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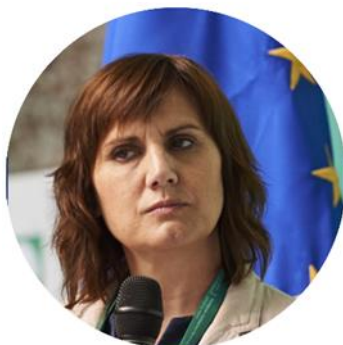
Civil society organisations defending and strengthening European democracy

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Biographies of the speakers



Séamus Boland was elected President of the EESC's Civil Society Organisations' Group in October 2020. 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 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 has 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). Her professional background mainly lies in business and the Youth NGO Sector, where she has worked as an administrator, a trainer, and an expert. Gabriella has volunteered since childhood in a variety of fields, including youth advocacy, international development, disability, environment, migration, human rights and sports. Through her work in the youth field, she was involved in the campaign to establish 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering. 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. Her current role as CEV Director involves managing the network of over 60 member organisations, facilitating their sharing and learning together on volunteering and solidarity issues. She takes a leading role in advocating for better volunteering policies, contributing her expertise on the topic 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 extends her expertise to numerous civil dialogue campaigns and 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 currently serves as Treasurer as a member of the Steering Committee. She has co-chaired the 'Our European Life' thematic cluster of the Civil Society Convention for the CoFoEU since March 2021 and actively contributed to the CoFo EU plenary sessions and the working group on Migration.



Colin Scicluna joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta in 1994 and has been posted to Brussels, Dublin, Helsinki and the United Nations in New York. He has also served in the EU Negotiations Secretariat in the Office of the Prime Minister (2000-03), the Policy Unit of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana (2006-10) and the European External Action Service (2011-12). He was appointed Ambassador of Malta to Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Kosovo, as well as Permanent Representative to the OSCE and the multilateral bodies in Vienna, from February 2012. In 2013, he was appointed Middle East and North Africa Adviser in the Cabinet of the EU High Representative for CFSP and Vice President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton. From November 2014 until December 2016, he served as Adviser on the Southern Neighbourhood of the EU in the Cabinet of the Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn. In January 2017, High Representative Federica Mogherini appointed him Director and Deputy Managing Director for the Middle East, North Africa and Gulf region in the European External Action Service. In December 2019, he was appointed Head of Cabinet to the Vice President of the European Commission responsible for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica. Mr Scicluna is a graduate in Law (University of Malta)

and International Politics (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and speaks Maltese, English, Italian, French and Dutch.



Marie-Hélène Boulanger joined the European Commission, after working at the Belgian Data Protection Authority, where she was secretary. Between 2009 and 2014, she headed the unit in charge of the reform of the European data protection rules. Since 2014, she has headed the unit responsible for European citizenship and free movement of persons. She is responsible i.a. for the implementation of the COVID certificate and the negotiation of legislative proposals to strengthen our democracies, such as proposing greater transparency in political advertising. She is also in charge of the implementation of the Recommendation to limit SLAPPs. Currently she is also Acting Director of the Directorate for rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy.



Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, born in Britain, grew up in Ivry-sur-Seine before moving to Grenoble for her studies, where she was elected as a municipal councillor and then a regional councillor. Member of the leadership of the European Green Party from 2012 to 2019, she has always linked local political commitment and European commitment. In the European Parliament, she is involved in constitutional issues, civil liberties, digital rights and women's rights. Vice-president of the Greens/EFA group, she defends a Europe of values, feminist and inclusive, and strives to ensure that the action of ecologists is useful to all, especially in countries where ecology is fragile or absent.





Waltraud Heller leads the work on civic space and rule of law at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). She joined the Agency's precursor organisation, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), in 2005 as a communications officer, and later became the Agency's spokesperson. From 2014-2022, she led FRA's cooperation with civil society and coordinated the Fundamental Rights Platform. Prior to joining the Agency, she worked as a communicator, among others for the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and for a development cooperation NGO. She was also a speechwriter for a European Commissioner and assistant to the editor in chief at the Wall Street Journal Europe. She holds a masters degree in social and economic sciences and a postgraduate degree in European studies from the College of Europe, Bruges.



Dovilė Juodkaitė is an experienced lawyer, specialised in human rights of people with mental disabilities. After graduating from the Law Faculty of Vilnius University in 1998, she continued her specialisation and received the International Diploma in Mental health Law and Human Rights, by the Indian Law Society in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO). With over 20 years of experience, Ms Juodkaitė is actively working in Lithuania and on international scale, focusing on human rights and disability. Ms Juodkaitė was also involved in promoting the UNCRPD and other international documents enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2017 she was selected as an Expert on the National WHO Quality Rights Assessment Team for human rights monitoring in social and medical closed type institutions in Lithuania. She has provided trainings for mental health specialists on WHO Quality Rights monitoring instrument in Ukraine, Georgia and Kenya. She has received various nominations and awards, including an award from the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas medal for merits in defending the rights of people with disabilities. Lastly, since 2022 Ms Juodkaitė was certified as an expert within the Expert Roster of UN Justice Rapid Response programme, alongside being a member of the EESC.



Jana Miléřová is Deputy Director at Glopolis, a Czech think-and-do tank and networking centre that connects people and organisations from the non-profit (public and private) sectors to better collaborate for sustainable democracy and to co-create an enabling environment for such collaboration. For the last 4 years, Jana has been providing the backbone coordination for NeoN network, consisting of 15 sector-based networks and CSOs representing more than 540 organisations in the Czech Republic, working towards democracy, the rule of law, accountable public governance, resilient civil society and sustainable development based on human rights. Jana is a member of the Czech Government Council for NGOs, and its Expert group on systemic change of financing of publicly benefit services from the state budget. Jana also worked on network strengthening for Eurodad - the European Network on Debt and Development. Since 2016, Jana has been a member of Board of Directors at CARE Czech Republic, a part of the world's leading humanitarian aid network, and acts as its Vice-Chair. For over 13 years, Jana served as Director at FoRS - Czech Forum for Development Cooperation, an umbrella CSOs organization for international cooperation, relief and global education. Jana completed two Master's degrees at Charles University in Prague - Faculty of Social Sciences (Western European Studies), and at the University of Economics in Prague - Faculty of International Relations.



Anne Esser is Research Project Officer at Civil Society Europe (CSE), the European coordination for CSOs. She is responsible for CSE's research activities within the Horizon 2020 EnTrust project, which examines trust and distrust in different governance levels. CSE contributes the perspective of CSOs at EU level. Prior to joining CSE, Anne has worked in international social research in and for the private, public and academic sector, mostly related to social protection, gender issues and marginalised groups. She holds an advanced master's degree in cultural anthropology and development studies and a master's degree in migration studies. Anne is based in Brussels.





Anna Herweg is a political scientist and started her lobbying career at consultancy firm. There she advised various organizations before her switch to green NGO's. She has now been working for the Groene11 for five years, where she advises green NGOs on lobbying strategy and green cooperation.



David Samuelsson is chair of NOD – the National Office for Dialogue and Consultation Between the Government and the Civil Society in Sweden. David plays a key role in several civil society organizations in Sweden. He holds the position of Secretary General of Studieförbunden – The Swedish Adult Education Association since 2015. David Samuelsson has a Master of Public Administration from Harvard university and a Master of Science in Computer Science from Uppsala university. He has served as Director of Planning in the Ministry of Education, Research, Media and Culture.

