secretary of Housing of Europe, the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing since 2014. Housing Europe brings together public, cooperative and social housing providers from across Europe. They share a vision of a Europe which provides access to decent and affordable housing for all in communities which are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and where everyone is enabled to reach their full potential. The sector manages 25 million homes and delivers over 200,000 new homes and renovations annually. Sorcha leads the team and coordinates the network for maximum impact aiming at better regulation, better knowledge and better finance for housing in EU and International policy-making. Under her leadership Housing Europe has become a point of reference for sustainable housing systems in Europe and beyond.



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Michele Calandrino leads the homelessness team in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission. He holds degrees in economics from the Universities of Bologna and Oxford. After working as a research assistant at the Institute of Development Studies (Sussex University) and as an economist at the Department for Work and Pensions (UK Government), he joined the European Commission in 2003. His past work experience in DG EMPL, the Secretariat-General and DG GROW has focused on social and employment analysis and policies and the economies of EU Member States.



Dr Bernd Rießland is a lecturer for universities in Vienna and Linz as well as a city-development adviser to the city of Vienna. Previous to this role, he studied civil engineering, developed and headed a private bank for affordable housing financing and managed at once a mixed real estate public stock company. Later on, he started and headed the implementation of a mixed urban development of 2,6 mio. square meters in Vienna. He has also been CEO and CFO of 2 LPHAs with 65.000 housing units in Austria for 12 years.



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Haydn Hammersley is Social Policy Coordinator at the European Disability Forum (EDF). He leads EDF's work on employment, inclusive education, de-institutionalisation, EU funds, the European Semester and the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Before joining EDF, Haydn worked for three years at Autism-Europe. He also worked for several years as a care worker and assistant to adults on the autism spectrum and with



Nóra Teller works at the Metropolitan Research Institute. She has 24 years of research and consultancy experience in social inclusion and housing inclusion measures, homelessness research, and housing desegregation of Roma in the urban and rural context. She has contributed to the impact assessment of various EU-co-funded social inclusion measures for the last 14 years, and worked for a number of international organisations like the World Bank, Council of Europe Development Bank, European Commission and the Open Society Foundations. She is member of FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness and has co-edited the European Journal of Homelessness for 16 years.



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Elizabeth Gosme is mother of two girls and Director of COFACE Families Europe, a network of 50+ family organisations across 23 countries advocating for the rights of all families without discrimination through various tools: advocacy and campaigning at European Union level for strong social rights and gender-responsive family policies, building European research projects, developing practical tools to support education and training to support parents, families, children. She has been working in European civil society for 20+ years, contributing to shaping EU policies, legislation, funding programmes and statistics tools in the fields of social policy, employment, education and housing. Based on its [2030 Child Compass](#), COFACE brings the families and child perspective to different policy areas such as education, digitalization, housing, economics and more through a multi-generation and intersectional lens based on values of human rights.