



# CALL FOR AN **EU Blue Deal**

CONFERENCE  
**26 OCTOBER 2023**  
Charlemagne Building | Room GASP

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## Speaker Bios

### Chris Burns, Moderator



Chris Burns is a Franco-American journalist, moderator and media expert with decades of reporting experience in Europe, the U.S., Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. He has covered wars, terror attacks, election battles, financial crises, disasters and film festivals. For Euronews he did magazine shows around the world and hosted the hard talk show “The Network”. He was a Bloomberg TV financial reporter based in Brussels and Berlin, and a CNN correspondent based in Germany and the White House. He reported for the Associated Press based in Paris, New York and Nashville. He’s also a media consultant, media trainer and video producer, and has moderated panels for the World Economic Forum, OECD, OSCE, United Nations, World Bank, EU institutions, NGOs and the private sector. He graduated in Political Economy at the University of California, Berkeley, and did post-grad studies in Europe.

### Kristof Braekeleire, Visual Facilitator



Kristof Braekeleire is a visual facilitator and strategist, with 20 years of experience in business transformation and technology.

He has facilitated change programmes in numerous countries, including in Silicon Valley and innovation centres in New York, Plano and London, with CEOs and senior leaders teams of organisations, countries and large enterprises across all industries.

Since 2017 he runs JIXSO, a visual strategy firm based out of Brussels. He is also co-founder of the Visual Senseformers and partner with Visual

Harvesting.

**Oliver Röpke, EESC President**



Oliver Röpke was elected as the president of the EESC in April 2023. Member of EESC since 2009, Mr Röpke was the president of the EESC Workers' Group, a member of the EESC Bureau and rapporteur of many EESC resolutions and opinions on employment and social policy, single market and innovation.

Mr Röpke headed the Brussels office of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and took on several senior positions including as ÖGB representative to the EU institutions, the Executive Committee of the ETUC, and an advisory member of the ÖGB federal executive board. Mr Röpke has a legal background and holds a law degree from the University of Vienna.

**Pietro Francesco De Lotto, President of Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)**



Pietro Francesco De Lotto is the President of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI). The CCMI is coordinating the EESC flagship initiative Call for an EU Blue Deal. As the EESC Blue Deal coordinator, he recently signed the EESC-EP joint letter to the EU Heads of State and Government calling for an EU Blue Deal.

He was a Senior Researcher and Aggregate Professor in International Economics at the University of Trieste until 2009, when he moved to the private sector. In 2010, he was appointed to the EESC Employers' Group. Mr De Lotto was also President of the Eastern Neighbourhood Follow-up Committee and spokesperson for the SME category.

Mr De Lotto is the Founder and Director of Digital Innovation Hub. He was appointed Director General of Confartigianato, Italy's main SME association, and headed several leading companies as CEO/DG. He currently represents Confartigianato Imprese, the largest and leading national SME association.



**Kinga Joó, Member of the EESC and rapporteur on the Blue Deal**

Kinga Joó is a member of the European Economic and Social Committee since 2010. She is active in the work of the EESC's sections on Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) and Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society (TEN). Her background is in social and civil society organisations in Hungary. She is chairing the Social Responsibility board of the National Civil Cooperation Fund since 2020, where she has been a board member during the last three terms. She is also the international coordinator of the largest family organisation in Hungary, the National Association of Large Families (NOE).

As an EESC member working on the EU Blue Deal, she was a co-rapporteur of the opinions A Call for an EU Blue Deal (umbrella opinion [CCMI/209](#)) as well as a rapporteur on the opinion on Access to water: tackling water poverty and its implications for social policy ([SOC/763](#)).

### **Pedro Arrojo Agudo, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to water and sanitation**



Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo is the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. He was appointed by the Human Rights Council in September 2020 and started his mandate on 1 November 2020. Previously, from 2016 to 2019, Arrojo-Agudo served as an elected member (MP) of the Spanish Parliament during its eleventh and twelfth legislature, during which he was part of the International Cooperation Committee working on human rights. Arrojo-Agudo was Professor in the Area of Fundamentals of Economic Analysis at the University of Zaragoza (1989-2011). He is the co-founder of New Water Culture Foundation and the Public Water Network (as part of Aqua Publica Europea).

### **Hasmik Barseghyan, President of European Youth Parliament for Water**



Mrs. Hasmik Barseghyan is the President of the European Youth Parliament for Water (EYPW), with eight years' experience in project management and advocacy in the water, energy and environmental management sectors. Founded by the International Secretariat for Water, the EYPW has empowered thousands of young people to take action to protect our future and continues to drive ambition for greater inclusion of youth in decision-making processes.

As a water and climate action advocate, Hasmik brings the voice of youth to high-level European and international platforms. She was an official delegate to the COP26 in Glasgow, UK, as well as at the COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt. She carried the voice of the Global Youth Movement for Water to the UN2023 Water Conference in New York. Hasmik serves on the Advisory Committee of the United Nations University FLORES, the boards of Green Cross France et Territoires and the International Secretariat for Water, as an Ambassador of the Universal Declaration of Humankind Rights (DDHU), member of the EU Water Alliance.

Hasmik holds a Master's in Business Administration from the Université de Nantes, France. She was a U.S. State Department exchange program fellow at the Oregon State Capitol. She was a post-graduate fellow in Environmental management at TU-Dresden, Germany.

**Bernard Van Nuffel**, President of Aqua Publica Europea



Bernard Van Nuffel has been President of VIVAQUA, Brussels' drinking water operator, since February 2019 and of Aqua Publica Europea, the European association of public water operators, since November 2020. Currently Deputy Mayor of Jette, one of Brussels' municipalities, he has been involved in the implementation of local urban and environmental policies since 1997, when he joined the administration of the Belgian capital first with responsibilities for urban planning, then as advisor and chief of cabinet to the Deputy Mayor for Public Spaces. Bernard Van Nuffel is an architect by training.

**Ewa Ewart**, Documentary filmmaker



Ewa Ewart is a journalist and an award-winning filmmaker who specialises in ground-breaking and influential documentaries. Her films have revealed new information about issues such as corruption in Boris Yeltsin's Russia, secret prison camps in North Korea, or the civil war in Colombia. For the last few years, she has been the presenter of an international documentary strand on channels TVN24 and TVN24Bis in Poland. She has also worked for the BBC in London. Her latest documentary work, *Until the Last Drop*, filmed in several locations around the world, explores the global cost and consequences of the destruction of nature and the emerging freshwater crisis. The film has won several awards, including the special prize of the Prince Rainier III Special Award at the Monte-Carlo Television Festival in June 2023.

**Monika Sitárová**, Co-President of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI)



Monika Sitárová is the International Secretary of Metalworkers' Trade Union KOVO in Slovakia, European Work Council Coordinator and member of the Industrial Policy Committee and Company Policy Committee in IndustriAll European Trade Union.

Since 2008, she has been a Delegate in the Consultative Commission for Industrial Change – CCMI, which is a part of EESC. From 2021, she holds the position of Coordinator of the Workers' Delegates in CCMI and the Co-President of CCMI.



**Lifeng Li**, Director, Land and Water Division (NSL), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



Lifeng Li is the Director of [Land and Water Division](#), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), leading FAO's work on soils, land, water, geospatial and climate financing through partnership with the Adaptation Fund and acting as the FAO Focal Point to UNCCD Convention and Ramsar Convention. He has over 15 years of experience on water policy, river basin, and freshwater ecosystems management through his works in World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Wetlands International, as well expertise of climate financing, national climate planning & programming and country readiness to access climate financing through his works in the Green Climate

Fund (GCF). He holds a PhD in physical geography from Chinese Academy of Sciences in China.

**Geoff Townsend**, Water Vision Leadership Team Leader, Water Smart Industries, Water Europe



Dr. Geoff Townsend is an industry fellow for Ecolab. He engages in the strategic direction of Ecolab's water and energy-related innovation with a particular emphasis on enabling customers to meet the challenges associated with water scarcity and water quality constraints. Since 2017, Geoff has led Water Europe's Cluster Theme 'Water Smart Industry'. He has 32 years of direct experience in industrial water management including sales, project management, auditing, research & development and technical training. He has been involved in the design, optimisation and troubleshooting of many key utility processes across a variety of industries including power and the petrochemical sector. Dr. Townsend holds a Bachelor's degree in ecology (UEA) and a Ph.D. in environmental chemistry

from the University of Cambridge.

**Michele Falcone**, Chair of SGI Europe Water Task Force



Michele Falcone is Counseling and Procurement Director of CAP Group and President of Neutalia S.r.l. He holds a Law degree from Sapienza University of Rome, a Master's degree in Administrative Management and an MBA. He has worked as municipal secretary and in corporate administration, dealing with public works and asset and property management. In 2008 he was appointed general manager of Brianzacque. In 2010 he joined the CAP Group, the public company which manages the integrated water service of the metropolitan city of Milan, one of the biggest single utilities in Italy. He was first General

Manager, then Strategic Development Director; today he holds the position of General Manager of Amiacque, developing new strategies for the company in the areas of waste management and circular economy. He is also General Manager of Alfa, the water company of Varese in Italy.

**Milena Angelova, Member of the EESC and rapporteur on the Blue Deal**



Dr Milena Angelova has been Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA) since 2002. She was Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in charge of Budget for the mandate 2018 – 2020. She has been a Member of the EESC since 2007 and Employers' Group Vice-President since 2010. She has been CEEP Executive Vice-President since 2011 and Member of the Euromed Follow-Up Committee since 2020.

As an EESC member working on the EU Blue Deal, she was the rapporteur of the opinion on Water efficient consumption and consumer awareness about their water footprint ([INT/1022](#)) as well as co-rapporteur for the opinion on Water Politics: Between Desertification and Securitization - Time for a Blue Diplomacy ([REX/ 570](#)).

Dr Angelova has been a member of the Bulgarian ESC since 2006 and is well known as an active participant in decision-making processes in Bulgaria, within areas concerning business climate improvement. She has profound expertise in the field of corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, better legislation, SMEs and entrepreneurship promotion, European funds management, skills mismatches and qualified labour shortages. She is senior research fellow at the Institute of Economics of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and was a lecturer in the Economic University in Varna. She is the author of more than 45 scientific publications in the area of marketing and of corporate governance.

**Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean**



Since September 2022, Almotaz Abadi has been serving as the UfM Deputy Secretary General responsible for Water, Environment, and Blue Economy. Previously, he held the position of UfM Acting Deputy Secretary General for the same division in 2015-2016. During his tenure at the UfM, Abadi served as the Water Managing Director, leading various initiatives related to water politics; geopolitics; and stakeholder mobilization in the Mediterranean region. Notable achievements include a Ministerial Declaration and the approval of a regional water strategy that focuses on resource efficiency and investment in sectors such as water and renewable energy. With over 20 years of experience, Abadi is an expert in international and regional cooperation. He has worked with various international donor agencies, organizations, and governments in policy advisory roles. Abadi holds a Master's degree in Water Resources Management, another Master's degree in Governance, and a postgraduate degree in leadership and multilateral cooperation on resources and cross-border arrangements.

**Phoebe Koundouri**, Professor Athens University of Economics and Business & Technical University of Denmark, President EAERE, Chair SDSN Global Climate Hub, Co-chair SDSN Europe



Phoebe Koundouri is Professor in Economics and Director of ReSEES Laboratory at the School of Economics of the Athens University of Economics and Business, Research Professor at the Department of Technology, Management and Economics at the Technical University of Denmark – DTU, and Director of the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) at ATHENA Information Technology Research Center. In 2019, she was elected President of the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE) and she is now chairing the World Council of Environmental and Natural Resource Economists Associations (WCERE). She is the director of the Alliance of Excellence for Research and Innovation on Aeiphoria (AE4RIA). She is chair of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

Global Climate Hub and co-chair of SDSN Europe and is an elected member of Academia Europaea (European Academy of Science), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, the World Academy of Art and Science, and member of the InterAcademy Partnership Board. In 2022 she received the prestigious European Research Council Synergy Grant and in 2023, she was awarded the Academy of Athens Excellence in Science Award, awarded every four years. She is a member of the Nominating Committee for the Prize in Economics Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

**Patricia Calderon**, Global Associate Director for Water, CDP



Dr Patricia Calderon is Associate Director Water Security at CDP. She has 20 years of global water experience including private sector and civil society. She has 18 years of experience in process engineering including with CH2M Hill and Veolia as an expert on municipal and industrial water technologies in Australia, UK, Europe and Singapore. She has a PhD in Chemistry focusing on membrane water technology from the University of New South Wales in Australia. She has been with CDP over the last two years operationalising its global water strategy, including as a leading author of the report '2021 High and

Dry - How Water Issues are stranding assets' and the first ever report on disclosure from private sector financial institutions '2022 Financial Institutions are Valuing Water'.