



European Young Leaders

Class of 2022

About the EYL40 Programme

The European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme, led by Friends of Europe, is a unique, inventive and multi-stakeholder programme that aims to promote a European identity by engaging the continent's most promising talents in initiatives that will shape Europe's future.

The European Young Leaders represent promising European leadership from all over the continent, with a wide variety of backgrounds including politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science and the media.

EYL40 is organised under the patronage of the Board of Trustees of Friends of Europe. The programme was initially conceived in a joint partnership with EuropaNova.

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Class of 2022

Adwoa Aboah

UNITED KINGDOM

Model, Founder of Gurls Talk

A British feminist and activist, Adwoa has modelled for the likes of Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs, Alexander Wang and Fendi, and starred on the covers of international publications, including Vogue and i-D. She has also featured in short films, music videos and most recently, the Hollywood movie, "Ghost in the Shell". Recognised as a Next Generation Leader on the cover of Time magazine, she has become among the most influential voices of her generation. Adwoa, having struggled with depression and addiction, recognised the lack of mental health resources for young women. This inspired her to launch Gurls Talk, a mental health organisation that offers young women a safe space to discuss a wide range of issues, including loneliness, body image and sexuality. Having started as an Instagram account, Gurls Talk has grown to include an online community, weekly podcast and live events in major cities, including London, Los Angeles, Accra and Warsaw.



Enass Abo-Hamed

UNITED KINGDOM

Co-Founder and CEO of H2GO Power

Enass is the Co-Founder and CEO of H2GO Power, an award-winning British company that develops hydrogen energy storage technologies. Her designs for a new energy storage system can guarantee stable supply of renewable energy for areas in developing countries with limited or no access to the electrical grid. With over a decade of both research and business experience in renewables and energy storage, Enass champions climate entrepreneurship and clean energy technology. She is currently a Member of the Advisory Board of General Atlantic's BeyondNetZero \$4bn equity growth climate fund, a Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Fellow and a technology consultant for the European Research Executive Agency. Enass has received several awards in recognition of her work, including the MIT Technology Review Innovators Under 35 Europe Visionary of the Year award and the Best Energy Start-up award at the Global Hello Tomorrow Summit.





Neil Agius

MALTA

Founder of Wave of Change, former Olympic swimmer

A Maltese athlete and climate activist determined to eliminate marine plastic pollution, Neil created Wave of Change, a movement to encourage a behavioural shift in society's plastic use. Neil swims great distances to raise awareness about marine pollution and inspire others to collect three items of rubbish when visiting the seaside. He has swum a 100km journey from Sicily to Malta in an astonishing 28 hours, as well as around the entire island of Malta. Most recently, he swam the 125.6km journey from the Italian island of Linosa to Gozo in just over 52 hours, breaking the previous world record for the longest continuous, unassisted, current-neutral swim along a single-segment natural route in ocean, sea or bay. The entire swim was livestreamed, attracting over 2mn viewers, which Neil used as a platform to highlight plastic pollution in our oceans. The former competitive swimmer participated in the Athens Olympic Games and the Games of the Small States of Europe.

Witold Bańka

POLAND

President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

Witold is a former Polish athlete, who currently heads WADA in its mission to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport. He is the youngest person to assume the presidency of WADA in its 22-year history. Witold values sportsmanship and actively demonstrates the importance of listening to athletes. Under his leadership, WADA is reinforcing the global anti-doping programme through implementation of the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code. He is also strengthening the Agency's governance, with more independent voices, athletes and anti-doping experts involved in the organisation's decision-making processes. Witold previously served as the Polish minister of sport and tourism and, for nearly a decade, he competed internationally as a 400m sprinter. Most notably, Witold won a bronze medal in the 4x400m relay at the 2007 World Championships.



Alviina Alametsä

FINLAND

Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Helsinki City Council



A Finnish politician representing the group of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament, Alviina is an advocate of human rights, peace, the environment, as well as mental health and wellbeing. As a Member of the European Parliament, she serves as a Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and as her group's coordinator for the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. She is also a substitute Member of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Development, and serves as a Co-Chair of the Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing. She was the shadow rapporteur for parliamentary reports on security in the Arctic and the Sahel region. Alviina also serves as a Member of the Helsinki City Council, where she has led several successful initiatives to tackle discrimination, increase accessibility to natural areas and set up low-threshold mental health clinics in the Finnish capital city. Alviina is one of the initiators of #Terapiatakuu, a citizens' initiative to speed up and facilitate access to mental health care.

Erenik Beqiri

ALBANIA

Film director, screenwriter

Erenik is an award-winning Albanian film director and screenwriter based in Tirana. His films showcase the inner struggles of characters and highlight the comic, tragic or grotesque aspects of society. His latest short film, "The Van", was in the running for the Short Film Palme d'Or at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival and shortlisted in the Live Action Short Film category for the 93rd Academy Awards. His earlier short films include "Bon Appetit", "Alphonso" and "Seed Money". Erenik's works have featured in several internationally renowned film festivals, including the Melbourne International Film Festival, the Sarajevo Film Festival, the Vancouver International Film Festival and the Brussels Short Film Festival. He has also participated in the Sarajevo Talent Campus programme at the Sarajevo Film Festival as a screenwriter.



Loubna Bouarfa

THE NETHERLANDS

Founder and CEO of OKRA Technologies

A Dutch machine learning scientist turned entrepreneur, Loubna is the Founder and CEO of OKRA Technologies, a leading artificial intelligence analytics company in the life sciences sector. The start-up aims to revolutionise traditional healthcare systems by abandoning the one-size-fits-all model and building a future of personalised medicine. OKRA uses explainable AI to empower healthcare professionals to make decisions that will support the delivery of the right drug to the right patient at speed. In recognition of Loubna's leadership, OKRA received the StartUp Europe Award for Best Female-Led Startup. The same year, Loubna also accepted the CEO of the Year Award at the Cambridge Independent Science and Technology Awards. As a former member of the European Union High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, she supported the implementation of the Union's strategy on AI within the digital single market.



Mario Brandenburg

GERMANY

Member of the German parliament, computer scientist

Mario is a German computer scientist and politician, who currently serves as a Member of the Bundestag for the Free Democratic Party (FDP). He is determined to support Germany's future through the use of digital technologies. With strong knowledge in quantum computing, biotechnology, AI, 3D printing and blockchain technologies, Mario is the FDP's spokesperson for technology policy, the Chairman of the Education, Research and Technology Assessment Committee and a Deputy Member of the Digital Agenda Committee. In addition to his role at the federal level, he remains active in local politics as a Member of the Municipal Council of Rülzheim and the District Council of Germersheim. Mario also has a keen interest in how digital processes can benefit rural areas within society's digital transformation.



Nicolas Brien

FRANCE

Chairman of the Management Board at EuraTechnologies

Nicolas is the Chairman of the Management Board of EuraTechnologies, Europe's largest and oldest incubator, and President of the European Startup Network, an industry group which represents start-ups in Brussels. An avid supporter of Europe's digital sovereignty and named among the most influential people in the digital sector in Europe, Nicolas promotes greater investment in local start-ups across Europe. Nicolas sits on the board of a number of other companies and foundations, including Tilder and France Alzheimer, and regularly contributes to the global conversation on tech policies through op-eds in global media. He is the former chief executive officer of the largest start-up organisation in Europe, France Digitale. Prior to entering the tech sector, he was the research director at Kantar-TNS Sofres and a senior advisor to the French government's spokesperson.



Sinéad Burke

IRELAND

Founder and CEO of Tilting the Lens

Sinéad is an Irish writer, educator and advocate, who champions inclusive, universal design to create a more equitable and accessible world for everyone. She founded Tilting the Lens to bring visibility to inaccessibility through the three pillars of education, advocacy and design. The consultancy has advised major global brands, including Gucci, Ralph Lauren, Netflix, Pinterest and Starbucks, on their move from awareness to action. Sinéad serves on Gucci's Global Equity Board, ITV's Cultural Advisory Council, the Irish President's Council of State and Ireland's Future of Media Commission. As a public speaker and host of the As Me with Sinéad podcast, Sinéad facilitates honest conversations about identity, disability and accessibility. Her children's book, "Break the Mould", is a primer on how to take your place in the world – with lessons for all. It won the An Post Irish Book Award.



Gustavo Carona

PORTUGAL

Intensive care doctor

Gustavo is a Portuguese doctor and anaesthesiologist, specialising in intensive care. He has been actively outspoken about COVID-19 and the pandemic to raise awareness around scientific information, vaccination and mental health. Gustavo has appeared on major news channels, such as CNN, Reuters and Público, while his Facebook and Instagram accounts reach audiences of 60k and 80k, respectively. An activist and self-described dreamer, he is passionate about humanitarian medicine. Over the last years, Gustavo has joined 13 humanitarian missions to war zones with the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders. Following his first mission to Mozambique, he has travelled to various Central and Northern African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Burundi and South Sudan. In the greater Middle East, these humanitarian missions have brought him to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Palestine. His latest book, "The World Needs to Know", shares his experiences of several humanitarian missions to war-torn countries.



Mihai Danila

UNITED KINGDOM

Vice-President at BlackRock

Mihai is a value-oriented investor from the United Kingdom with extensive experience in the financial sector. In his current role as Vice-President at BlackRock, the largest asset manager in the world, his work focuses on event-driven and special situation investments in both public and private markets throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Mihai is a former executive director in the Investment Banking Division at Goldman Sachs, covering multi-billion transactions across Europe and the Middle East, prior to which he worked in mergers and acquisitions at Morgan Stanley. Mihai is also a national contests laureate in piano, maths and business ethics.



Valentina Diouf

ITALY

Professional athlete

A professional Italian volleyball player, Valentina is a true role model for girls and women in sport. She currently sports the #7 jersey for LKS Commercecon Lodz in Poland, prior to which she played for Wealth Planet Perugia in Italy. Valentina is an Ambassador for Laureus Italia and Nike Made to Play project, two initiatives which encourage inclusion, gender equality and female leadership in youth sports. Before returning to Italy to play for the Italian women's volleyball league, Serie A1, Valentina spent three seasons abroad. She played for KGC Ginseng in South Korea, where she scored a personal record of 54 points in a single match and earned her position among the top 10 best single-game scorers in the world. While playing for Associação Vôlei Bauru in Brazil, she helped lead the team to its victory at the Paulista Championship. Valentina has won gold medals with the national Italian team at the U20 World Championship and Mediterranean Games.



Maïmouna Doucouré

FRANCE

Filmmaker, Director of “Mignonnes”

A French filmmaker, Maïmouna is the Screenwriter and Director of “Mignonnes” (“Cuties”). The critically acclaimed film follows the coming-of-age story of a Senegalese-French girl and premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Directing Jury Award. It also won the International Jury Mention at the Berlinale. Based on Maïmouna’s own experiences and having spent nearly 18 months researching the hyper-sexualisation of adolescents, the script was awarded Sundance’s Global Filmmaking Award. Through her artwork, Maïmouna unapologetically sheds light on alarming societal issues to spark dialogue and challenge the status quo. Among her first projects is the short film “Maman(s)”, which screened at over 200 film festivals and won nearly 60 awards, including Best Short Film at the Toronto Film Festival, Best International Short Film at Sundance and the César for Best Short Film. In recognition of her contribution to the film industry, Maïmouna is the recipient of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ Gold Fellowship for Women.



Stevan Dojčinović

SERBIA

Investigative reporter, Editor-in-Chief of Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK)



Stevan is a Serbian reporter, specialising in the investigation of organised crime, corruption, privatisation deals and money laundering. He is the Editor-in-Chief of KRIK and the Regional Editor of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) for the Balkans, prior to which he was the founding editor-in-chief of the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia. The author of "Šarić", a book which dissects the role of the Balkan mafia in international cocaine smuggling, Steven also teaches journalists how to collect and analyse business data and property records. He has received national and international recognition for his journalistic work, most notably as the recipient of the Knight International Journalism Award, the CEI SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism and the Serbian National Award for Investigative Reporting. He was also a member of the award-winning OCCRP investigative team that uncovered links of the former Serbian government to organised crime.

Melisa Erkurt

AUSTRIA

Journalist, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Die Chefredaktion

An Austrian journalist and author, Melisa founded @die_chefredaktion, an Instagram-based medium that produces diverse journalism by and for young people. Recognising that traditional media is too far removed from teenagers and young people, the account offers younger generations a new type of interactive journalism and has enjoyed tremendous success. As Editor-in-Chief, she leads a young editorial team in the production and publication of journalistic contributions and video reports on social and political topics. Melisa also hosts the Ö1 Sprechstunde podcast and writes two weekly columns for Falter and taz magazines on education policy and equal opportunities. Her report, "Generation haram – why schools have to learn to give everyone a voice", on discrimination and restrictive culture in Austrian schools for Biber magazine is based on two years of research and first-hand experience as a former teacher. Generating significant public interest, the report went on to win Story of the Year at the Austrian Journalism Days.



Federico Fabbrini

ITALY

Full Professor at Dublin City University (DCU), Founding Director of the Brexit Institute



Federico is an Italian academic, who currently teaches at the School of Law & Government at DCU, where he is also the Director of the Law Research Center and established the Brexit Institute to explore the implications of Brexit on government, business and society from an academic and policy perspective. A qualified attorney, he has previously held academic positions in the Netherlands and Denmark and been a visiting scholar in France, Australia, Japan and the United States. Federico has authored five monographs, one textbook and over 100 articles and book chapters on European law and policy, in addition to policy reports at the request of the European Parliament and the Presidency of the Eurogroup. He has also edited numerous books and special issues for journals. In recognition of his contributions to European scholarship, Federico was awarded the European Charlemagne Prize Fellowship and knighted by the President of Italy.

Mato Franković

CROATIA

Mayor of Dubrovnik

Mato is a Croatian politician, who currently serves as the Mayor of Dubrovnik and a Member of the Croatian parliament. As mayor, he has introduced key projects, including 'Respect The City', 'Plastic Smart Cities' and 'Smart Parking Dubrovnik', to manage the city's overtourism, increase the quality of life for its citizens and develop a more sustainable city. Mato is equipped with a wealth of experience in the tourism industry and also sits on the parliament's Tourism Committee. A longstanding and active member of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Mato is the Chairman of the HDZ branch in Dubrovnik and has previously served as the party's youth president of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County and national youth vice president. He is the former director of the capital city's ACI Marina, which received multiple awards and yielded outstanding financial results under his leadership, and he previously oversaw the regional coordination of ACI's activities in the southern Adriatic region.



Andrea Fernández Benéitez

SPAIN

Secretary of Equality for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)

Andrea is a Spanish lawyer and politician, who currently serves as the Secretary of Equality for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the government's ruling party. As a Member of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, she is the Deputy Spokesperson of the Justice Commission and the First Vice President of the Commission for the audit of democratic quality, the fight against corruption and institutional and legal reforms. She is also committed to NGOs which provide free legal and psychological assistance to people who are victims of abuse and sexual violence. Andrea previously practiced corporate law and has held various positions within different youth organisations, including as a member of the Permanent Commission of the School Council of Castile and León, and as the secretary-general of the Autonomous Federation of Student Associations (FADAE).

Liza Gashi

KOSOVO

Kosovar Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora

A Kosovar innovator and entrepreneur, Liza is shaping public discourse around diaspora and civic engagement. As Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, she advocates for the advancement of Kosovo's policies, legislation and institutional approaches regarding diaspora engagement. She founded the Kosovar committee for the United World Colleges (UWC), a global movement that promotes education as a force to unite people, nationals and cultures, where she served as chairwoman for over a decade. Liza is well known as the Founder and former executive director of GERMIN, an NGO that uses technology and virtual channels to connect and engage with the diaspora community to advance the socio-economic development and democratisation of the Western Balkan region. Additionally, Liza is also the Co-Founder and former managing director of KosovoDiaspora.org, a crowdsourcing digital engagement and diplomacy platform that connects Kosovars to the world and vice versa to promote Kosovo's statehood internationally.



Iva Gumnishka

BULGARIA

Founder and CEO of Humans in the Loop



A Bulgarian social entrepreneur, Iva is the Founder and CEO of Humans in the Loop, which provides remote online employment to conflict-affected and displaced people, such as refugees, in the field of dataset annotation and model validation for computer vision and artificial intelligence. The award-winning social enterprise has provided work and training opportunities for over 500 people in Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Yemen, and maintains a dedicated programme to promote the economic inclusion of women. Humans in the Loop is part of MIT SOLVE's 'Good Jobs and Inclusive Entrepreneurship' cohort of social enterprises and has also been awarded by the Global Innovators programme of the Dubai 2020 World Expo. Iva is passionate about promoting the role of humans in AI pipelines and the mitigation of bias in AI systems through diverse and representative data. She is also part of Forbes 30 under 30 in her country.

Audrey Hanard

BELGIUM

**Chair of the Board of Directors at bpost,
Associate Partner at Dalberg Advisors**

Audrey is a Belgian businesswoman with a wealth of experience in advising corporate, government and philanthropic clients on a range of development and social impact topics. As an Associate Partner at Dalberg Advisors, she works with clients to improve education, employment and health outcomes worldwide through the development, implementation and impact evaluation of inclusive development strategies. Audrey currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors at bpost, leading the Belgian postal operator's transition from a mail to parcel network. She is the Chair of the Board at Be education, an organisation that supports the improvement of education in Belgium. Audrey is also the Co-Founder and former operational director of Spectralys Biotech, a start-up that provides a unique protein analysis technology for the biopharmaceutical industry. She was previously the president of Groupe Vendredi, a think tank focused on societal issues in Belgium, and head of philanthropy at Telos Impact, a venture philanthropy firm.



Katinka Hosszú

HUNGARY

Competitive swimmer



Nicknamed the 'Iron Lady', Katinka is a competitive swimmer from Hungary. The three-time Olympic gold medallist, nine-time World Champion and 14-time European Champion holds 96 medals and aims to be the first swimmer with 100. Katinka is the only swimmer ever to hold all five individual medley world records at the same time. Recognised as the most versatile swimmer in the world, she has been named Female Swimmer of the Year by the International Swimming Federation (FINA) four times and Hungarian Sportswoman of the Year seven times. Katinka founded the Iron Swim Club in Budapest for recreational and professional swimmers, preparing athletes of all ages for domestic and international competitions. The swimming icon currently competes for her own team, Team Iron, as its captain and is a Founding Member of the International Swimming League, an annual team-based swimming competition established by a group of athletes.

Justas Janauskas

LITHUANIA

Serial entrepreneur, Co-Founder of Vinted

Justas is a Lithuanian entrepreneur and the Co-Founder of Lithuania's first unicorn start-up, Vinted. The mobile shopping platform for second-hand fashion is Europe's largest online customer-to-customer (C2C) marketplace in Europe. Operational in 15 countries with over 45mn users, the platform has continued to experience tremendous growth, as consumption patterns continue to shift against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Justas served as Vinted's CEO for nearly a decade. A serial angel investor who offers his expertise and financial support to young entrepreneurs, Justas has backed a wide range of projects, including Memby, an after-school online learning platform, the sustainable Local Ocean shrimp farm, as well as Dogo, a mobile app for dog training that has been named Apple's App of the Day in countries across North America, Europe and Australia.



Tea Jarc

SLOVENIA

President of Sindikat Mladi plus, President of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) Youth Committee



Tea is a grassroots youth activist from Slovenia, who campaigns for social justice and actively engages in various social movements. As President of the ETUC Youth Committee, she leads the organisation in its mission to amplify the voice of the European youth workforce. Tea is also the President of Sindikat Mladi plus, a Slovenian youth trade union that represents working and unemployed Slovenian young people and students, including high school students, and seeks to protect their social and labour rights. A freelance educator, trainer and facilitator, Tea also hosts a podcast, which covers labour issues and explores labour policy alternatives that prioritise the well-being of citizens and the environment.

Toms Jurjevs

LATVIA

Founder and CEO of Sun Finance Group

Toms is a Latvian entrepreneur in the fintech industry. He is the Founder and CEO of Sun Finance Group, a fintech company that operates a user-friendly online and mobile lending platform. One of the fastest growing companies in Europe, Sun Finance has expanded its operations beyond Latvia to Denmark, Poland, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Vietnam and Sweden and secured over €1.2bn in loans to clients who have been typically unable to access funding. He has also launched two additional successful businesses, supporting their growth in the start-up stage and development as international multi-million companies. Toms is also the Founder and Chairman of the Council at the Alternative Financial Services Association of Latvia, which connects fintech and other companies in order to promote responsible practices and cooperation in the sector.



Nektarios Kalantzis

GREECE

President of the European Local Leaders



Nektarios is a Greek politician with a passion for good local governance. He currently serves as the President of the European Local Leaders, a committee of young European politicians that have been elected at the regional or local level. The initiative aims to promote creativity and share pioneering ideas among the new generation of locally elected officials throughout cities across Europe, with a focus on climate change, environmental protection, smart cities and new technologies. Nektarios is also the President of the Union of Young Local Councillors of Greece, which brings together newly elected regional and municipal councillors, governors, deputy mayors and mayors in Greece and organises events on the role of local governments in the development of smarter and greener cities. He is also the Municipal Councillor of the Pallini Municipality in Greece, prior to which he has served as a member of the Municipal Council.

Benjamina Karić

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Mayor of Sarajevo

A Bosnian politician, Benjamina is the Mayor of the City of Sarajevo, the second woman to serve the office in the history of the city, and the Vice-President of the Social Democratic Party. As mayor, she has spearheaded a number of green infrastructure projects, including a large park in the heart of Sarajevo and a bike path that connects the city to the nearby town of Pale. Benjamina is the youngest doctor of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first post-war doctor of classical Roman law. An Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Travnik, she has authored over 50 publications books, articles, reviews and translations from Latin to Bosnian. Benjamina is also a Founding Member of BATHINVS, an association which studies and promotes the Illyrian heritage and ancient and classical civilisations.



Leszek Konrad Jaźdżewski

POLAND

Editor-in-Chief of Liberté!



A Polish writer, speaker and activist, Leszek is the Editor-in-Chief of Liberté!, a journal which he founded over a decade ago to promote freedom, share ideas and counter populism. He is the co-creator of Freedom Games, an interdisciplinary event that gathers 4,000 attendees and 350 speakers to discuss the key challenges Western societies must face in the 21st century. Leszek is also the Founder and CEO of Bookme, an app which makes reading internet-friendly. He currently serves on the Council of European Forum for New Ideas and recently completed a policy fellowship at the European University Institute in Florence, where his work focused on how the narrative of change could counter the rise of populism in EU member states, overcome the European identity crisis and strengthen transnational governance.

Pavlos Kontides

CYPRUS

Competitive sailor, Olympic medallist

A competitive sailor from Cyprus, Pavlos is an Olympic medallist and the first and only athlete to win an Olympic medal for the country. Following his historic win, he went on to place second at the International Laser Class Association (ILCA) World Championship and then earned the title of World Champion for two consecutive years, as well as European Champion. Pavlos has been recognised as the Cyprus Athlete of the Year seven times. He is a true role model for young athletes and actively supports the sporting community in his country. Ahead of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games, Pavlos launched the #TowardsTokyo campaign to financially support five promising Cypriot athletes in their preparations to qualify for the national Olympics team, four of which were successful in reaching Tokyo.



Christina Krzyrosiak Hansen

DENMARK

Mayor of Holbæk Municipality



A Danish politician who became Mayor of Holbæk Municipality on her 25th birthday, Christina is the country's youngest mayor ever, simultaneously tackling age and gender stereotypes. Labelled Denmark's poorest municipality at the start of her term, Holbæk's finances have significantly improved under Christina's leadership, having exercised tight financial management and prioritised previously neglected areas, including primary and lower secondary schools. Her fresh approach to local politics is characterised by greater engagement with the community. She partakes in an 'internship' every Tuesday to gain insight into different sectors across the municipality and was recognised for her efforts with the Dialogue Prize at Folkemødet. She previously served as a municipal council member. An established member of the Danish Social Democratic Youth (DSU) and the Social Democrats, she is the former chairman of DSU Holbæk and former deputy to the party association's main board.

Arancha Martínez Fernández

SPAIN

Founder of It-willbe.org, Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain

Arancha is a Spanish social innovator on a mission to maximise the impact of social projects. With 13 years of experience in the field of humanitarian aid, Arancha is tackling poverty through innovation and reshaping the world of philanthropy. She founded It-willbe.org to maximise aid and funds by leveraging data to understand the dimensions and significance of problems faced by vulnerable people. Its largest project, the People's Protection App, promotes the right to identity by accurately identifying homeless minors through biometrical recognition and data processing software, making "invisible" people visible. Arancha is also the Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain, the first blockchain-backed platform to measure and report social impact across entire value chains, providing the social sector with the traceability and transparency it needs to transform society. In recognition of her work, she has received the European Commission's EU Prize for Women Innovators and the Princess of Girona Social Award.



Marie Mawad

FRANCE

Journalist, Dean of the Sciences Po Journalism School

Marie is a Paris-based journalist and the Dean of the Sciences Po Journalism School. She has spent the past 15 years in international newsrooms, including Bloomberg and Reuters, digging into how technology has changed the economy, politics and culture across Europe. She has written extensively about innovation policies in the EU, in the face of US and Chinese tech giants. Passionate about the crucial role that information plays for society, citizens and businesses, she is responsible for Sciences Po's strategy in training future journalists who will go the extra mile to understand the world and decode it. Marie is also a Senior Reporter and Editorial and Business Strategist at Sifted, a new digital media venture backed by The Financial Times and focused on European start-ups.



Soheil Mirpour

GERMANY

Member of the Management Board of Rocket Internet, Partner at Global Founders Capital

Soheil is a Member of the Management Board of Rocket Internet, Europe's largest incubator for technology companies. He is also a Partner at the company's investment arm, Global Founders Capital, which is among of largest venture capital firms in Europe. Prior to his current roles, Soheil gained experience in private equity and investment banking at two leading global investment firms, KKR and Morgan Stanley. He started his career at Rocket Internet as a co-founder and managing director of marketplaces in the Middle East. Devoted to social causes that benefit youths from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, Soheil currently works as a mentor in the Deutschlandstiftung mentorship programme and serves on the Board of InteGREATer.



Sophie Mousel

LUXEMBOURG

Actress



Sophie is a Luxembourgish actress, well known for her roles in the crime series, "City Hunter" ("Nicky Larson et le parfum de Cupidon") and Netflix's "Capitani". A linguaphile, Sophie is building her international portfolio, playing roles in German, French and English. Most recently, she has starred in movies within the drama and thriller categories, including "An Zéro - Comment le Luxembourg a disparu" and "Skin Walker". Sophie has also appeared in a number of theatre productions, including "Ivanov" and "Le jeu de l'amour et du hazard". In her first leading role and big screen debut, Sophie played a rebellious teenager in the French comedy, "Le Correspondant". During her studies, Sophie was among those selected to join the world renowned Classe libre at the Cours Florent.

Talitha Muusse

THE NETHERLANDS

Chief Impact Officer at Blikverruimers, Founder of Energieboot

A Dutch businesswoman and entrepreneur passionate about sustainability and innovation, Talitha is involved with a number of social initiatives. She launched Blikverruimers, a training programme and recruitment selection agency for young professionals in the Netherlands, who aspire to become business leaders. She is also the driving force behind Energieboot, a leadership programme for young professionals developing sustainable energy projects. As one of the faces of the Coalition-Y movement, a partnership of youth, trade union and climate organisations, Talitha promotes youth participation in society. She also regularly appears on talk shows and previously hosted the current affairs TV programme, Opt1. She started her career at MVO Nederland, an organisation which guides companies in corporate social responsibility, where she became the youngest member to sit on a supervisory board in the Netherlands nearly a decade ago. Talitha is also Member of the Advisory Board at the research institute TNO.



Aleksandar Nikoloski

NORTH MACEDONIA

Vice-President of the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

A Member of the Assembly of North Macedonia, Aleksandar is the Vice-President of the country's main opposition party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). Committed to tackling corruption and pursuing the country's EU membership, he serves as the Chairman of the National European Integration Council, in which role he facilitates the country's EU accession talks. Aleksandar is a Vice-President of the European People's Party group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where he also sits on the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. He previously served as vice president of PACE, first vice-chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, as well as the Monitoring Committee. Prior to his entry in politics, Aleksandar was the secretary of FRESTA, a programme led by the Danish Foreign Ministry to promote the NGO community and interethnic dialogue in south-eastern Europe.



Paolo Petrocelli

ITALY

Director-General for the Stauffer Center for Strings

Paolo is the Founding Director-General of the Stauffer Center for Strings in Italy, the first international music centre for higher education dedicated entirely to string instruments. Paolo's work is driven by the belief that culture, arts and education are a major force for growth, development and change on the global level. He is the Founder and President of EMMA for Peace (Euro-Mediterranean Music Academy), among the largest international non-profit organisations for the promotion of a culture of peace through music diplomacy and education in Europe, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Paolo is the Founder and Honorary President of the Italian Youth Association for UNESCO, the largest youth organisation in the UNESCO system, and Cultural Diplomacy Officer for the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates. A performing arts manager, professor and researcher, he has become an influential global cultural leader, collaborating with renowned organisations and artists, including the United Nations, European Commission, Rome Opera House and Coldplay.





Johny Pitts

UNITED KINGDOM

Multi-disciplinary artist

Johny is a writer, photographer and broadcaster, known for his work in exploring African-European identities. He is the curator of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) award-winning Afropean.com, and the author of "Afropean: Notes From Black Europe". He currently co-hosts the 'Open Book' literature programme for BBC Radio 4 and is the creator of a forthcoming Afropean podcast funded by the National Geographical Society. Johny has contributed words and images for The Guardian, The New Statesman, The New York Times and CondéNast Traveller, and in recognition of his work, has received the Jhalak Prize, the Bread & Roses Award for Radical Publishing, the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding and the European Essay Prize. He is the recipient of the inaugural Ampersand/Photoworks Fellowship and will be exhibiting a new body of photographic work called 'Home is Not a Place' in a touring exhibition beginning in 2022.

Josef Průša

CZECH REPUBLIC

Founder and CEO of Prusa Research

Josef founded the Prague-based open-source 3D printing house, Prusa Research, famous for its award-winning Original Prusa i3 3D printer, which is also one of the largest in the world. The start-up prides itself on its craftsmanship, developing its own hardware and software, and its most notable feature is a large hall, nicknamed 'The Farm', of over 500 printers that create printer parts. Prusa Research aims to develop as many parts as possible on-site, challenging reliance on global supply chains. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Prusa Research developed protective medical shields and shared plans on how to replicate the product on social media networks, a commendable action for which Josef received the Czech Red Cross. Josef started off his career as a core developer of the RepRap project, famed for starting the open-source 3D printer revolution by creating a printer that can print its own parts, after discovering his interest in 3D printing at university.



Marko Russiver

ESTONIA

Founder and CEO of Grantful



An Estonian designer and innovator, Marko is passionate about the open sharing of knowledge and its capabilities to shape the future. Having most recently founded Grantful, he helped launched a global online hackathon series, Hack the Crisis and The Global Hack, to address challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Marko delivered a TED talk on how the initiative could create solutions for the post-pandemic world. He is the Co-Founder and former CEO of Guaana, an online platform that connects scientists and researchers to break down barriers between disciplines. Marko is a Member of Accelerate Estonia's Advisory Board, the Estonian Founders Society and the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs' mental health think tank. He has worked closely with research organisations and government institutions, including CERN, the European Space Agency, Dubai Future Foundation and the European Commission, to empower researchers and innovators. Marko previously worked as a creative and art director at branding and service design companies.

Gundbert Scherf

GERMANY

Co-Founder, President and COO of Helsing

A German technology expert, Gundbert's personal mission is to make technology work for the purpose of democratic defence and security institutions. He co-founded Helsing, a security and artificial intelligence company that specialises in real-time information processing software, with the aim of strengthening Europe's liberal democracies by providing the clearest image possible of an operating environment. Assisting democratic governments in becoming technology makers not takers, Helsing has quickly become one of the fastest growing tech companies in Europe. A self-described 'transatlanticist', Gundbert is also a Member of Atlantik-Brücke, a non-profit association which aims to deepen transatlantic cooperation. Gundbert previously served as a commissioner at the German Federal Ministry of Defence, in which role he contributed to the design of the Cyber and Information Domain Command, a new military service related to the information domain.



Michal Šimečka

SLOVAKIA

Vice-President of the European Parliament

Michal is the first Slovak politician to serve as a Vice-President of the European Parliament. The highest-ranked Slovak in the Parliament's history, Michal is responsible for democracy and human rights. He is a former vice-president of Renew Europe and was the rapporteur for a key proposal to introduce a new mechanism for the protection of democracy, the rule of law and European values in member states. A champion of a free, secure and democratic Europe, Michal is a Founding Member and the Vice-President of the Progressive Slovakia, a pro-European party in Slovakia. Previously, he worked as a senior researcher at the Institute of International Relations Prague, studying European integration and security, and served as an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Michal began his professional career as a journalist for SME, a Slovak newspaper, and then the Financial Times.

Tamara Srzentić

MONTENEGRO

Montenegrin Minister for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media

Tamara currently serves as the Minister of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media in Montenegro, in which role she advocates for public administration reform, digital transformation and the development of e-government services. Prior to her current role, Tamara was integral to the launch of the Government of California's Digital Innovation Office, established to improve the state's digital services. In this capacity, she led the COVID-19 digital response, the Policy Design Lab and the Inclusive by Design initiative. She is also the Co-Founder and former deputy director of the Office of Innovation at the California Health and Human Services Agency, where she was responsible for driving innovation to provide critical healthcare and social services. She has been involved with a number of organisations and programmes, including Alchemist, CivicMakers, Code for America, New America and most recently, Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), where she provides support for public administration reform in the Western Balkans.



Fatma Taspinar

BELGIUM

Journalist and News Anchor at VRT

Fatma is a Belgian journalist and news anchor, specialising in justice and criminal law. She has worked at VRT for over a decade and currently hosts the “Het Journaal” evening news programme on the Flemish broadcaster’s main channel, One. In the documentary series, “De Cel Vermiste Personen” (“The Missing Persons Cell”), Latma dives into the work of the federal police unit that investigates disappearances. Her television programme, “Mij overkomt het niet” (“It does not happen to me”), explores guilt and grief through a series of interviews with people that have unintentionally caused a deadly accident. Fatma also speaks with the families, judges, prosecutors and social workers involved in the tragic events. Throughout its first season, the programme attracted almost 900,000 viewers each week. A former newsreader at Studio Brussel and Radio 1, Fatma began her professional career as an editor at Reyers Laat, a late-night talk show on Canvas, a VRT channel.



Caroline Walerud

SWEDEN

Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of AirForestry and Volumental

Caroline is a Swedish entrepreneur at the helm of deep tech and green tech start-ups. She co-founded AirForestry to reinvent sustainable forestry by enabling better biodiversity, gentler thinning and higher uptake of carbon dioxide through the use of electric drones. She is also the Co-Founder of Volumental, using 3D scanning and AI to shape a future free from sizes and creating a world where every body fits, and a Partner at Walerud Ventures, a pre-seed investment firm with a focus on green tech start-ups. Having advised the Swedish government on its start-up policy, she continues to promote entrepreneurship as a Member of the Sting Incubator Advisory Board, Prince Daniel's Fellow and mentor at Creative Destruction Lab, a deep tech incubator. Caroline has been named the Swedish Supertalent of the Year and among Sweden's top serial entrepreneurs under 40 by the country's Business Week magazine.



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