



Class of 2023

# European Young Leaders

# 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.

## Our partners



John S. Latsis  
Public Benefit Foundation



Fondazione  
**CARIPLO**  
TUTTE SERVARE. MUNIFICENTIA DONARE. 1916



*Coca-Cola*  
in Europe



Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union

# Class of 2023

*Position held at the time of nomination*

## Ifrah Ahmed

IRELAND

**Founder of the Ifrah Foundation**

Ifrah Ahmed is a Somali-Irish social activist and advocate for the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM). She is the Founder of the Ifrah Foundation, devoted to the elimination of FGM in her native Somalia and the Horn of Africa. As a child, Ahmed underwent forced mutilation and later fled to Ireland during the war in Somalia in her teenage years, where she was granted political asylum. She became the first woman to broadcast her testimony about undergoing FGM and has served as an advisor to the Somali president and government on gender. Ahmed is also a multi-award winning international advocate for the global elimination of FGM. Along with community empowerment, media and film are central tools to her advocacy work. She has made a short documentary on the death of a 10-year-old girl due to FGM-induced complications. The award-winning, feature-length film "A Girl from Mogadishu" documents her experiences of gender-based violence and turns it into a force for change.



## Adis Ahmetovic

GERMANY

**Member of the Bundestag**

Adis Ahmetović is a German politician with roots in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who represents Hanover in the German Bundestag. An advocate of transparency, accountability and citizen engagement, Ahmetović's political work primarily focuses on foreign policy issues, as well as climate and energy policy. In the German Bundestag, he is a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and a Deputy Member of the Defence Committee. A strong supporter of the accession of the Western Balkan states to the European Union, Ahmetović is the rapporteur for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) parliamentary group for the Western Balkans, as well as for civil crisis prevention, conflict management and networked action, and co-rapporteur for South Asia. Furthermore, he has been appointed by his parliamentary group as spokesperson for the subcommittee on international climate and energy policy. Involved in local organisations, he is the Co-Chair of the Hanover SPD City Association and Vice-President of the German Red Cross in Hanover. Before entering the Bundestag, Ahmetović served in the State Chancellery of Lower Saxony as an advisor on government planning and policy issues.



# Rim-Sarah Alouane

FRANCE

**Legal scholar and commentator**

Rim-Sarah Alouane is a French legal scholar and commentator. Her research focuses on religious freedom, civil liberties, constitutional law and human rights across Europe and North America, with a special focus on France. Alouane has explored these issues as a guest lecturer at Georgetown University, Harvard Law School, Sorbonne and Sciences Po, among others. Her works have been published by the Atlantic Council, the Brookings Institution, *The New York Times* and *Foreign Policy* magazine. Alouane also regularly appears on TV and radio outlets worldwide, including NPR, Al Jazeera, BBC and France24, to discuss issues such as discrimination, human rights and politics. Notably, she has been vocal about the rise of far-right politics and anti-Muslim hatred, specifically providing her expert commentary on bodily autonomy given policy developments regarding bans on hijabs and burkinis in France.



# Camilla Appelgren

MALTA

**Chief Patrolling Ranger at the Heritage Parks Federation**

Camilla Appelgren is an environmental activist, who hails from Sweden but has called Malta home for over two decades. She founded Malta Clean Up to inspire citizen climate action by organising monthly clean-ups in different locations across the island, as well as to mobilise public support for clean-up and waste reduction efforts in the face of environmental degradation. Appelgren also built up the patrolling ranger unit at the Majjistral National Park. Her role is to ensure adherence to the park's site regulations and documentation of environmental crimes, such as poaching and dumping of waste. A strong advocate against single-use plastics, she strives towards a zero-waste lifestyle and encourages others to adopt sustainable practices in their everyday lives. Appelgren ran as a Democratic Party (PD) candidate in the 2019 European elections. Although she was not elected to the European Parliament, the support she received from voters defied expectations, in no small part due to her passion for the environment and commitment to her community.





# Anders Bæksgaard

DENMARK

**Editor and Head of Politics, National Security and Public Administration at *Politiken***

Anders Bæksgaard is a political journalist from Denmark, who currently co-leads one of the country's largest newsrooms at the prestigiously regarded newspaper, *Politiken*. He also heads the daily newspaper's department on politics, national security and public administration. Bæksgaard has extensively covered the last three general elections in Denmark, while also providing political analysis for DR and TV2, two of the country's major TV stations. The youngest political editor in Denmark at the time of his appointment, he previously headed the *Politiken* political editorial office after starting his career at *Politiken* as a political reporter. Bæksgaard has also covered Danish politics at the *Berlingske Tidende* daily newspaper's editorial office and worked as a news coordinator at the Berlingske News Agency, beginning his journalism career as a researcher at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation.



# Andrea Barber Lazcano

SPAIN

**Co-Founder and CEO of RatedPower**



Andrea Barber Lazcano is a Spanish entrepreneur and champion of sustainable energy. As the Co-Founder and CEO of RatedPower, she leads the sustainable and energy-efficient design and construction of solar photovoltaic (PV) plants. The award-winning, cloud-based software company's pvDesign is a game-changing technology that has transformed and revolutionised traditional engineering through optimisation and automation in order to improve the performance and profitability of solar PV plants. Barber Lazcano is on a mission to accelerate the energy transition by contributing to the widespread use of solar energy, reducing CO2 emissions and increasing the competitiveness of sustainable energy worldwide, with plans to expand beyond the solar sector and into the wind and storage sectors. A champion of female entrepreneurship, Barber Lazcano also hosts the *Vostok 6* podcast, which gives visibility to the stories of trailblazing women, in order to inspire and empower listeners.

# Hervé Berville

FRANCE

**French State Secretary for the Sea**

Hervé Berville is a French economist and politician, who serves as the country's State Secretary for the Sea, in which role he is responsible for the development and implementation of the government's policy related to the sea, particularly the maritime economy. He has been elected twice to the French parliament, *Assemblée nationale*. Having authored a report on the modernisation of French foreign aid policy to support equal partnerships with Africa, Asia and Latin America, Berville was also the rapporteur of a programming bill on solidarity-based development and the fight against global inequalities. Both activities successfully led to the allocation of development funding. Berville began his political career as the spokesperson for *La République en Marche* parliamentary group, prior to which he worked as an economist for the French Development Agency in Mozambique and as a programme manager for the Stanford Institute for Innovation in Developing Economies in Kenya.



# Giulia Bonfà

ITALY

**Lieutenant Commander in the Italian Navy**

Giulia Bonfà serves in the Italian Navy as one of the 10% of women who make up the Italian Armed Forces. She currently works on maritime policy and international relations as part of the Italian Navy General Staff, prior to which she served as the flag aide in Operation IRINI, which aims to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya. Most notably, Bonfà became the commanding officer of a minesweeper ship, the *Chioggia*, at the age of 33. An anti-submarine warfare specialist, she has served in the future operation branch of the Italian Navy Fleet Command and spent several years on board the Italian destroyer *Andrea Doria* and frigate *Zeffiro*. Bonfà took part in the biggest NATO anti-submarine warfare exercise, Dynamic Manta, as well as several maritime exercises and real-world missions, including the EU's first-ever naval operation, Atalanta. She has also been deployed to Lebanon, where she acted as the deputy commander of the Italian joint multimodal operational unit within a UN-led operation.



# Eleanor Carter

UNITED KINGDOM

**Research Director of the Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab) at the University of Oxford**

A British academic, Eleanor Carter is a Research Fellow at the University of Oxford Blavatnik School of Government and the Research Director of the Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab). GO Lab is a research and policy centre that considers, designs and evaluates new approaches to improve social outcomes. Addressing challenges in public service outsourcing and the structure of partnerships between the government, private sector and other organisations, her research explores the potential of novel contracting arrangements, such as social outcomes contracts and impact bonds, in order to facilitate purposeful partnerships and effective services. A former policy advisor to the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office on social investment and finance, Carter has also undertaken collaborative research projects with the Department for Work and Pensions. Her research has influenced policy design and evaluation strategies of government departments, and her work has also been published in leading policy journals.



# Saska Cvetkovska

NORTH MACEDONIA

**Co-Founder, President and Editor-in-Chief of the Investigative Reporting Lab**

An award-winning investigative reporter from North Macedonia, Saska Cvetkovska co-founded the Investigative Reporting Lab, a non-profit media organisation that operates in the Balkans. As the Editor-in-Chief, she works to increase the impact of investigating reporting by creating new narratives through film and campaigning. Cvetkovska currently produces "Редакција" ("Newsroom"), a documentary series that follows investigative journalists to increase public trust in the media. Cvetkovska has worked on national and cross-border investigations that have exposed domestic and transnational crime, corruption, the illicit trade of arms and disinformation wars. Notably, she was the lead reporter of 'Spooks and Spin – Information War in the Balkans', the Organized Crime and Corruption Project (OCCRP) project that exposed Russian and US influence in information warfare during the 2016 US presidential election. In addition to offering pro bono training to justice institutions and mentoring young journalists, Cvetkovska has developed the Mediapedia database of media ownership and Getdata, an online tool that maps data resources.





# Annita Demetriou

CYPRUS

**President of the Cypriot House of Representatives**

Annita Demetriou is the first woman and youngest person to serve as the President of the House of Representatives of Cyprus. A strong female figure on an island long-dominated by male politicians, Demetriou is among the eight women who currently serve in the country's 56-seat parliamentary body. The Cypriot politician has championed women's rights and gender equality, most notably having delivered legislation that criminalises sexism and discrimination against women. Demetriou firmly believes that equal participation in decision-making is essential for a functioning democracy. She is the Vice President of the liberal-conservative Democratic Rally (DISY) party. She is also a Women Political Leaders' Ambassador on behalf of the Cypriot House of Representatives. Throughout her two terms as a Member of the House of Representatives, Demetriou has served as the deputy chair of parliamentary committees on equal opportunities between men and women, as well as education and culture. She has also acted as the spokesperson of the Cypriot president during his election campaign.



# Daumantas Dvilinskas

LITHUANIA

**Co-Founder and CEO of TransferGo**

A serial entrepreneur and fintech expert from Lithuania, Daumantas Dvilinskas is the Co-Founding CEO of TransferGo, a London-based, high-growth and purely digital global money transfer service. Its innovative digital 'local in, local out' business model works with banks worldwide to enable cheaper, faster and safer cross-border money transfers. TransferGo's main goal is to increase the accessibility of transfers to migrant workers, who make regular payments to their families back at home, by reducing costs and facilitating same-day purchasing power. Dvilinskas challenges monopolies in the banking industry by targeting niche customers with a superior product experience. He has also co-founded Pinevio, a social content discovery platform that enables users to discover content from people with shared interests. Dvilinskas is a recipient of the Global Lithuanian Award, which is bestowed upon Lithuanian diaspora professionals in recognition of their contribution to the economy, science, culture and international presence of Lithuania.





# Emine Dzhaparova

UKRAINE

**Ukrainian First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Emine Dzhaparova serves as the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. She is responsible for policy planning, cooperation with international organisations, public diplomacy and the Ukrainian Institute's activities, representing Ukrainian culture to the world. She joined the MFA as the First Deputy Minister with the idea to establish the Crimea Platform aimed at the de-occupation of the Crimean peninsula. Today, this unique diplomatic tool unites over 60 countries and international organisations. Dzhaparova is also a Chairperson of the National Commission of Ukraine for UNESCO and coordinates cooperation with the organisation. Prior to this, she was a journalist in Crimea and witnessed the 2014 occupation of the peninsula by Russian invaders. As a Crimean Tatar, she has dedicated her life to the liberation of her homeland and her compatriots. After being forced to leave the peninsula, Dzhaparova served as the first deputy minister of information policy of Ukraine and considerably contributed to strengthening Ukraine's strategic communications both domestically and abroad. Dzhaparova was awarded the Mark Palmer Prize for her support of the Ukrainian people, especially Crimean Tatars, and her leadership in the fight against Russian aggression.



# Yann Fleureau

FRANCE

**Co-Founder of Cardiologs**

Yann Fleureau is a French engineer, entrepreneur and thought leader in the application of artificial intelligence in healthcare. He co-founded Cardiologs to enhance cardiac care and specifically heart disease diagnostics through the use of AI and cloud technology. The medical technology start-up is famed for developing one of the world's first CE-marked and FDA-approved medical devices powered by deep learning technology. Under Fleureau's leadership as CEO, Cardiologs became a market leader in the United States and diagnoses over two million patients worldwide each year. Named BNP Paribas European Innovator of the Year and among the *MIT Technology Review* Innovators Under 35 Europe, Fleureau is now pursuing new projects to positively impact the field of digital medicine through deep technology. He is also an active investor in deep medical and biotechnologies, including surgical robotics, alternative proteins and AI diagnostics.



# Gustaf Göthberg

SWEDEN

**Member of the Riksdag**

Gustaf Göthberg is a Swedish politician and represents Gothenburg in the national parliament, where he belongs to the Moderate Party and sits on the Committee of Defence. Passionate about foreign and security policy, he supports stronger EU policies towards Russia and China, as well as defence cooperation and migration policy. Göthberg serves on the Swedish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where he also sits on the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. He is committed to reducing poverty through trade, specifically free trade agreements, and increasing human rights protection for persecuted groups. Prior to being elected to the Riksdag, Göthberg worked on development in Belarus, Russia and eastern Europe at the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation. He has served in several departments within the City of Gothenburg's administration, as well as the Stockholm County Council. He began his career in politics as a political advisor to the Moderate Party. Additionally, Göthberg maintains a long-standing background at the Moderate Youth Association, where he held roles as the international secretary and foreign policy spokesperson.



# Jasminko Halilović

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**Founder and CEO of the War Childhood Museum**

Jasminko Halilović is a leading conflict researcher from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who compiled short recollections from people who experienced the Bosnian War as children into "War Childhood". The award-winning book has now been translated into six languages. He went on to establish the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, the world's only museum exclusively dedicated to childhoods affected by armed conflict. Awarded the Council of Europe Museum Prize, the museum aims to raise awareness of the specific experience through archived materials, from drawings to personal belongings, and motivate adults to consider the consequences of war. Halilović has developed the museum from a small local initiative into an international non-profit with offices in Sarajevo, Kyiv, The Hague and New York City. A serial entrepreneurial since his teenage years, Halilović has co-founded several companies. His passion for peacebuilding and entrepreneurship has earned him spots as a keynote speaker and guest lecturer at universities and conferences in over 15 countries.



# Pia Henrietta Moon

FINLAND

**Co-Founder and CEO of Carbo Culture**

Pia Henrietta Moon is the Co-Founder and CEO of Carbo Culture, a climate technology company on a mission to remove one billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere annually. Carbo Culture removes carbon by converting CO<sub>2</sub> from plant waste into a stable form of carbon, also generating renewable energy and carbon credits in the process. Carbo Culture's breakthrough carbon removal solution solves key scalability challenges of the carbon removal industry. Her prior experience includes growing two organisations in ed-tech: Mehackit, which provides creative technology courses for youth to experience building technology, and Rails Girls, a global non-profit that organised open-source weekend workshops for women to dive into the world of technology. Given her management expertise, Moon was the youngest board member of a publicly traded company in Finland, YE International. Named a Bloomberg New Economy Catalyst, she is also an alumna of Stanford's StartX founder community.



# Monika Herceg

CROATIA

**Writer, editor**

Monika Herceg is a poet, playwright, editor, feminist and activist from Croatia, who also creates and coordinates cultural programmes. Her work explores poverty, domestic violence, migration, and class and gender inequalities. In her debut poetry collection *"Početne coordinate"* ("Initial Coordinates"), Herceg portrays the lives of women in rural Croatia throughout the 20th century to tell stories of poverty and struggle, recounted through the voices of her own family members. The critically acclaimed collection has been awarded the Goran and Kvirin awards for young poets, the Slavić Award, the Mostovi Struge international award, as well as the Fran Galović Award in recognition of its discussion around homeland and identity. Her drama scripts, short stories and books, including *"Lovostaj"* ("The Closed Season") and *"Vrijeme prije jezika"* ("Time Before the Tongue"), have enjoyed similar successes. Altogether, her works have been translated into over 15 languages and she has received more than 15 literature awards.





# Laurent Hublet

BELGIUM

**Co-Founder and Managing Director of BeCentral**

Nicknamed 'the philosopher of tech', Laurent Hublet is a Belgian entrepreneur, who champions investment in human capital and skills as a means to strengthen the social pact between the public and the government. He founded BeCentral, the largest tech campus in Europe in terms of the number of people (re) trained, with the belief that every citizen, regardless of their age, gender, colour or culture, should have the opportunity to become a digital native and an actor of the digital revolution. An angel investor in over 15 digital start-ups, Hublet is also behind the We Are Founders programme, which assists non-entrepreneurs in launching start-ups. In the academic arena, he is the Co-Academic Director of an executive programme at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, which focuses on responsible and ethical approaches to management. Hublet has previously served in the cabinet of the Belgian deputy prime minister and advised on the digital strategy of the federal government.



# Darren Jones

UNITED KINGDOM

**Chair of the UK House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee**

Darren Jones is a British Labour politician, who currently serves as the Chair of the House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee, in which role he holds the government to account on workers' rights, business and industrial policy, research and development, and climate change targets. He also sits on the Liaison Committee, the only committee to question the prime minister, and the National Security Strategy Joint Committee. Representing Bristol North West, he earned his seat by overturning a Conservative majority and has gained strong voter support in subsequent elections. A climate advocate, Jones introduced the first citizens' assembly on net-zero emissions to the Parliament of the United Kingdom and scrutinised the government's deliver of net-zero targets at COP26 in Glasgow. A lawyer who specialised in technology law, he is a leading voice on technology policy and founded the Interparliamentary Forum on Emerging Technologies.



# Ahmad Joudeh

THE NETHERLANDS

**Artistic Director of the Dance or Die Foundation**

Ahmad Joudeh is a ballet dancer and choreographer, who obtained Dutch nationality. He was trained as a dancer in Syria, where he was born as a stateless refugee. During the civil war, he gave free dance classes to war-orphans and young people with Down's syndrome. As a response to the constant threats from extremists because of his dance activities, Joudeh had the words 'dance or die' tattooed on his body. Upon an invitation to join the Dutch National Ballet, he moved to the Netherlands to dance with the prestigious company. He is the Artistic Director of the Dance or Die Foundation, a non-profit organisation that aims to contribute to cultural and social causes through dance, and his personal adage has also inspired the titles of his memoir and an Emmy Award-winning documentary that chronicles his life. Joudeh has performed on stages worldwide, including at the Eurovision Song Contest. In addition to his dancing activities, he is a High Profile Supporter of the United Nations Refugee Agency, an International Friend of SOS Children's Villages International and an Ambassador for Pride Amsterdam.



# Anna Júlia Donáth

HUNGARY

**Member of the European Parliament**

A Hungarian politician, Anna Júlia Donáth is a Member of the European Parliament for the Renew Europe group. Passionate about fundamental human rights, her work largely focuses on labour rights, the rule of law, non-discrimination and civic space. As an MEP, she sits on the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) committees and belongs to the Democracy, Rule of Law & Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group. She also contributes to the parliamentary investigation on the use of Pegasus and other surveillance spyware and has been assigned to the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (INGE). Notably, she has been lauded for her use of social media to connect with citizens. She is a leading figure of the Hungarian Momentum Movement political party and led protests against an unjust labour law, nicknamed the 'slave law'.



# Dimitris Kalavros-Gousiou

GREECE

**Co-Founder of Velocity Partners Venture Capital and Found.ation**

Dimitris Kalavros-Gousiou is an entrepreneur and investor from Greece, who currently works at the intersection of technology, culture and new media. He is the Co-Founder of Velocity Partners Venture Capital, a pre-seed and seed venture capital fund that currently maintains a portfolio of 22 companies with a presence in Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific. As a General Partner, he assists tech companies with the development of disruptive products and services. The fund was born out of Kalavros-Gousiou's other company, Found.ation, a start-up hub and educational platform that seeks to enable innovation through digital technologies, new business models and cultural shifts. He also founded TEDxAthens, one of the world's first TEDx events. Kalavros-Gousiou previously worked for HackFwd, a Hamburg-based early-stage fund, where he led the pre-seed investment firm's pipeline in Greece and south-east Europe.



# Misbah Khan

GERMANY

**Member of the Bundestag**

Misbah Khan is a Member of the German national parliament and a representative of the Alliance 90/The Greens party. As a Member of the Committee on Digital Affairs and the Committee on Internal Affairs and Community and also as a Substitute Member of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid Committee, she focuses on topics related to migration, digital administration and bureaucracy reduction. The preservation of human rights in the real world, as well as in the digital space, is essential to Khan. She is resolutely committed to countering right-wing extremism and champions diversity and equal opportunities. Before she was elected to the Bundestag, Khan worked for the Rhineland-Palatinate State Agency for Civic Education and at the Rhineland-Palatinate Democracy Centre.





# Julian Kostov

BULGARIA

**Founder and CEO of JupiterLights Media**

Julian Kostov is an award-winning Bulgarian actor and filmmaker. He stars in the People's Choice Award-nominated hit fantasy series "Shadow and Bone" and was critically acclaimed for his performance in the historic war drama "Another Mother's Son". He has landed roles in "A Discovery of Witches", "Berlin Station", "Temple" and "The Toxic Avenger", among other movies and TV series, which have aired on major networks and premiered in movie theatres worldwide. Experienced in filmmaking, Kostov produced "The Dare", the debut feature film of his Bulgarian-based production and talent management company, JupiterLights Media Group. Notably, he supported casting for Sacha Baron Cohen's "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm". Established to promote original storytelling, JupiterLights also organises workshops for actors and filmmakers to nurture their empowerment and mental health. He also co-founded the Five Oceans production company to bring Bulgarian, Balkan and Slavic stories to international audiences and tackle stereotypes and underrepresentation in the industry. A man of many talents, Kostov holds over 60 medals in swimming, including a bronze medal from the Balkan Games.



# Gunita Kuļikovska-Ķiesnere

LATVIA

**Founder of the New Building School at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences**

An architect by trade, Gunita Kuļikovska-Ķiesnere is a leading Latvian voice of the sustainable construction revolution. She founded the New Building School at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, which focuses on sustainable and smart construction, timber construction and eco-building, to combat outdated construction practices and encourage a significant paradigm shift in the construction industry. Kuļikovska-Ķiesnere is also the Founder of Vividly App, which operates at the intersection of tech, architecture and urban planning. The company harnesses the power of data, 3D modelling and virtual reality simulations to assist development processes and also contributes to educational and cultural initiatives that work with young people as part of its social responsibility activities. Additionally, Kuļikovska-Ķiesnere gives lectures on digital transformation at the BA School of Business and Finance, mentors various hackathons and leads workshops for young entrepreneurs.



# Raphaël Liégeois

BELGIUM

## Career Astronaut at the European Space Agency (ESA)

A Belgian biomedical engineer, physicist and neuroscientist, Raphaël Liégeois is a Career Astronaut at the European Space Agency (ESA) and one of five to be selected among over 22,500 applicants in the agency's latest class of astronauts. He is also a Research and Teaching Fellow at the University of Geneva, where he teaches courses in neuroengineering and statistics. Liégeois views science as truly beautiful and believes that it will be central to meeting humanity's collective challenges. His academic career has also brought him to École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Stanford University, the National University of Singapore and the University of Liège. His research has focused on studying brain dynamics in health and disease, developing dynamic models of brain function and defining new neuroimaging markers of neurodegenerative diseases. An aviation enthusiast, he also pilots hot air balloons, gas balloons and gliders.



# Fabio Mancini

ITALY

## Supermodel

Fabio Mancini is an Italian supermodel. Recruited while strolling through the streets of Milan at the age of 21, he has achieved many industry firsts since his modelling debut on a Giorgio Armani runway. Mancini represented the Giorgio Armani and Emporio Armani brands for a record-breaking 15 consecutive years both on the runway and in advertising campaigns. Most notably, he was the face of the Emporio Armani underwear and Armani jeans collections. He is represented by international agencies in New York, Paris, London, Milan, Los Angeles, Barcelona, Hamburg, Vienna and Tokyo. Having modelled for the likes of Dolce & Gabbana, Vivienne Westwood, Christian Dior and Massimo Dutti, he has also posed for covers and editorials for top magazines, including Vanity Fair, Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, GQ and Cosmopolitan. An unofficial ambassador of the Italian fashion industry, Mancini is also a philanthropist, who regularly volunteers at children's hospitals and also tours schools to discuss issues surrounding body shaming and social media networks with younger generations.



# Kristjan Maruste

ESTONIA

**Co-Founder and CEO of Kõu Mobility Group**

Kristjan Maruste, husband and father of three, is an Estonian mechatronics engineer by training and entrepreneur by profession. He founded Äike, a global e-scooter company, to reimagine micro-mobility by building safe, sustainable and emission-free mobility solutions. Having created the first USB-C chargeable e-scooter, Äike is also the first and only company that designs, manufactures and fully assembles its e-scooters in Europe. Championing sustainable practices, Äike opts to use recycled materials to construct its products and 70% of its supply chain comes from within a two-hour drive of its factory in Tallinn. Maruste is also the Co-Founder and former CEO of Comodule, an Internet of Things (IoT) and connectivity provider that was among the first to connect light motor vehicles to the internet. Both companies belong to the Kõu Mobility Group, of which Maruste is a Co-Founder and the CEO. He has also previously pursued entrepreneurial ventures in battery design, engineering and manufacturing, as well as electric racing cars.



# Juan Mata

SPAIN

**Professional footballer, Co-Founder of Common Goal**



Juan Mata is a Spanish professional footballer and the Co-Founder of Common Goal, a charitable fund that aims to generate sustainable and equitable social change through the cultural force that is football. The movement motivates stakeholders in the football industry to pledge 1% of their income to a collective fund that supports active projects worldwide. Mata currently plays midfield for Galatasaray in Istanbul. Having previously played for Manchester United and Chelsea, he is considered among the best attacking midfielders to have played in the Premier League. Before moving to the United Kingdom, Mata played for Castilla in Madrid and then Valencia CF, where he won his first professional title, the Copa del Rey. He helped secure Spain's win at the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Notably, alongside a Chelsea teammate, Mata was the first footballer to hold the Champions League, Europa League, World Cup and the European Championship simultaneously.



# Oleksandra Matviichuk

UKRAINE

**Human rights lawyer and Head of Centre for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate**

A human rights lawyer and defender, Oleksandra Matviichuk is the first-ever Ukrainian Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. She was awarded the esteemed prize for her work with the Center for Civil Liberties on democratic reform campaigns in Ukraine and the OSCE region. The organisation has been documenting war crimes committed by Russian troops since the initial invasion of Crimea, but also develops legislative changes, exercises public oversight over law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, and implements international solidarity programmes. Matviichuk coordinated the Euromaidan SOS civic initiative to provide legal assistance following the government's crackdown on Euromaidan protesters, which has since monitored political persecution in the illegally occupied regions of Crimea and Donbas. Matviichuk has led similar campaigns, including #LetMyPeopleGo and #SaveOlegSentsov, to fight for the release of political prisoners detained by Russian authorities. Having authored reports for several United Nations bodies, the Council of Europe, the EU, the OSCE and the International Criminal Court, she received the Democracy Defender Award and is the country's first female candidate to be nominated to the UN Committee against Torture.



# Žan Menart

SLOVENIA

**Co-Founder and CEO of Smart Optometry**

A Slovenian entrepreneur, Žan Menart recognises the potential of scientific and technological advances to positively impact quality of life. Faced with the knowledge that half of the world's population will have serious vision problems by 2050, Menart co-founded Smart Optometry to develop digital software solutions for eye diagnostics and vision therapy, including examinations, therapy, health monitoring and damage prevention. By adopting a non-traditional approach to eye care and health, Menart oversaw the development of AmblyoPlay, a software-based vision therapy solution that provides at-home therapeutic games and exercises for children with medical eye conditions. The novel interactive gaming software now helps protect and improve the eye health and well-being of thousands of patients worldwide from an early age. Under Menart's leadership, Smart Optometry has also developed the first-of-its-kind interactive app for eye screening and testing to provide simple, fast and precise diagnostics.



# Hekuran Murati

KOSOVO

**Kosovar Minister of Finance, Labour and Transfers**

An economist known for his expertise in finance and investments, Hekuran Murati currently serves as the Minister of Finance, Labour and Transfers in Kosovo. He has notably broadened the tax base and combatted informality, resulting in a 46% increase in tax revenues. Murati advocates for the effective and efficient execution of ideas rather than drawn-out bureaucratic processes. For instance, during his first six months in office, he led the design and successful implementation of an entirely digital universal allowance scheme for all children under the age of 16. As a former member of parliament, Murati served as the chairperson of the budget and finance committee and sat on committees related to the economy, employment, trade, industry, entrepreneurship, strategic investments and investigations regarding the privatisation process. Prior to entering politics, Murati led the public debt division at the Ministry of Finance and worked at the World Bank and the Central Bank of Kosovo.



# Giulia Pastorella

ITALY

**Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies**

An Italian politician, Giulia Pastorella serves in the Italian parliament, where she sits on the Committee on Transport, Post and Telecommunications. She co-founded the liberal, pro-European *Azione* party, of which she is the Vice President. A champion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, she aims to expand equal opportunities, especially for young people. Notably, she has authored a book on Italy's approach to brain drain, entitled "Exit Only", which also provides recommendations to make Italy more attractive to international talents. In her capacity as a Municipal Councillor of the City of Milan, Pastorella focuses on the digitisation of civic services, the uptake of sustainable mobility solutions and skills training for young people. Previously, she led European and global public affairs activities for multinational digital and technology companies, including Zoom and HP, focusing on cybersecurity and data policies.



# Tahereh Pazouki

LUXEMBOURG

**Founder of Magrid Learning Solution, CEO of Letz-Math**

An Iranian-Luxembourgish entrepreneur, Dr Tahereh Pazouki founded Magrid, a pedagogical programme that develops and improves cognitive and math abilities by removing language as a barrier to learning, in order to support equal educational opportunities for all learners. The award-winning project was inspired by Pazouki's research on children with migrant backgrounds and language disorders in Luxembourg's public school system, which concluded that adapted training can support children who are disadvantaged by an education system in reaching their full potential. The Magrid programme now helps thousands of students in schools across Luxembourg and Portugal with early childhood development in math, visual-spatial and cognitive abilities. It will soon be available for parents all over Europe. Pazouki also founded a start-up, LetzMath, to continue the research and development of educational solutions that champion equal opportunities. In recognition of her innovative contributions to the field of education, she has been the recipient of the World Summit Awards, the European Investment Bank's social innovation prize, the Creative Young Entrepreneur award and the MIT Solve award.



# Ermal Peçi

ALBANIA

**Television host at Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH)**

Ermal Peçi is an Albanian journalist and television presenter, who hosts a weekend show on the public broadcaster, *Radio Televizioni Shqiptar* (RTSH). His work has largely focused on sharing personal and professional conversations with public figures in Albania, combined with trending topics of the day. Prior to joining the ABC family and hosting ABC News Albania's daily show "*ABC e pasdites*" ("Afternoon ABC"), Peçi hosted primetime, daily and Saturday programmes on major television networks in Tirana. He has hosted the "*Trokit*" ("Tap") and "*Një kat më lart*" ("One Floor Above") shows, as well as the popular "Euro Beat" prime time programme that was entirely dedicated to the Eurovision Song Contest and sharing experiences of the Europe-wide music festival. Famed for his energetic presence on the screen, he was the presenter on the popular "Heart Attack" reality show and a celebrity contestant on the «Dance with me Albania» programme. Peçi has also participated in hosting or promoting other music and cultural events throughout Albania, reaching a diverse broadcast and social media audience.





# Paweł Radziszewski

POLAND

**Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Nevomo**

A Polish aerospace engineer with a passion for disruptive technologies, Paweł Radziszewski is the Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Nevomo, a deep-technology company that is developing the next generation of high-speed and freight railways. Radziszewski is responsible for the product, technical and intellectual property strategy, and system-level projects supervision. Committed to the sustainable development of the mobility industry, Nevomo is the first company in the world to propose the phased implementation of hyperloop-inspired solutions for railways. Having led the development of Nevomo's MagRail system that enables magnetic levitation vehicles propelled by a linear motor to operate on existing railroads, Radziszewski plans to take the technology further by developing hyperloop subsystems for the future market and applying the technology to other areas of the industry. He has won several international technology competitions, including the SAE Aerodesign West and Shell Eco-marathon, and is a two-time finalist of the SpaceX Hyperloop Pod Competition.

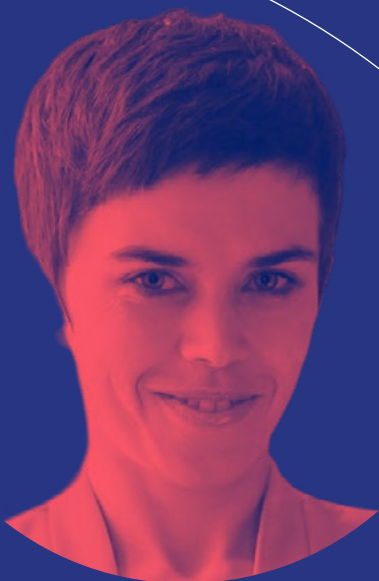


# Olga Richterová

CZECH REPUBLIC

**Deputy Speaker of the Czech Chamber of Deputies**

A Czech politician, who serves in the Czech Chamber of Deputies, Olga Richterová is the Deputy Speaker of the parliament's lower house and former vice-chair of the *Česká pirátská strana* (Czech Pirate Party). Throughout her political career, she has been a vocal advocate for freedom of information and progressive social, health, housing and urban planning policies. Richterová sits on parliamentary committees concerning social health borders, consumer protection, freedom of speech and the media, foreign relations and military intelligence. Previously, she previously represented Prague's tenth district as a member of the municipal council and founded a civic watchdog association, *Zaostřeno na Desítku* (Focused on District Nr. 10), to provide the district's residents with objective information and increase citizen engagement. In addition to her political pursuits, she has published a collection of poems, "*Napříč kůrou*" ("Through the crust").



# Tiago Sá

PORTUGAL

**Co-Founder and CEO of Wisecrop**

An engineer and social entrepreneur from Portugal, Tiago Sá is the Co-Founder and CEO of Wisecrop, a web-based operating system on a mission to support the productivity, sustainability and efficiency of farm management through the use of technology. Wisecrop provides farmers and other agricultural professionals with integrated, real-time data related to the weather, irrigation, soil nutrition and fertilisation, crop health, as well as field and labour operations and costs, in order to maximise field profitability and reduce the negative environmental impacts of agricultural practices. Recognising the challenges of digitalising a sector that is traditionally slow to adopt change, Sá combines environmental and business incentives to unlock disruptive tech solutions, while also ensuring that Wisecrop features a simple and user-friendly interface. Since its inception over seven years ago, Sá has overseen the company's growth to assist over 60k hectares of more than 250 different varieties of crops, with plans to push for the modernisation of the agri-food industry across Europe.



# Liesje Schreinemacher

THE NETHERLANDS

**Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation**

Liesje Schreinemacher is the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in the Netherlands. She supports development cooperation to assist regions that face poverty, climate change, terrorism and migration challenges. Notably, Schreinemacher has fostered a new partnership with UNICEF to ease the food and nutrition crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa. She currently represents the Netherlands at several regional development banks and international financial institutions, including the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Joint World Bank-IMF Development Committee. While serving as a member of the European Parliament, she was the vice-president of the LGBTI Intergroup and supported the proposal for common charging ports as a shadow rapporteur. A lawyer who specialises in construction and contract law, she has also served as an advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Defence and worked as an assistant to two members of the Dutch parliament.



# Max Siedentopf

GERMANY

Artist and Founder of *Ordinary*

Max Siedentopf is a German-Namibian multi-disciplinary conceptual artist, who works across video, photography, sculpture, creative direction and more. He founded *Ordinary*, a quarterly art magazine that reimages ordinary household objects, transforming them into the extraordinary. Siedentopf's latest artworks also include 'Don't Worry, Be Happy', a dark-humoured satirical installation that reflects on society's delusional positive outlook in the face of major crises, and 'Toto Forever', an installation in an undisclosed location in the Namib Desert, which earned him acclaim in *Vogue Italy* as a "viral artist". He currently creatively collaborates with Gucci on campaigns, brand image and special projects, having most recently led the creative art direction for the Italian fashion house's experimental online space Gucci Vault. Siedentopf has directed music videos, even starring in one of them, and was nominated by *Campaign Magazine* among the top ten directors of 2022. He is also the former creative director and youngest-ever partner of the creative agency KesselsKramer.



# Bart Staszewski

POLAND

LGBTQI+ activist

Bart Staszewski is a Polish filmmaker and fierce champion of LGBTQI+ rights. His "Article 18" documentary details the LGBTQI+ struggle for equality in the country to showcase that the government has failed to introduce legislation that protects same-sex relationships. Staszewski was among the organisers of the first-ever Equality March and went on to establish an association of the same name. He also belongs to *Miłość Nie Wyklucza* (Love Does Not Exclude), an organisation that fights for marriage equality, and serves as the Co-Founder, CEO and Chairman of the Board at the Basta Foundation, which monitors homophobic and transphobic hate speech in Polish media. Notably, Staszewski created the internationally acclaimed "Zones" photography project to remind politicians of their LGBTQI+ constituents and protest the infamous 'LGBT-free zones' in approximately 100 Polish municipalities. He was named an Obama Leader for Europe by the Barack Obama Foundation and among the TIME100 Next rising individuals.





# Tijana Tamburic

SERBIA

## Co-Founder of Female Narratives

A Serbian storyteller and entrepreneur, Tijana Tamburic is the Co-Founder of Female Narratives, a London-based but globally affiliated creative agency and collective of freelancers that connects brands to real women with real stories. Tamburic was a model herself, signed to one of the world's top agencies for nearly a decade, but decided to pursue something new in order to work collaboratively with women, rather than in competition with them. Female Narratives has created campaigns for female-led or ethical companies, such as Bumble, Allbirds, The North Face, Merrell and Kiehl's, and is now composed of over 100 female and non-binary creators, from models and artists, to wordsmiths and choreographers. Tamburic also hosts *The Vulnerability* Challenge podcast, in which she sets monthly challenges and brings listeners along her journey of vulnerability. Notably, 'When My Masculine Met My Feminine', her TEDx Talk on the perceived boundaries of femininity and masculinity, has over 36,000 views.



# Oana-Silvia Țoiu

ROMANIA

## Chair of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies Committee on Youth and Sports

Oana-Silvia Țoiu is a Romanian social entrepreneur-turned-politician, who currently serves as a Member of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and the Save Romania Union (USR) party. She advocates for a more inclusive and entrepreneurial workforce, while championing youth and women. Having successfully passed laws that offer financial support for single-parent doctors during school closures, improved flexible work schemes for employees and housing rights for victims of domestic violence, Țoiu most recently put forward a start-up and private investment package. She previously served as the state secretary in the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Family. Prior to entering politics, she embarked on various social entrepreneurial ventures, including as a former executive at Mesteshukar ButiQ, a network of Roma artisans and international designers. She also co-founded Social Innovation Solutions, an accelerator that invests in educational and future-oriented solutions by engaging and connecting entrepreneurs, NGOs, academia, youth and policymakers throughout Europe.



# Katharina Unger

AUSTRIA

**Founder and CEO of Livin Farms**

Katharina Unger is an Austrian thought leader in sustainability, food and agricultural innovation. Following the success of her first project, Farm432, which was designed to rear the black soldier fly larvae and won the Red Dot Design Award, she founded Livin Farms, a company that turns organic food waste into valuable insect protein. Her fascination with home insect farms began while researching the impacts of factory farming and industrial meat production. Unger believes that a designer must observe the world on a systems level in order to create impact through physical or strategic inventions. She has been awarded the BraunPrize Sustainability Award, the Bio Art & Design Award and the Core77 Design Award, among others, in recognition of her work to identify novel sources of protein and fertilizers. Unger was also named among the *MIT Technology Review* Innovators Under 35 Europe.



# Gauthier Van Malderen

BELGIUM

**Founder and CEO of Perlego**

An ed-tech entrepreneur from Belgium, Gauthier Van Malderen is disrupting the traditional academic publishing industry. He is the Founder and CEO of Perlego, the world's first digital, subscription-based service for textbooks. Inspired by popular online streaming services, Perlego is a 'Spotify for books', offering a library of over one million e-textbooks, plus additional learning resources. The affordable alternative to traditional textbooks breaks down barriers to education for students and also supports the publishing industry's digital transition. Van Malderen has previously founded several other innovative businesses, including Iconic Matter, a marketing company for university-branded merchandise, and the Teenage Tourist social platform for students to exchange travelling tips. A champion of entrepreneurial ventures beyond his own, Van Malderen continues to support the Belgian early-stage tech ecosystem through investment, knowledge sharing and mentorship as a Member of Syndicate One, a group of experienced start-up stakeholders.



# Maria Vircikova

SLOVAKIA

**Co-Founder and CEO of MATSUKO**

A tech innovator and entrepreneur from Slovakia, Maria Vircikova specialises in machine learning and human-computer interaction. She is the Co-Founder and CEO of MATSUKO, which aims to revolutionise everyday communications through a 3D hologram connection based on mixed reality. The world's first real-time app for holographic presence, MATSUKO allows users to embark on a holographic experience through the use of smartphones and mixed reality glasses. Inspired not only by technology, but psychology and sociology, Vircikova believes that artificial intelligence can be used as a human-centric tool to meaningfully connect individuals, rather than fracture communities. Prior to embarking on this entrepreneurial endeavour, Vircikova performed research at the Technical University of Kosice's Center for Intelligent Technologies, where she also taught classes on AI, humanoid robotics, human-robot interaction and service robotics. In recognition of her expertise and accomplishments, she has also notably been awarded the European Tech Women Award.



# Marija Vuković

MONTENEGRO

**Olympic athlete**

A Montenegrin high jump athlete, Marija Vuković made history when she won the country's first-ever athletic gold medal at the 2010 World Junior Championships in Athletics, where she cleared a 1.91 metre high jump. She has earned the top spot on the podium at the Games of the Small States of Europe five times throughout her sporting career. At the 2021 Balkan Championships, Vuković achieved her current personal best in the high jump, which stands at 1.97 metres and led her to the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, where she became the first athlete from Montenegro to reach an Olympic final and placed ninth. Since, she has medalled at the 2022 Mediterranean Games and the European Athletics Championships, where she once again made history as the first medallist from her home country. Notably, Vuković was awarded the title of Montenegro's best athlete by the Montenegrin Olympic Committee.





# Get in touch!



**Discover and read our reports, analyses, highlights and more**  
[www.friendsofeurope.org](http://www.friendsofeurope.org)



**Follow us on Twitter**  
[@friendsofeurope](https://twitter.com/friendsofeurope)



**Join us on Instagram**  
[instagram.com/friendsofeurope](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofeurope)



**Engage with us on Facebook**  
[/friendsofeurope.foe](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofeurope.foe)



**Find us on LinkedIn**  
[linkedin.com/company/friends-of-europe](https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-europe)



**View pictures of our events**  
[flickr.com/friendsofeurope.foe](https://www.flickr.com/friendsofeurope.foe)

## **Friends of Europe**

Connect. Debate. Change.

+32 2 300 29 92  
eyl40@friendsofeurope.org  
friendsofeurope.org

---

Friends of Europe is a leading think-tank that connects people, stimulates debate and triggers change to create a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-looking Europe.

