HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



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Hungarian National Assembly, Budapest, Hungary

Speakers' and Moderators' Bios

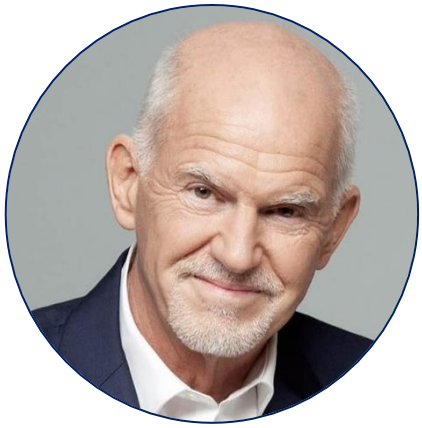
	**Ágnes Forsthoffer** Ágnes Forsthoffer is a Hungarian politician and executive currently serving as Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly. Her professional career includes executive leadership roles as Finance Director at Talajerőgazdálkodási Ltd. and Managing Director of Fortrend Hotel Ltd. She also served as Regional Director for the Lake Balaton Region at the Hungarian Hotel & Restaurant Association and as an active local constituency coordinator. Vice President of the Respect and Freedom Party (TISZA), she was elected as a Member of Parliament for Veszprém county prior to taking up her role as Speaker.
	**Judit Lannert** Judit Lannert currently serves as Hungary's Minister of Education and Children. She is an economist, sociologist and education researcher with more than three decades of professional experience. She began her career at the Hungarian Poll Institute and subsequently worked at the National Institute for Public Education, where she later served as Director of the Research Centre. From 2008 to 2012, she was Managing Director of the TÁRKI-TUDOK Centre for Knowledge Management and Educational Research, and from 2012 to 2026 she worked as a senior researcher at T-Tudok. Her main areas of expertise include educational inequalities, the performance of education systems, teacher policy, student progression, career guidance and the transition from education to employment. She holds an MA in Economics, specialising in Foreign Trade, from the Karl Marx University of Economics, and a PhD in Sociology from Corvinus University of Budapest. She also pursued further studies in school policy, econometrics and sociology at Princeton University and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. In her free time, she plays the piano and enjoys classical music.
	**Márton Hajdu** Márton Hajdu is a Hungarian politician and former EU official currently serving as Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian National Assembly. His professional career features extensive experience within European institutions, including roles as Advisor in the Secretariat-General of the European Commission and Head of Strategic Communications at the Joint Research Centre. He previously served as Head of Cabinet for the TISZA Delegation in the European Parliament's EPP Group, as well as Spokesperson for both the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU. He is also Chair of the Hungarian delegation and Vice-Chairperson of the PACE.

	**István Gyöngyösi** István Gyöngyösi is a Member of the Hungarian National Assembly and a member of the TISZA parliamentary group, standing as one of the parliament's youngest members. He serves on three parliamentary committees, including the Committee on European Affairs, where he focuses on EU decision-making and representing Hungarian interests. He also chairs the investigative committee examining abuses in judicial enforcement. Having gained international professional experience in the United States, his legislative focus is rooted in community building and social inclusion. Informed by his university research into disadvantage, segregation, and social mobility, his parliamentary work prioritises equal opportunities, education, employment, minority rights, strengthening rural communities, and European cooperation.
	**Krisztián Kovács - Moderator** Krisztián Kovács is the director of the Directorate for Foreign Relations of the Hungarian National Assembly. He is both a lawyer and an economist with excellent communication skills. He has more than 24 years of experience in international relations of the Hungarian National Assembly. He spent more than two years in the Parliament of Moldova, and in Bosnia-Hercegovina on behalf of the EU in parliamentary capacity building projects. During Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Mr. Kovács led the operational team of the Parliamentary Dimension. As the director for Foreign Relations he has been the Secretary of the Hungarian national delegation of PACE since June 2026.
	**Péter Magyari - Moderator** Péter Magyari (born 1977, Budapest) is an acclaimed Hungarian political journalist and analyst with over 25 years of experience. A regular commentator on television, radio, and online media, he is the deputy editor-in-chief of the news channel at the Hungarian Public Radio. Throughout his career, Magyari has interviewed leading political figures and produced high-profile investigative work, earning the "Investigative Journalist of the Year" award in 2010 for his expose on the regional gas trade. In 2020, he received the Hungarian Press Prize for lifetime achievement. Alongside his journalism, he has taught at universities and professional training programmes since 2003.

	**Petra Bayr** Petra Bayr is the current President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She has been a member of the Austrian National Council since 2002 and Chairperson of the National Council's Committee on Foreign Affairs since 2025. She is also a member of the Austrian delegation to the IPU. Ms Bayr has been fully involved in numerous civil society organisations, some of which she founded herself. She has a MA in Human Rights as well as a Master's degree in Legal Studies, with a thesis on the criminal offence of incitement to hatred in the Austrian Criminal Code, from the Danube University Krems.
	**Despina Chatzivassiliou** Despina Chatzivassiliou is the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She was the first woman to hold this post since the Assembly's creation in 1949 when she was first elected in 2021. On 30 September 2025, she was re-elected for a second five-year term. Prior to this, she spent 21 years working with and for parliamentarians across Europe within the Assembly, notably heading the secretariats of its Monitoring and Political Affairs Committees. She began her career at the Council of Europe in 1993, at the European Commission of Human Rights. She holds a PhD in Law on the European Convention of Human Rights, from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.
	**Tanja Gonggrijp** Tanja Gonggrijp took office as Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 1 September 2026. A career diplomat with extensive experience in international relations and senior management, she previously served as Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe and as Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Her career with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also included senior positions in sustainable trade, international cooperation and HR strategy. She holds a Master's degree in Public Policy and Public Administration from the University of Twente.

	**Sevilay Çelenk - Moderator** Ms Sevilay Çelenk is a Member of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye representing the DEM Party and a member of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where she serves as Third Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. An academic by background with a doctorate in communications and extensive experience as a university faculty member and researcher focusing on media and social issues, she brings a robust analytical perspective to institutional transparency and rights. Within PACE, she is actively involved in committees addressing social rights, democratic governance, and youth-oriented policy frameworks, demonstrating a deep commitment to championing democratic values and inclusive participation.
	**Damien Cottier** Damien Cottier is a Swiss politician serving in the National Council for the canton of Neuchâtel and representing Switzerland at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). A member of the FDP. The Liberals, he serves as Vice-Chairperson for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group within PACE. In his international role, Cottier works extensively on legal affairs, human rights, and democratic integrity across Europe. As part of PACE's broader mandate to strengthen democratic institutions, he contributes to parliamentary initiatives aimed at bolstering youth civic engagement, fostering political participation among younger generations, and ensuring young people are integrated into European democratic decision-making processes.
	**Benjamin Dalle** Benjamin Dalle holds advanced law degrees from Ghent University and New York University (LL.M.) and previously worked as an attorney and senior constitutional advisor. Benjamin Dalle has maintained a strong focus on youth policy throughout his career. From 2019 to 2024, he served in the Flemish Government as Minister for Brussels, Youth, Media, and Poverty Reduction. Following the 2024 elections, he became a member of the Brussels Parliament and the Belgian Senate, where he serves as CD&V group leader. Internationally, he furthers his youth advocacy as Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Youth and the Society of the Future within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

	**Paul Galles - Moderator** Paul Galles is a Luxembourgish politician serving as a Member of the Chamber of Deputies for the Christian Social People's Party (CSV). Since joining the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in November 2021 within the Group of the European People's Party, he has spearheaded key legislative initiatives across the continent. As a PACE rapporteur, he authored reports positioning social rights as the foundation for democratic resilience, championed intergenerational equity, and advocated for concrete mechanisms to integrate young citizens as equal partners in institutional decision-making. Through these contributions, Paul Galles addresses how structural inclusion, social guarantees, and youth engagement directly rebuild public trust and reinforce democratic legitimacy.
	**Dr Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica** Dr Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica is Deputy Speaker of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) and Chairperson of Latvia's Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). She is also a Council Member of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). She previously served as Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gaining extensive experience in European affairs and international relations. She lectures on EU foreign policy at the University of Latvia and advocates for democracy, good governance, civic participation, and European cooperation. Recognised as a European Young Leader by Friends of Europe and a Munich Young Leader, she serves on the board of European Movement – Latvia and as a trustee of Friends of Europe, contributing to European policy dialogue and democratic resilience.
	**Marko Pavić - Moderator** Marko Pavić is a Member of the Croatian Parliament, Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Head of the Croatian Delegation to PACE. He previously served as Croatia's Minister of Labour and Pension System and Minister of Regional Development and EU Funds. Throughout his political career, he has focused on European integration, EU financial policy, employment, social inclusion and regional development. As Minister, he played an active role in negotiations on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027 and led reforms and EU-funded programmes supporting youth employment, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities, including initiatives that enabled more than 35,000 people, predominantly young people, to become self-employed. A physicist by education, he holds an MPhil in Physics and Climate Change from the Universities of Zagreb and Southampton.

	**Luz Martínez Seijo - Moderator** María Luz Martínez Seijo is a Spanish politician and member of the Congress of Deputies representing the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). An expert on education policies and a former language professor, she has served as a Representative to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) since 2022, affiliated with the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC). Within PACE, Martínez Seijo actively shapes policies centred on human rights, democratic values, and social cohesion. Her work focuses heavily on equality, gender rights, combating violence and hate speech, and guaranteeing access to essential health care for vulnerable groups, including migrants. Through her parliamentary debates and committee engagements, she advocates for human dignity, gender equality, and inclusive European public policy.
	**George A. Papandreou** George Papandreaou served as Prime Minister of Greece (2009–2011), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999–2004), and Minister of Education (1994–1996). He was also President of the Socialist International from 2006 to 2022. Throughout his political career, he has consistently promoted democracy, human rights, citizen participation, and multilateral cooperation. As a member of PACE, he has served as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democracy and currently serves as General Rapporteur on Democracy. A long-standing advocate for civic engagement and educational reform, Papandreou actively champions empowering young people to participate in political processes, elections, and decision-making, viewing youth participation not merely as consultation, but as a vital force for shaping the future of democracy.
	**Lisa Yasko** Member of the Parliament of Ukraine and political scientist. She serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee and leads interparliamentary cooperation, whilst representing Ukraine at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Her work focuses on national security, European integration, and post-war restoration, alongside drafting key PACE resolutions on sanctions and democratic security. A passionate advocate for youth empowerment and civic engagement, Lisa encourages young leaders to enter politics to drive change. Founder of Yellow Blue Strategy, she is active in cultural diplomacy as a documentary producer and musician. The first Ukrainian graduate of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government (MPP), she lectures globally and is pursuing a PhD at the University of St Gallen.

	**Dr. Petra Guasti, PhD** Petra Guasti is Associate Professor of Democratic Theory at Charles University in Prague. Her research focuses on democratic innovation, political representation, democratic resilience, populism and polarisation, with particular attention to how citizens can participate meaningfully in democratic decision-making. She is a former Visiting Democracy Fellow at Harvard University and is working for more than two decades with the Bertelsmann Stiftung on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) and Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), where she is currently Regional Coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe. She has held leading roles in the Horizon Europe projects AUTHLIB and INSPIRE. In INSPIRE, she leads research on co-production and democratic innovations, including mini-publics and approaches to strengthening participation and connecting citizens, civil society and representative institutions.
	**Dr. Xesc Mainzer** Xesc Mainzer is a historian, holding a PhD in contemporary history, and currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) of the Council of Europe. He has been an activist for democracy and the rule of law for the last 15 years. Most of his activist trajectory has been as a member of the Young European Federalists, the organisation that nominated him to join the CCJ. He is currently serving in his second mandate in the CCJ, working on topics such as the revitalisation of pluralistic democracy, supporting Roma people and other autochthonous minorities, as well as culture and heritage.
	**Eeva Luhtakallio** Eeva Luhtakallio is professor of sociology at the University of Helsinki. Her research focuses on democracy and citizenship as practices by studying activism, political participation, marginalization, and young people's political engagements. Her recent book *Youth Participation and Democracy: Cultures of Doing Society* with Veikko Eranti et al. (Bristol University Press, 2024), as well as *Practicing Democracy* (Palgrave 2012) and articles published in the last decade, address everyday political action, engaging with theoretical debates concerning the plurality of the common good and definitions of civic action. Luhtakallio leads the Centre for Sociology of Democracy (csd.fi) and is member of the Finnish Academy of Sciences.

	**Cristina Leston-Bandeira** Cristina Leston-Bandeira is Professor of Politics at the University of Leeds and Chair of the pioneering International Parliament Engagement Network (IPEN), which she co-founded in 2020 with the UK House of Commons Service. IPEN brings together academics, parliamentary staff and civil society representatives from across the world, to promote collaboration and encourage knowledge sharing on parliaments and public engagement. Professor Leston-Bandeira has worked on parliaments for over 30 years, having authored over 60 academic publications, and was the first female academic Chair of the UK Study of Parliament Group. She is a leading scholar on parliaments and public engagement and was awarded the UK Political Studies Association 2025 Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for her outstanding professional contributions to political studies.
	**Martin Karlsson** Martin Karlsson is Professor of Political Science at Mälardalen University, Sweden. His research examines how citizens participate and are represented within democratic systems. He explores how participatory processes and digital media reshape communication between citizens and elected officials, and how young people engage with new forms of democratic participation. His most recent study focuses on a much-neglected aspect of trust: elites' trust in citizens and shows that well-functioning participatory processes are important for building such trust. He has participated in numerous national and international research projects and authored more than 70 academic publications and has contributed expertise to a Swedish governmental inquiry on democracy, public authorities and municipalities.
	**Maurizio Cuttin** Maurizio Cuttin is a member and former Vice-Chair of the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), where he works within its unique co-management system to co-develop European youth policy standards. Across two consecutive mandates, he has led efforts to revitalise pluralistic democracy and boost youth participation across the continent. Previously, Cuttin served as the British Youth Council's chief international spokesperson from 2021 to 2026. In this role, he led a major campaign advocating for the UK's return to the Erasmus+ programme while promoting opportunities for young people to influence European policymaking and shape the future of democratic engagement.

	**Lauren Bond** Lauren currently serves as a board member of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, representing student rights at an international level, with a focus on issues such as citizenship education and digital education. Previously, Lauren spent three years with the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland, as international officer and President. She was recently selected as the European Union's Youth Delegate to the United Nations, focusing on peace, security and quality education. As a member of the UK Youth Parliament, she worked extensively on the inclusion of youth in peace processes. Her advocacy was recognised by King Charles in 2023, when she received a Coronation Champion Award, and she won the 2024 Rotary Youth Leadership Development competition.
	**Kalypso Nicolaidis** Kalypso Nicolaidis is professorial Chair of Global Affairs at the EUI School of Transnational Governance in Florence, where she convenes the Democratic Odyssey, the Transnational Democracy Programme, and the Global Peace Tech Hub. She is emeritus fellow at the University of Oxford and was professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and at ENA, Strasbourg. She has worked with the EU Council, Parliament and Commission, the Council of Europe as well as numerous other IOs. She is an academic activist engaged in action-research promoting democratic innovations, including permanent itinerant citizen assembly for the EU, as well as exploring the connection between democracy and geopolitics, as well as the role of Europe as a laboratory for planetary politics. Website: http://kalypsonicolaidis.com/
	**Wojciech Przybylski** Wojciech Przybylski leads strategic foresight in Central and Eastern Europe on European affairs, including democratic security, economic security, and foreign policy. He is chairing the Europe Future Forum in Warsaw. With extensive experience in private sector management he has also gained recognition as a media commentator and a public speaker. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Visegrad Insight and president of the board at Res Publica Foundation. Previously, he has served as the editor-in-chief of Eurozine - a European platform of over 80 culture journals and prior to that Res Publica Nowa in Poland. He is a member of board in several national and international organisations including LSE IDEAS Ratiu Forum, European Forum of New Ideas, and Europe's Futures Initiative.

	**Iida Karjalainen** Iida Karjalainen is a student from Tapiola upper secondary school, Espoo. She has served as a youth representative since 2023 and currently acts as the second Vice-Chair of Espoo Youth Council, while holding a seat in the City Council representing the voice of the local youth. Throughout her tenure, Karjalainen has authored dozens of initiatives and statements to advance policies in education, sustainable development and youth priorities. Karjalainen also serves in the Youth Group of Opinkirjo Development Centre, where she helped prepare and took part in the national Youth Parliament of Finland. She brings fresh insights into Finnish governance and politics, built through hands-on experience and meaningful discussions with politicians across different parties and levels.
	**Santiago Barrail** Santiago is a Policy Officer at the European Partnership for Democracy, where he is responsible for the overall coordination of the Youth Democracy Cohort and leading advocacy efforts for greater youth political participation around the world. Santiago coordinates a network of more than 400 organisations that are either youth-led or working on youth inclusion. He also supports CSOs, young politicians and activists in achieving political changes through citizen-government dialogues and other innovative formats, namely in the framework of Open Government Partnership processes. Prior to joining EPD, Santiago worked at the Carter Center and had internship experiences at the European External Action Service, the United Nations Development Program and the private sector. He is from Paraguay but currently based in Belgium.