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# Biographies of Speakers and Moderators

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Rue Belliard 101, 1040 Brussels

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## Opening Session



**Dr. Kevin Casas-Zamora**, Secretary-General, International IDEA

Dr. Casas-Zamora is the Secretary-General of International IDEA and Senior Fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue. He was member of Costa Rica's Presidential Commission for State Reform and managing director at Analitica Consultores. Previously, he was Costa Rica's Second Vice President and Minister of National Planning; Secretary for Political Affairs at the Organization of American States; Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution; and National Coordinator of the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report.

Dr. Casas-Zamora has taught in multiple higher education institutions. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Oxford. His doctoral thesis, on Political Finance and State Subsidies for Parties in Costa Rica and Uruguay, won the 2004 Jean Blondel PhD Prize of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).



**Mr. Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, President of the European Committee of the Regions

Mr. Karl-Heinz Lambertz was elected as President of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) in July 2017 after serving as First Vice-President. He is also President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

His interest in politics came early in his career having served as President of the German-speaking Youth Council. He then became Member of Parliament of the German-speaking Community in 1981.

He held numerous Ministerial posts in the German-speaking Community Government before being elected its Minister-President. In 2014 he became President of the Parliament, before being appointed to represent the German-speaking Community in the Belgian Senate. In June 2019, he resumed office as President of the Parliament. Since 2000, he has been a Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in which he is currently Vice-President.



**Ms. Heidi Hautala**, Vice-President of the European Parliament

Ms. Hautala is Vice-President of the European Parliament, Member of the European Parliament in the Greens/EFA group and former Minister for International Development and State Ownership Steering in Finland. She was elected as a Vice-President of the European Parliament in October 2017 and continues in the office. Ms. Hautala serves on the Committee on International Trade, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and as a substitute on the Committee on Legal Affairs of the European Parliament. In 2017 Hautala established a Working Group on Responsible Business Conduct in the European Parliament.

Ms. Hautala was born in 1955 in Oulu, Finland, and has a master's degree in agriculture and forestry. She has complemented her extensive political career at national and European level with other professional activities (journalist, founder of a restaurant) and combined it with her various voluntary work commitments related mostly to human rights.



## Opening Session



**Mr. Sam van der Staak**, Head of Regional Europe Programme, International IDEA

Mr. Sam van der Staak is the Head of International IDEA's Europe Programme, and Head of the International IDEA Office to the EU. He has previously worked in countries including Kenya and Georgia, where he advised electoral commissions, political parties and other democratic institutions on a broad range of democratic reforms. Sam is the author of publications on political finance, political party development, and citizen movements. He is a regular commentator for various international media. Prior to his involvement in democracy assistance, he worked in the Netherlands House of Representatives.



**Mr. Jan Fischer**, Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (2009 - 2010)

Jan Fischer is the former Prime minister of the Czech Republic and the former vice president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). As Prime minister of the Czech Republic, he supported the declaration on crimes of communism. He was also the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in later years. He currently teaches economic statistics at the University of Economics in Prague and is part of various councils such as the Board of Trustees of the University of Economics and the Czech Statistical Council. He holds a PhD from the University of Economics. After working in the Federal Statistic, he became vice-president and president of the Czech Statistical Office. He later worked on the International Monetary fund mission in East Timor before starting his work at the EBRD.



**Mr. Raul Mälk**, Former Foreign Minister of Estonia (1998-1999)

Between 1992 and 2019, Ambassador Mälk worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia 1998-99. Mälk also was Deputy Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, Press and Information, acting Deputy Under-Secretary for EU Affairs (two periods), and Director General of the Policy Planning department. Mälk has been Estonian Ambassador to United Kingdom, Ireland and Portugal and Estonian Permanent Representative to European Union (2007-11). Between 2011 and 2019, he was Ambassador-at-Large for the Baltic Sea Region.

After graduation University of Tartu in 1975, Mälk worked at the Estonian public radio from 1985 as Editor-in-Chief. During the years of change 1990-92 he worked in the Office of the Chairman of the Supreme Council.

In August 2019 he joined Estonian Center for Eastern Partnership as Senior Research Fellow.

## Opening Session



**Mr. Petre Roman**, Former Prime Minister of Romania (1989 - 1991)

Mr. Petre Roman served Romania in a variety of political roles. In December 1989, he joined the uprising against the dictatorship. He launched a proclamation for freedom and democracy and became a founding member of the National Salvation Front. In June 1990 he was elected as Prime Minister after the first free elections were held in Romania. He later became member of the Chamber of Deputies, Senator, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs and founder of the Democratic Party of Romania.

He also served as Special Rapporteur to the North Atlantic Assembly and as the Acting President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Mr. Roman has served in his academic field as Professor and Head of department in Bucharest Politehnica University. He holds a degree in Power Engineering from Bucharest Politehnica University, a diploma on Hydrodynamics from ENSEEIHT (Ecole Nationale d'Electrotechnique, Electronique, Informatique et Hydraulique) and PhD in Fluid Dynamics at Paul Sabatier University.



**Mr. Rikard Jozwiak**, Brussels Correspondent, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Mr. Rikard Jozwiak is the Brussels Correspondent for Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). RFE/RL is an American media organization broadcasting news in 21 countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established such as Belarus, Iran and Russia. Jozwiak is responsible for daily reporting from the EU institutions and NATO about the latest political developments. Prior to joining RFE/RL, he worked as the press officer at EU office of Amnesty International and as a reporter for European Voice covering EU affairs. Jozwiak has a Masters in Journalism from the University of Lund, Sweden and a Masters in European Politics from the College of Europe.

## Session 2



**Dr. Adam Bodnar**, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland

Dr. Adam Bodnar is Poland's seventh Ombudsman (Commissioner for Human Rights), elected for a five-year term in 2015. He holds a PhD and a master's degree in law from University of Warsaw. After a debut in the corporate world, he joined the Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights. He was also a senior expert of the Agency of Fundamental Rights of European Union. He was a member of the board of directors of the United Nations Fund for Victims of Torture. In 2011, he was awarded with the Tolerance Prize by the Polish LGBT organizations. He then was appointed Ombudsman by the parliament. In 2018 the Commissioner's work was recognized with the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Award for actions to protect judicial independence and minorities in Poland. He has published a book on the enforcement of the European Court of Human Rights' judgments. In 2019, the Commissioner and the office were honored with the Rule of Law Award by the World Justice Project.



**Mr. Richard Wike**, Director of Global Attitudes Research, Pew Research Center

Mr. Richard Wike is director of global attitudes research at Pew Research Center. He conducts research about international public opinion on a variety of topics, such as America's global image, the rise of China, democracy, and globalization. He is an author of numerous Pew Research Center reports, including U.S. Image Suffers as Publics Around World Question Trump's Leadership; Post-Brexit, Europeans More Favorable Toward EU; Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy; Chinese Public Sees More Powerful Role in World, Names U.S. as Top Threat; and Global Support for Principle of Free Expression, but Opposition to Some Forms of Speech. In addition, he has written pieces for The Atlantic, Financial Times, the Guardian, Politico, Foreign Policy and other online and print publications. He received a doctorate in political science from Emory University. Before joining Pew Research Center, he was a senior associate for international and corporate clients at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.



**Ms. Zsuzsanna Szelényi**, former MP, Hungary (1990-1994; and 2014-2018), Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow of the Robert Bosch Academy

Ms. Zsuzsanna Szelényi was a Member of Parliament in Hungary, covering foreign policy, migration and constitutional affairs. Before rejoining politics in Hungary in 2012, Szelényi served at the Council of Europe for fifteen years. She worked as a human development consultant in various Central European and North African countries. Szelényi started her political career as member of Fidesz, a Hungarian youth party. She became Member of the first freely elected Parliament. In 2012 she returned to the Hungarian politics as a member of the new liberal party, 'Together'.

Ms. Szelényi is a Richard von Weizsäcker fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. She researches the future of the European Union regarding the decline of democracy and rule of law. She holds a degree in International Politics from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, (USA) of Psychology of the University of Eotvos Lorand, and of International Relations of the Corvinus University.

## Session 2



**Mr. Jan Macháček**, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Institute for Politics and Society, Czechia

Mr. Jan Macháček is a Czech journalist and musician, working as a commentator and analyst for the daily newspaper Lidové Noviny. Before, he worked for Hospodářské Noviny and Respekt, the latter of which he co-founded after the Velvet Revolution (1989) as the country's first independent media outlet. During the Communist era, he was a vocal dissident of the Czechoslovak regime and signed the human rights petition Charta 77. He was involved in samizdat publishing and underground music culture. He is currently the Chairman of the Board of Trustees in the Institute for Politics and Society.

His main field of interest is Political Economics, namely the Eurozone Crisis and European integration. He writes for his daily online blog, Monitor, and provides analysis for Czech Radio and Television. With his lectures, he visits international conferences and universities. He teaches journalism at New York University in Prague.



**Ms. Jessica Fortin-Rittberger**, Prof. of Comparative Politics, University of Salzburg

Ms. Jessica Fortin-Rittberger is Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Salzburg. She holds a PhD in political science from McGill University (Canada). She has held positions at GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, and the University of Mannheim (Germany).

Her main areas of research interest include political institutions and their measurement with particular focus on electoral rules, women's political representation, political knowledge, as well as the impact of state capacity on democratization. Her work has appeared in Comparative Political Studies, European Journal of Political Research, Electoral Studies, European Union Politics, and the Journal of European Public Policy, among others.



**Ms. Magdalena Jakubowska**, Res Publica Foundation (media outlet), Poland

Ms. Magdalena Jakubowska serves the role of vice president at Res Publica Foundation, where she manages and supports key ventures, including institutional cooperation and partnerships, strategic development and programme planning. With her opinion piece on women's insufficient involvement in security matters, Magda has influenced strong international interest regarding women's empowerment in security and gave grounds to begin NATO's campaign: #WomenAreNATO. Earlier in her career, Magda was the Director of Operations at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and worked at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). In 2016 Magda earned a diploma from the Leadership Academy of Poland, and she also holds degrees from the University of Warsaw and the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH).



## Session 3



**Ms. Kata Tuttö**, Deputy Mayor of Budapest, Hungary

Ms. Kata Tuttö is an economist and a Hungarian politician. She is currently Deputy Mayor of Budapest. For the past 12 years she has been elected member of the City Assembly of Budapest, and is former chair of the Financial and Public Procurement Commission. Moreover, she is board member of the Budapest Transport Company (BKV) and alternate member of the European Committee of the Regions, working in the Commission for the Environment, Climate change and Energy. She served as the rapporteur of the Opinion on the Future of the Covenant of Mayors and Waste to Energy in the circular Economy. She is a member of the National Presidium of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP).



**Mr. Randel Länts**, Rapporteur of the European Committee of the Regions Opinion on the Action Plan against disinformation, Member of Viljandi City Council, Estonia

Randel Länts is a social democrat politician. He started as the president of the Young Socialist Party in Estonia before becoming Secretary-general of the Social Democratic Party. He is now the chairman of the Social Democratic Party Viljandi. He also ran for European Parliament elections in 2009, for local elections in Tartu and Viljandi as well as for the position of Mayor of Viljandi in 2013.

Today he is the Rapporteur of the European Committee of the Regions Opinion on the Action Plan against disinformation as well as a Member of the Viljandi City Council in Estonia and the advisor of Ivare Padar in the European Parliament.



**Ms. Jasna Gabric**, Member of the European Committee of the Regions; Mayor of Trbovlje, Slovenia

Ms. Jasna Gabric is a member of the European Committee of the regions. She is also the mayor of Trbovlje in Slovenia. She started off as a speaker in various Slovenian radios, such as Radio Aktual and Radio Kum, before becoming deputy mayor in 2012 and Mayor of Trbovlje in 2014. In 2018 she was nominated for the world mayor prize.

In the European Committee of the regions she is active in the committees for social policy, education, employment, research and culture (SEDEC) as well as the commission for environment, climate change and energy (ENVE).

Ms. Gabric holds two diplomas, in economics and in social sciences, from the University of Ljubljana. She also studied managerial economics at the Estonian Business School.

## Session 3



**Mr. Vytautas Grubliauskas**, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Klaipėda, Lithuania

Mr. Vytautas Grubliauskas was elected mayor of Klaipėda in 2011 and was approved as a member of the European Committee of the Regions in 2015. He initially worked as a member of the Klaipėda City Council and the Council of Public Sports, Arts and Culture. He later became Chairman of the Seimas Information Society Development Committee and member of the Seimas Youth and Sports Affairs Committee, before being elected mayor as part of the Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Grubliauskas also had a distinguished musical career as a soloist and concertmaster, until 2004.

He has received multiple and varied awards, such as the Royal Swedish Order of the Commander of the Northern (Polar) Star, one of the highest awards of the Kingdom of Sweden and the rank of officer of the Order of Art and Literature from the French government for his work promoting relations with France as a mayor.



**Mr. Laurent Thieule**, Director of the Committee of the Regions Directorate B – Legislative Works

Mr. Laurent Thieule is currently Director of the Committee of the Regions Directorate B – Legislative Works, dealing with definition, development and implementation of policies related to environment, energy, natural resources, constitutional, external affairs, human rights, migration. A professional journalist specialized in European issues, he has been working at the European Committee of the Regions since it was established in 1994. Born in Montpellier (France), Mr. Thieule holds a Master's degree and postgraduate degree in Economic Science.



## Closing session



**H.E. Ms. Hanna Lehtinen**, Ambassador of Finland to the Political and Security Committee of the EU

Ambassador Hanna Lehtinen has considerable experience working in foreign affairs. She was head of the department of Foreign affairs at the Finnish ministry of foreign affairs. Lehtinen also worked in the Department for Foreign Affairs of America and Asia, and in the Department of Commerce and Politics. She was also ambassador of Finland in Warsaw, before becoming Ambassador of Finland to the Political and Security Committee of the EU in 2018.

She received a special military award for her work in the defence forces from the Finnish defence forces.

She holds a masters degree in international economics from the Helsinki School of Economics.



**Dr. Marcin Walecki**, Head of Democratization Department, OSCE/ODIHR

Marcin Walecki is from Poland. He is the Head of Democratization Department with OSCE/ODIHR. Walecki is a seasoned expert who has worked on anti-corruption and political finance, political party assistance in some 40 countries.

He has over 20 years of democracy assistance and governance experience working in more than 40 countries around the world implementing programs that ranged from anti-corruption and political finance, political party assistance and development, to gender equality. Prior to joining the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, he was the Executive Director of the Brussels based European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) and Senior Adviser for Public Integrity with IFES (Washington DC). He has written for numerous publications on democratization and democratic governance. A graduate of Oxford University, Dr. Walecki studied law and political science.



**Dr. Ruslana Vovk**, Regional Manager, Democracy Reporting International

Ms. Ruslana Vovk has in-depth knowledge of comparative constitutional law, international law, and European integration. Before joining DRI she worked at an international law firm in Luxembourg. Vovk holds a Master's degree in European Studies from the European-University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), a Magister degree in International Law from the Ivan-Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine), as well as a PhD in law from the Humboldt University of Berlin. In her PhD thesis, she explored the openness of the Ukrainian constitution towards international law and European integration against international standards and comparative constitutionalism.

## Closing session



**Mr. Daniel Mitov**, National Democratic Institute; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

Mr. Daniel Mitov served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria from 2014 to 2017. He worked at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in the U.S. as the head of the political party development programme in Iraq and representative in Brussels. Mitov has been the NDI representative in Libya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, Yemen, Tunisia and elsewhere. He has worked at the Political Academy for Central and Southeast Europe, participating as a member of the team from the Bulgarian School of Politics. Mitov has studied political science at Sofia University. He has participated in many international programmes, including the Marshall Memorial Fund, and at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



**Mr. Massimo Tommasoli**, Permanent Observer for International IDEA to the United Nations

Massimo Tommasoli is a policy specialist with extensive experience in democracy building, democratic governance, social development, and aid effectiveness. He is responsible for developing strategic partnerships, policy advocacy and outreach of International IDEA at the UN General Assembly and in other multilateral policy fora, as well as with democracy-building institutions based in North America.

He previously worked as Head of the Good Governance and Conflict Prevention Unit in the Development Cooperation Directorate at the OECD in Paris. He held positions at the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, and at UNESCO in Addis Ababa. He is the author of seven books and several essays and articles on participatory development, aid evaluation and conflict and resettlement policies.

A visiting scholar at the LUISS University in Rome, he lectured at the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, and various Italian Universities.



**Ms. Marilyn Neven**, Programme Manager, International IDEA

Ms. Marilyn Neven's main role is to reinforce International IDEA's relations with Belgium and with European institutions. She contributes to increasing the EU's focus on democratic governance, including in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Neven was a special adviser to the Secretary-General of the Institute in 2015. Her previous work experience includes advisory positions to several Belgian Ministers during the period of 2008-2014, including to the Prime Minister. She also worked at the European Parliament and the European Commission. She is a Council Member in the municipality of Lanaken in Belgium.

Ms. Neven has extensive knowledge on political life and networks and was elected national vice-president of the youth wing of the Flemish Christian-Democrat party in 2009.



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