



BUSINESS DAYS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
7/8 JUNE 2023



renew europe.



EVENT INFORMATION

European Union is currently facing many different challenges. After Covid crisis it must address digital and climate transitions, while maintaining economic growth and opportunities for everyone. At Renew Europe, we believe that EU companies carry many solutions to these challenges, and therefore it is of utmost importance to hear directly from them on what needs to be done to design a way to a sustainable competitiveness.

Renew Europe Business Days are designed as a listening exercise offering a forum for entrepreneurs and businesses to share their concerns, expertise, solutions and recommendations to make legislation more fit for the purpose. The event provides a platform for entrepreneurs to engage in meaningful discussions about current and upcoming rules. We are bringing together EU politicians, industry experts and business leaders, all eager to exchange their ideas on how to make the regulatory framework of the EU more efficient and functional.

The first day of the Renew Europe Business Days focuses on small and medium-sized enterprises, recognising their crucial role as the foundation of our European economy. The following day is devoted to all businesses. There will be extensive Q&A sessions after every debate in order to make sure that everyone can engage in a fruitful discussions on relevant topics. The entire event is created based on a questionnaire that we have disseminated to our economic stakeholders. Multiple panel debates and roundtables will gather speakers from 16 different Member States, complemented by a multitude of participants in the room.

Let's renew the European business environment together!





DAY 1 - PROGRAM

SMALL & MEDIUM SIZE BUSINESSES IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Wednesday 14:00 - 19:00 (PHS 5B01)

14:00 **Opening speech by Renew Europe MEP Martina Dlabajová**, Chair of Renew SME Taskforce

14:15 **Interactive interview with Olivia Grégoire**, Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Trade, Crafts and Tourism, France

14:30 **Panel: SMEs and administrative burden: situation and solutions**

- **Olivia Grégoire**, Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Trade, Crafts and Tourism, France
- **Vladimír Dlouhý**, President of Eurochambres
- **Vernique Willems**, Secretary General of SME United
- **Philippe De Backers**, Senior Partner Newton Biocapital, former MEP and Minister in the Belgian Federal Government

Moderator – Martina Dlabajová, Renew Europe MEP, Chair of Renew SME Taskforce

15:15 **Coffee Break**

15:45 **ROUNDTABLE: How to ensure better access to private and public financing for SMES?**

- **Petar Hristov**, Managing Director, I – hydrogen Ltd, Bulgaria
- **Leo van Bree**, CEO, Biogas Fond, Germany
- **Alkistis Venetopoulou**, CEO of Alchemia Self-Care Rituals, Greece
- **James Watson**, Chief Economist, Director of Economics of BusinessEurope

Moderator – Catharina Rinzema, Renew Europe MEP

16:35 **ROUNDTABLE: Transfer of ownership and business perspectives: how to foster the entrepreneurial spirit?**

- **Arantxa Tapia Otaegi**, Minister for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment of the Basque Country, Spain
- **Rania Labaki**, Associate Professor at EDHEC Business School, Director of the EDHEC Family Business Centre & Family Business Fellow at Cornell University
- **Matthieu Leclercq**, former chairman of Décathlon representing European Family Businesses organization, France
- **Nader Laalinia**, CEO of Finstansteknik, Sweden

Moderator – Abir Al-Sahlani, Renew Europe VP

17:20 **Coffee Break**





17:50 **SPECIALISED MASTERCLASS FOR SMEs**

Interactive presentation of case-studies from various territories in Europe which have successfully developed an SMEs-friendly environment. Concrete examples of the best regulatory, financing, legal and organisational practices in cooperation with subnational representatives from the Renew Europe group of the Committee of the Regions.

- **François Decoster**, President Renew Europe CoR & Mayor of Saint-Omer, France
- **Sanna Savolainen**, Senior Advisor International Affairs, Business Oulu, Finland
- **Valentine Delwart**, Deputy Mayor Economy & Commerce, Commune of Uccle, Belgium
- **Owen Lavery**, Head of Enterprise at Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Ireland

Moderator – Iskra Mihaylova, Renew Europe VP

19:00 **Closing remarks by Thierry Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market

19:20 **Conclusions by Renew Europe MEP Martina Dlabajová**

19:30 **Networking reception**





DAY 2 – PROGRAM

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN SINGLE MARKET OBSTACLES OR OPPORTUNITIES?

Thursday 9:00 – 13:00 (PHS 3C50)

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- 09:00 **Opening speech by Renew Europe VP Morten Løkkegaard**
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- 09:10 **Interactive interview with European Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager, followed by Q&A**
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- 09:50 **Interactive Interviews with** French Minister in charge of Digital transition and telecommunication Jean-Noël Barrot, France
Moderator – Morten Løkkegaard, Renew Europe VP
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- 10:10 **Coffee Break**
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- 10:30 **ROUNDTABLE: How to make the EU greener while keeping businesses dynamism?**
- **Martin Hojsik**, Renew Europe MEP, ENVI committee
 - **Tuomas Hooli**, CEO, Winda Energy, Finland
 - **Doris Birkhofer**, President of Siemens France
 - **Uroš Vajgl**, State Secretary responsible for environment, Slovenia
 - **Markus Beyrer**, Director General of Business Europe
- Moderator – Elena Sánchez Nicolás**, EU Observer
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- 11:30 **Interactive Interview with** Vittorio Colao, former CEO of Vodafone and former Minister of Technological Innovation and Digital Transition, Italy
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- 11:50 **ROUNDTABLE - Digital economy - from the Far-West to overregulation?**
- **Robert Gentz**, CEO, Zalando
 - **Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl**, Director General, Digital Europe
 - **Eva Poptcheva**, Renew Europe MEP, ECON Committee, Spain
- Moderator – Antonios Nestoras**, Deputy Executive Director of the European Liberal Forum
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- 12:35 **Concluding remarks by Renew Europe MEP Morten Løkkegaard**



SPEAKERS

WEDNESDAY JUNE 7



Martina Dlabajová

Renew Europe MEP, Chair of Renew SME Taskforce (Czech Republic)

Member of the European Parliament since 2014, Martina Dlabajová is the Renew Europe Coordinator in the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), the Chair of Renew Europe SME Taskforce and the Co-Chair of the SME Intergroup in the European Parliament. In her work, she focuses mainly on SMEs, family businesses, creative industries, digitalisation and research & innovation. She is the former President of the Regional Chamber of Commerce of Zlín Region in the Czech Republic (2012 – 2014), and a former founder and manager of several companies in the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Italy. In 2019, she received the Gold Badge of the Italian-Czech Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Camic) for contribution to the development of economic and business relations between the Czech Republic and Italy.



Olivia Grégoire

Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Trade, Crafts and Tourism (France)

Olivia Grégoire is a graduate of the Paris Institute of Political Studies (IEP) and ESSEC Business School. From 2003 to 2005, she was an Expert Advisor to the Prime Minister and joined the Minister of Health and Solidarity as Public Relations Advisor until 2007. She then joined the private sector and became Public Relations and Sustainable Development Manager with the DDB Group.

After a two-year mission for Etalab as Editorial and Public Relations Manager, she founded her own consulting firm Olicar' and then became, in 2017, MP for Paris and spokesperson for the La République en Marche (REM) party at the National Assembly, but also vice-chair of the Finance Committee, re-elected on 19 June 2022. From 2020 to 2022, she was also the Minister of State reporting to the Minister for the Economy, Finance and the Recovery, with responsibility for the Social, Solidarity and Responsible Economy and also Minister of State reporting to the Prime Minister, Government spokesperson in 2022. Currently, she holds the position of Minister Delegate reporting to the Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, with responsibility for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, Trade, Craft Industries and Tourism.



Vladimír Dlouhý

President of Eurochambres (Czech Republic)

Vladimír Dlouhý is a Czech economist with business, academic and political experience. Currently, as the President of Eurochambres from May 2023 he represents more than 20 million companies. Before, from 2014 he was the President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce. He advises large international companies, is a member of several international think-tanks and serves as a member of the National Economic Council of Czech Government. He was a Czechoslovak Minister of Economy until 1992 and then the Czech Minister of Industry and Trade leading the Czech Economic Transformation. Between 2009 and 2012, he served in the European Advisory Group as the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC.



Véronique Willems

Secretary General of SME United

Véronique Willems is representing Crafts and SMEs in Europe as the Secretary General of SMEUnited (formerly known as UEAPME) since January 2017. Beforehand and as from 2009, she was the Head of European affairs at UNIZO (SMEUnited Belgian member organisation) and was responsible for advocacy on policies affecting SMEs at EU-level. In January 2016, she was nominated deputy to the SME-representative for Belgium at the European Economic and Social Committee. Ms Willems started her career at UNIZO in 1999 as Policy Officer in charge of education, training and SME counselling and went on to work at the regional office (Vlaams Brabant & Brussel) as responsible for advocacy at regional level, mentorship programs and individual counselling for entrepreneurs. Ms Willems holds a Law degree from Vrije Universiteit Brussels and a Master's Degree in Commercial sciences / Business management from VLEKHO Brussels





Philippe De Backers

Senior Partner Newton Biocapital, former MEP and Minister in the Belgian Federal Government (Belgium)

Philippe De Backer obtained a PhD in Molecular Biology from VIB/Ghent University and an MBA from Solvay Business School. He became a member of the European Parliament in 2011, focussing on fund regulation and long-term investment, SME policy and industrial policy. In 2016, he became State Secretary and later Minister in the Belgian Federal Government. In March 2020, he led the Federal Taskforce fighting the COVID pandemic in Belgium, procuring medical materials and setting up testing capacities. After the pandemic he announced his return to life sciences and investment. In 2022, he joined Newton Biocapital as senior partner. Newton Biocapital provides capital to support innovative start-ups and helps them to develop new therapies for chronic diseases.

Petar Hristov

Managing Director, I – Hydrogen Ltd. (Bulgaria)

Petar Hristov is the Co-owner and CEO of I-Hydrogen Ltd., managing the relationships with clients and partners and leading the coordination groups for project development. He has experience in the construction and financial sectors thanks to his past experience of project management in a large construction company in Bulgaria with nearly 100 million annual turnover. One of the main objectives of the company was developing energy efficiency measures in buildings and waste management systems in both sewages and landfill recultivation.

I-Hydrogen Ltd. is a Bulgarian start-up coproducing, developing and managing hydrogen and other renewable energy products and solutions. For the past two years, the company installed 1 MW of electrolyzers on the Balkan Peninsula for both industrial use and domestic heat generation in the public and private sector. Furthermore, the company aims at developing several small regional "Hydrogen Valleys" in Bulgaria, with the purpose of producing green energy to satisfy the local & industry demand in partnership with the local municipalities. Finally, Petar Hristov and his colleagues created partnerships and projects with 7 countries.



Leo van Bree

Co-founder and CEO, Biogas Fond (Germany)

Before becoming Co-Founder & CEO of Biogas-Fond GmbH, Leo van Bree held advisory and supervisory board functions in various family businesses and multinationals. He is also an expert in Intercontinental Sales and, in addition, held the position of CEO of a listed company.

Biogas-Fond GmbH was founded in October 2021 and offers a revolutionary approach to climate change with its breakthrough technology EMISSION CO2NTROL™. It removes up to 99.9% CO2 and other pollutants, can be applied to any exhaust gas source and requires extremely little electrical energy.



Alkistis Venetopoulou

CEO of Alchemia Self-Care Rituals, Greece

Alkistis Venetopoulou, a Greek entrepreneur, has established herself in the wellness and beauty industry. With a background in prestigious institutions like Saint Martins, Istuto Marangoni, and London Communication, she immersed herself in London's vibrant fashion, design, and wellness scene. Motivated by her personal journey and a passion for holistic well-being, Alkistis launched Alchemia Self-Care Rituals, a little after the birth of her daughter with sensitive skin offering clean, eco-friendly skincare products that prioritize natural ingredients and sustainability. The brand quickly gained recognition, amassing a strong global following. Now seeking funding to expand her business, Alkistis aims to make a lasting impact while staying true to her Greek roots, transforming the beauty industry with her sustainable vision.



James Watson

Chief Economist, Director of Economics of BusinessEurope

James Watson was appointed Director of Economics at BusinessEurope, the Confederation of European Business, in June 2011. He is responsible for developing and communicating the organisation's positions on macroeconomic policies, structural and financial market reforms, economic governance, taxation, the EU budget and EU regional policies. Prior to joining BusinessEurope, he worked for 14 years as an economic adviser in the UK government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly DTI), providing economic advice and analysis on policies to raise the UK's long-term growth rate. During this period, he co-authored a number of research reports on subjects ranging from the role of high-growth firms in the UK economy to the UK's trade relationship with China and India. He has also worked on secondment to the Cabinet Office in the UK, at the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry and the European Commission's DG Economics and Financial Affairs. A graduate of the Cambridge University, James also holds an MSc from the University of York.



Catharina Rinzema

Renew Europe MEP (Netherlands)

Catharina Rinzema joined the European Parliament in January 2022 and is a member of International Trade and Internal Market committees. She studied law and legal and political philosophy at Leiden University. Love brought her to Belgium and as a result she has been dividing her time between Brussels and The Hague for eight years. Catharina has since worked for, among others, the European headquarters of Google, Stichting Lezen & Schrijven and the Global Centre of Expertise for Behaviour, Ethics and Compliance Learning of ABN AMRO. Catharina has a clear focus on diversity, inclusion, integrity and social involvement. In her campaign, she took the initiative to work with two female candidates from other parties. In this way she wanted to show that cooperation can and must be done, also in politics. She strongly believes in that.





Arantxa Tapia Otaegi

Minister for Economic Development, Sustainability and the Environment of the Basque Country (Spain)

Arantxa Tapia is an Industrial Engineer with a PhD Cum Laude from the University of Navarra and a Professor at the School of Engineering of the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU). She is currently a Minister of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government and since 2012 she has held different responsibilities in other areas of the Basque Executive, such as Tourism and Infrastructures, in addition to Economic Development. Previously, she was a Member of Parliament for Gipuzkoa in the Congress of Deputies, where she was the spokesperson for her parliamentary group in the transport, agriculture and economic development committees, among others. Her arrival at the Congress was preceded by a legislature as the Provincial Deputy for Mobility and Territorial Planning in the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa. Throughout her career she has carried out research work for companies such as Iberdrola, Indar and Lqpton.



Rania Labaki

Associate Professor at EDHEC Business School, Director of the EDHEC Family Business Centre & Family Business Fellow at Cornell University

Dr Rania Labaki is Associate Professor of Finance and Family Business at EDHEC Business School, Director of the EDHEC Family Business Chair, and Family Business Fellow at Cornell University.


She serves as board member of the International Family Enterprise Research Academy (IFERA) and is an advisory board member of Women in Family Business (WIFB). She is the co-editor of Entrepreneurship Research Journal and editorial board member of FamilyBusiness.Org and Droit & Patrimoine. As a global speaker, she held presentations and lectures related to her areas of expertise for various academic, professional, and business institutions in more than 50 countries across the world. Rania is recipient of multiple awards recognizing her contributions to the family business field, including the prestigious Barbara Hollander Award in 2020.



Matthieu Leclercq

former chairman of Décathlon representing European Family Businesses organization (France)

Matthieu Leclercq has been DECATHLON's Chairman until 2018. Decathlon, started by his father, is the world's leading integrated sporting goods company, with 1600 stores averaging 40000sqf, 100 000 employees in 50+ countries, 13B in sales. Matthieu has framed a transformation of the business and, as result, revenues have double from 2013 to 2018. Decathlon moved from 14th place in 2010 to 1st place in "Best place to Work" in France in 2017. As a true entrepreneur in 2007 Matthieu opened "OTera.fr" a "farm retail store" selling fresh farm products directly to consumers, soon 11 stores with 300 employees. In 2021 Matthieu started "ForTalents.com" - an investment fund dedicated to accompanying intra family business generational transmission. Matthieu has invested €400m into 4 family businesses. He doesn't understand why family business founders don't retire on time.



Matthieu believes that receiving the baton at the age of 35/45 enables next generation to act as entrepreneurs and lead growth and employment. He is looking for EU legislators support in adjusting fiscal shelter to help business owners to transfer full authority easier. Matthieu has a significant experience in managing generational challenges in his business environment and driving a change in the context of family business. He is also an alumnus of Harvard Business School and has followed several academic programs dedicated to family businesses.



Nader Laalinia

CEO of Finstansteknik (Sweden)

Nader Laalinia owns, co-owns and operates several manufacturing companies in and outside Sweden. In particular, Finstansteknik AB, which supplies tooling, automation and presses to modern manufacturing industry worldwide; Per Schürer AB, which is responsible of the production of technical plastic products, as well as packaging; and finally, Biokub Sweden AB, which designs and products recycling containers.

He is also responsible for other companies in the following industries: engineering consulting, design and manufacture of gearboxes, event companies within international exhibitions and production of power lines. Previously he has been a member of Advisory board at the Foreign Ministry in Sweden, Chairman of Sweden's international business association in Western Sweden and Board member at Almi Väst.



Abir Al-Sahlani

Renew Europe VP (Sweden)

Abir Al-Sahlani is a daughter of two Iraqi freedom fighters and came to Sweden as asylum seeker when she was 15 years old. She started her political career soon after, focusing on international development. She was a member of the Swedish Parliament before she was elected to the European Parliament in 2019. She is also Vice President of Renew Europe Group of European Parliament, responsible for relations with civil society. Abir has a great interest in entrepreneurship, a topic she has worked extensively on both in the Swedish Labour Market Committee as well as at the European Parliament.



François Decoster

President Renew Europe CoR & Mayor of Saint-Omer (France)

François Decoster is Mayor of Saint-Omer, France, Vice-President of Hauts-de-France responsible for culture, heritage, regional languages and international relations. In 2022, he won the World Mayor Prize for Public Service. In the European Committee of the Regions, he is the President of Renew Europe and has been Chair of the Citizenship, Governance and External Relations (CIVEX) Commission.





Sanna Savolainen

Senior Advisor International Affairs, Business Oulu (Finland)

Sanna Savolainen is the Senior Advisor of International Affairs at BusinessOulu, where she works with international support services for small and medium sized enterprises and the development of business ecosystems in Oulu, Finland. She helps companies develop their export processes and international actions globally, and her expertise is project management especially with Interreg, Tekes, ESR and EAKR funding.



Valentine Delwart

Deputy Mayor Economy & Commerce, Commune of Uccle (Belgium)

Valentine Delwart graduated with a master's degree in European law from the University of Ghent in 2003. She then held the positions of Legal Adviser to the Minister of the Civil Service and Local Authorities, Parliamentary Attaché to the Federal Parliament, spokesperson of the Minister for Development Cooperation and Secretary of the Consultation Committee at the Federal Government. From 2007 to 2018, she also held administrative positions in several companies. In addition, she has held the position of Secretary General of the Mouvement Réformateur (MR) since 2011.



Owen Laverty

Head of Enterprise at Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (Ireland)

Owen heads up an Economic and Enterprise development team in Dunlaoghaire Rathdown which is one of four regions in Dublin, Ireland. As part of his current role he heads up the Local Enterprise Office in DLR which is part of a national network and has the remit to train, fund and mentor micro enterprises. At its peak the office grant aided more than €20m to local businesses and trained more than 3000 entrepreneurs and their teams in one year. An Engineer by training, Owen has a strong practical background in commercialising technology and is driven to help companies develop strategic competencies and mindset to reach their potential and generally represent their views at local government.

Owen spent his early career working on product development in a variety of sectors to starting his commercial life in one of Ireland's first incubators. He went on to building and managing a University Incubator which included the ESA Business Incubation Centre. He sits on a number of advisory boards including Sandyford Business District which is home to Microsoft, Google, Vodafone and over 1000 businesses.

Owen is driven to help businesses succeed and realise their potential. He uses his significant experience to benefit the local ecosystem while navigating a complex environment. A keen sailor, Owen has represented Ireland in international competitions for more than 20 years with varying degrees of success.



Iskra Mihaylova

Renew Europe VP (Bulgaria)

Iskra Mihaylova was born on 1957 in Sofia, Bulgaria. She has an extensive career in the field of EU cooperation, regional and environmental policy. Her path into active politics has begun in 2001 when she was appointed adviser to the Minister for Regional Development. After the 2005 elections in Bulgaria, Mihaylova continued her involvement in regional policy as deputy minister up to 2009. In the period 2009-2013 she was Member of Bulgaria's 41st National Assembly and Chair of the Parliament's Committee on Environment and Water. From May 2013 up to June 2014 Iskra Mihaylova acted as a Minister of the Environment and Water of Bulgaria. She has participated in numerous international forums in the United States, Israel, China, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, and Azerbaijan as a lecturer and as an official representative of Bulgarian authorities. In 2014 she became a Member of the European Parliament where she served as a Chair of the Committee on Regional Development. She has been re-elected in 2019 and currently serves as a Vice-president of the Renew Europe Group as well as a member of ITRE and DEVE Committees. She works actively in the field of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and energy transition towards energy decarbonization and green solutions, as well as on synergies between European policies. For her work and activities as MEP, Iskra Mihaylova was awarded the MEP Award 2017 for the category "Regional Development".



Thierry Breton

European Commissioner for Internal Market (France)

Thierry Breton is a French business executive, politician, writer and the European Commissioner for Internal Market since 2019. Prior to joining the European Commission, he served as CEO of Atos from 2008 until 2019, and was a Professor of Leadership and Corporate Accountability at Harvard University from 2007 until 2008. From 2005 to 2007 Thierry Breton served as the French Minister for Economy, Finance and Industry.



SPEAKERS

THURSDAY JUNE 8



Morten Løkkegaard

Renew Europe VP (Denmark)

Morten Løkkegaard has been a member of the European Parliament for more than a decade and he is a Vice President of Renew Europe. Furthermore, Mr. Løkkegaard is the Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with India, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Interference and Disinformation, member of the committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) and substitute member of the committees on International Trade (INTA) and Culture & Education (CULT) and a member of the Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand (DANZ). Additionally, Mr. Løkkegaard is currently a member of the city council in the Danish municipality of Gentofte.

Before becoming a member of the Parliament, Mr. Løkkegaard worked as a journalist for many years, including for a national newspaper and as a news anchor on national television for public service broadcaster DR. Moreover, he also established an independent communication consultancy.



Margrethe Vestager

European Commission Executive Vice-President (Denmark)

Margrethe Vestager is the European Commission Executive Vice-President for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age and Commissioner for Competition. She previously held the position of European Commissioner for Competition from November 2014. A Danish national, Vestager was Minister for Economic Affairs and the interior as well as political leader of the Social Liberal Party from 2011 to 2014. She was Minister for Education from 1998 to 2001 and Head of Secretariat with the Danish Agency for Financial Management and Administrative Affairs from 1997 to 1998. She holds a Master of Science in Economics from the University of Copenhagen.



Jean-Noël Barrot

Minister Delegate for Digital Transition and Telecommunications (France)

Jean-Noël Barrot is a French politician and academic. Barrot has held various elected positions and ministerial roles. Since 2021, he has been a Regional Counsellor in Île-de-France. In 2017, Barrot was elected as a Member of the French Parliament. During his tenure, he served as the Vice-President of the Finance Committee of the National Assembly from 2017 to 2022. Prior to his parliamentary career, he served as a Departmental Counsellor in Haute-Loire from 2015 to 2017. Since July 4, 2022, he has served as the Minister Delegate for Digital Transition and Telecommunications in the Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty. He holds a Master's degree from HEC Paris, a Master's degree in Economic Governance from the Institute of Political Studies (IEP) in Paris, and a Master's degree in Economic Sciences from the Paris School of Economics.



Martin Hojsik

Renew Europe MEP (Slovakia)

Martin Hojsik has been actively involved in nature protection for over the last 25 years. Since 2019, he serves as a Member of the European Parliament, working to avert the climate threat, regulate hazardous chemicals, protect biodiversity and animals and promote safe and wholesome food. He is the official contact point for the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and is active in three committees - ENVI, ITRE and BUDG. In the past, he served as Program Director of the animal protection organization Four Paws, working in global corporate and public policy campaigns for Action Aid, Greenpeace International and communication campaigns for Greenpeace national offices. He studied genetics at the Comenius University in Bratislava.



Tuomas Huoli

CEO, Winda Energy (Finland)

Tuomas Huoli is the CEO of Winda Energy, where he leads the development of roughly 2 GW of installed wind and solar capacity in Finland. He is scaling up Winda Energy's portfolio through a stakeholder-centric approach which puts local communities first and accelerates the transition towards sustainable energy production. The company's core activities involve the development, construction, and operation of wind farms, and it currently has a dozen of projects scattered throughout Finland. Tuomas Huoli graduated from the London School of Economics and features in 2022 Forbes List of "30 under 30" in the industry and manufacturing category.





Doris Birkhofer

President of Siemens France

Doris Birkhofer has been President of Siemens France since October 1, 2021 and CEO of Siemens Smart Infrastructure France. Her scope also covers Belgium, Luxembourg and Maghreb. A graduate of the ESB Business School in Reutlingen (Germany) and the NEOMA Business School in Reims (France), she joined Siemens in the internal consulting department in Germany and the United States before working on Group strategy. She then took over the management of the identity and access solutions business in Munich. In 2009, after joining the strategy department at Saint-Gobain (now Verralia), she took over the management of the glass container machine building subsidiary of the Packaging division. In 2014, she joined the American company Alcoa (aluminum production) and managed the acquisition and growth projects in Europe. In 2016, she was appointed President of Arconic France (spin-off from Alcoa). She returned to Siemens in 2018, which she rejoined as CEO of the Western Europe Region of the Building Technologies Division.



Uroš Vajgl

State Secretary responsible for environment (Slovenia)

Uroš Vajgl, born in Ljubljana in 1976, holds a university degree in economics. He started his career in 2002 at the Office of the Government of Slovenia for European Affairs. During the first Slovenian Presidency he coordinated preparations of the meetings of the General Affairs Council and the European Council. From 2005 to 2006 he was posted to the Federal Ministry of Finance in Berlin, and from 2009 to 2013 he represented, as Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU, the interests of the Republic of Slovenia in the EU's internal market, which also included energy, environmental and climate policies. After returning to Slovenia, he joined the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, where he headed the Environment and Climate Change Division and served as Deputy Director General for the Environment. During this time he was also involved in international climate negotiations, including as head of the Slovenian delegation for most of the negotiations at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015. During the second Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2021, he chaired the Council of the EU's crisis response mechanism and coordinated the strengthening of resilience to crises.



Markus Beyrer

Director General of Business Europe

Markus Beyrer has been Director General of BusinessEurope since late 2012. Prior to this he held the positions of CEO of the Austrian Industry Holding ÖIAG, Director General of the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV) and Director for Economic Affairs of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. Before this he served as Chief Economic Advisor to the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel. In the 1990s he worked on Austria's accession to the European Union and the integration of Austria into the European Single Market. In addition to his executive positions, he held a number of non-executive board functions in various Austrian industrial companies and was a member of the non-executive board of the Austrian Central Bank. Mr Beyrer graduated in Law at the University of Vienna. Later he completed postgraduate studies in European law at the Danube University in Krems (Austria) and the Stanford Executive Program at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.



Elena Sánchez Nicolás

EU Observer

Elena Sánchez Nicolás covers institutional affairs, climate change, energy and tech policy for EUobserver. Prior to joining EUobserver, she worked on European affairs at the Brussels-based think tank VoteWatch Europe and the Spanish news agency EFE. Based in Brussels, she is originally from Spain and currently serves as the acting president of the Association of European Journalists Belgium. Sánchez Nicolás holds a Master's degree in New Media and Society in Europe from the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB) and a Master's in Transmedia Journalism from Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Madrid.





Vittorio Colao

former CEO of Vodafone and former Minister of Technological Innovation and Digital Transition (Italy)

Vittorio Colao is Vice Chairman EMEA of Growth Equity investor General Atlantic, a non-Executive Director of Verizon Communications in the US and a Board and Executive Committee member of Bocconi University in Milan. Vittorio has been Minister for Technology Innovation and Digital Transition as well as Delegate Authority for Space for the Italian Government in 2021-22. Prior to that he was also Chairman of the Remuneration Committee of Unilever PLC. Vittorio has been the CEO of Vodafone Group from 2008 to 2018. He has worked at Vodafone and predecessor companies since 1996 and has been also the Group CEO of RCS MediaGroup in Italy between 2004 and 2006. He served as Vice-Chairman of the European Roundtable of Industrialists until 2018 and McKinsey's International Advisory Council. In 2014 Vittorio was awarded Italy's Knighthood for professional merits and in 2021 the Grande Ufficiale honor from the President of Italy. He has also been appointed He4She Impact champion (UN, 2015), won the GSMA award for Refugees support (2017), and recognized FT HEROes champion (2017).



Robert Gentz

CEO, Zalando

Robert Gentz co-founded Zalando in Berlin in 2008. As Co-CEO he is responsible for the company's strategy and corporate affairs, as well as the company's technology and product development.

Robert holds a diploma in business administration from WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management. Robert founded Zalando together with David Schneider in Berlin in 2008. Today, Zalando has grown to be a leading European online platform for fashion and lifestyle. Zalando brings head-to-toe fashion to over 51 million active customers in 25 markets, offering clothing, footwear, accessories, and beauty. The assortment of international brands ranges from world famous names to local labels. The platform is a one-stop fashion destination for inspiration, innovation, interaction and shopping. As Europe's most fashionable tech company, Zalando works hard to find digital solutions for every aspect of the fashion journey: for customers, partners and every valuable player in the Zalando story.



Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl

Director General, Digital Europe

Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl is Director-General of DIGITAL EUROPE, the leading digital technology industry association representing over 45,000 digital companies in Europe. She has over 25 years of experience in the ICT industry, having held positions at IBM, Oracle, as well as with SMEs, and founded the global SAP implementation company and cloud provider GlobeIT. Currently, she is a member of the Board of Directors of Gaia-X and of the European Commission's Industrial Forum. She is also a member of the Stakeholder Cybersecurity Certification Group of ENISA.



Eva-Maria Poptcheva

Member of the European Parliament (Spain)

Born in Bulgaria in 1979, Eva-Maria Poptcheva since September 2022 is an MEP for the Spanish party Ciudadanos (Citizens in English) in the European Parliament. She is Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and substitute member of the Committee on Budgets. Previously, she worked as an official of the European Parliament for more than ten years. She was Head of the Legislative Affairs Unit of the European Parliament, member of the Secretariat of the Conference on the Future of Europe from 2021 to 2022, public policy advisor in the Cabinet of the Secretary General of the Parliament from 2018 to 2021 and analyst at the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) from 2012 to 2018. Before joining the European Parliament, she had experience in law firms in Spain and Germany and the European Court of Human Rights (ECTHR). By training, Eva-Maria Poptcheva holds a law degree from the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg in Germany and a PhD in European constitutional law from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, where she also taught Spanish and EU constitutional law.



Antonios Nestoras

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Antonios Nestoras is the Deputy Executive Director of the European Liberal Forum (ELF), and an adjunct professor at the Brussels School of Governance of Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), where he teaches geopolitics and technopolitics. For more than 12 years in the academic, think-tank and European public administration fields, his work has been published in peer-reviewed journals, think-tank reports and EU media. He is the editor of ELF's Technopolitics Series, the chief editor of the Future Europe Journal, and the curator of the Liberal Reads podcast. He holds a double PhD in Social and Political Science from VUB and the University of Antwerp and was awarded the Huygens Scholarship for International Talent for his graduate studies in the University of Leiden.





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