



European Economic  
and Social Committee  
Civil Society Organisations' Group



## Empowering consumers on climate change

11/10/2023 | 14.30 - 18.15

EESC | Brussels | Van Maerlant building, room VMA 23



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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.



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**Maroš Šefčovič** (born in 1966) is a Slovak politician and a career diplomat, who since 22 August 2023 serves as Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. Before that, from 2019 he served as Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. In this capacity, he leads the Commission's work on the European Green Deal, interinstitutional relations, better policymaking,

strategic foresight and the European Battery Alliance. He is also responsible for the European Union's relations with Western non-EU countries, notably Andorra, Iceland, Monaco, Norway, Lichtenstein, San Marino and Switzerland. He also cochairs the EU-UK Partnership Council under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the EU-UK Joint Committee for the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement. European Affairs have been at the centre of Mr Šefčovič's career for almost two decades. In 2014, he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament. From 2010-2019, he was Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of initially Interinstitutional Relations and Administration, and then the Energy Union. In 2009-2010, he was European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth. From 2004-2009, he was the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the European Union, steering the country's integration in the European Union, such as its entry to the Eurozone and the Schengen area. As a diplomat by profession, he served between 1992 and 2004 in Zimbabwe and Canada and as Ambassador of Slovakia to Israel. He graduated from the University of Economy in Bratislava, Slovakia, and the Moscow State Institute for Foreign Relations. He holds a degree as Doctor of Law and a PhD of European Law from Faculty of Law at the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. He also undertook training in diplomacy at Stanford University, USA. A book "Driving the EU forward – talks with Maroš Šefčovič" focuses on his first mandate as the Commission Vice-President. In 2018, he was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa at the Pan-European University in Bratislava, Slovakia. Mr Šefčovič is married and father of 3 children, Helena, Martina and Maroš. Two dogs and a cat are also part of the family.



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**Ioannis Vardakastanis** was born in Zakynthos, Greece. Throughout his life he has been a human rights campaigner, active at national, European and international level. Ioannis Vardakastanis 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 Group III (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. Since 2021 he holds the position of the President of the International Disability Alliance (IDA), which brings together over 1,100 organizations of persons with disabilities and their families from across eight global and six regional networks.



**Mikael Leyi** is the Secretary General of SOLIDAR, a European network of more than 50 progressive civil society organisations working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. A Political Scientist, with experience from working in five continents with European and international organisations of the trade union and popular education movements, as well as in collaboration with the institutions of the EU, OSCE and the UN. His work has centred on supporting democracy, human rights, social justice, sustainability, citizens' participation, inclusion and



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equality, peace, and dialogue. Mikael Leyi has an in-depth knowledge of progressive policy and organising, civil society, international development cooperation, and EU policy and political developments.



**Pekka Pesonen** is the Secretary General of Copa, representing European farmers, and Cogeca, representing European agri-cooperatives, which together count more than 70 national farming organisations from across Europe. Previously, he worked as State Secretary for the Finnish Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry. In addition, Mr Pesonen has extensive professional experience in lobbying at EU level on behalf of Finnish farmers, forest owners (MTK and SLC) and agri-forestry cooperatives (Pellervo). In the 1990s, he worked in the sales and marketing department of Valio, a Finnish dairy company. Mr Pesonen has also been a member of several high-level advisory groups concerning EU policy preparation. He is a qualified agronomist and is married with three adult children. Mr Pesonen comes from a 300-year-old Finnish family farm with active forest management.



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**Lorenza Campagnolo** holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Graduate School of Economics and Management in Venice. She is a researcher at the CMCC Foundation and her work focuses on macroeconomic assessment of climate change impacts and mitigation policies. She publishes in international journals and she has participated to several EU projects as the Horizon 2020 PARIS REINFORCE and ACCREU.



**Annemie Drieskens** is the President of Coface Families Europe and board member of Gezinsbond in Belgium. She has been for many years actively involved in Social and family policy at National and European level giving a voice to the needs and challenges that families are facing, and defending the rights of all families and their members in EU and beyond.



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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.



**Luke Haywood** leads the Climate and Energy team at the EEB, the largest federation of citizens environmental NGOs in Brussels. He used to work in academia trying to solve difficult problems related to labour market, transport, and climate policy. Now he work in an NGO trying to convince EU policy-makers to implement the many simple solutions we already have for better climate policy.



**Jan Dirx** studied chemistry and philosophy of science. He worked for the scientific bureau of a political party and was a representative at local and provincial level. After that Mr Dirx worked at high level for some Dutch nature and environmental organisations, which he has also been representing in the EESC since 2015.



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**Thierry Libaert** is the contact point coordinator of the French delegation to the European Economic and Social Committee, and co-chairs the Consumers and Environment Category. He was the rapporteur for the opinion on planned obsolescence, the first European text on the subject, and more recently for the opinion on the role of advertising in the green transition. He is a university lecturer, a research associate at the Earth & Life Institute – one of Europe's most important earth science research centres, Chair of the Academy of Controversy and Sensitive Communication, and Director of the Institute for Desirable Futures. His latest work, "*Des vents porteurs*" [Winds of Change], was awarded the 2021 Environment Book Prize.