



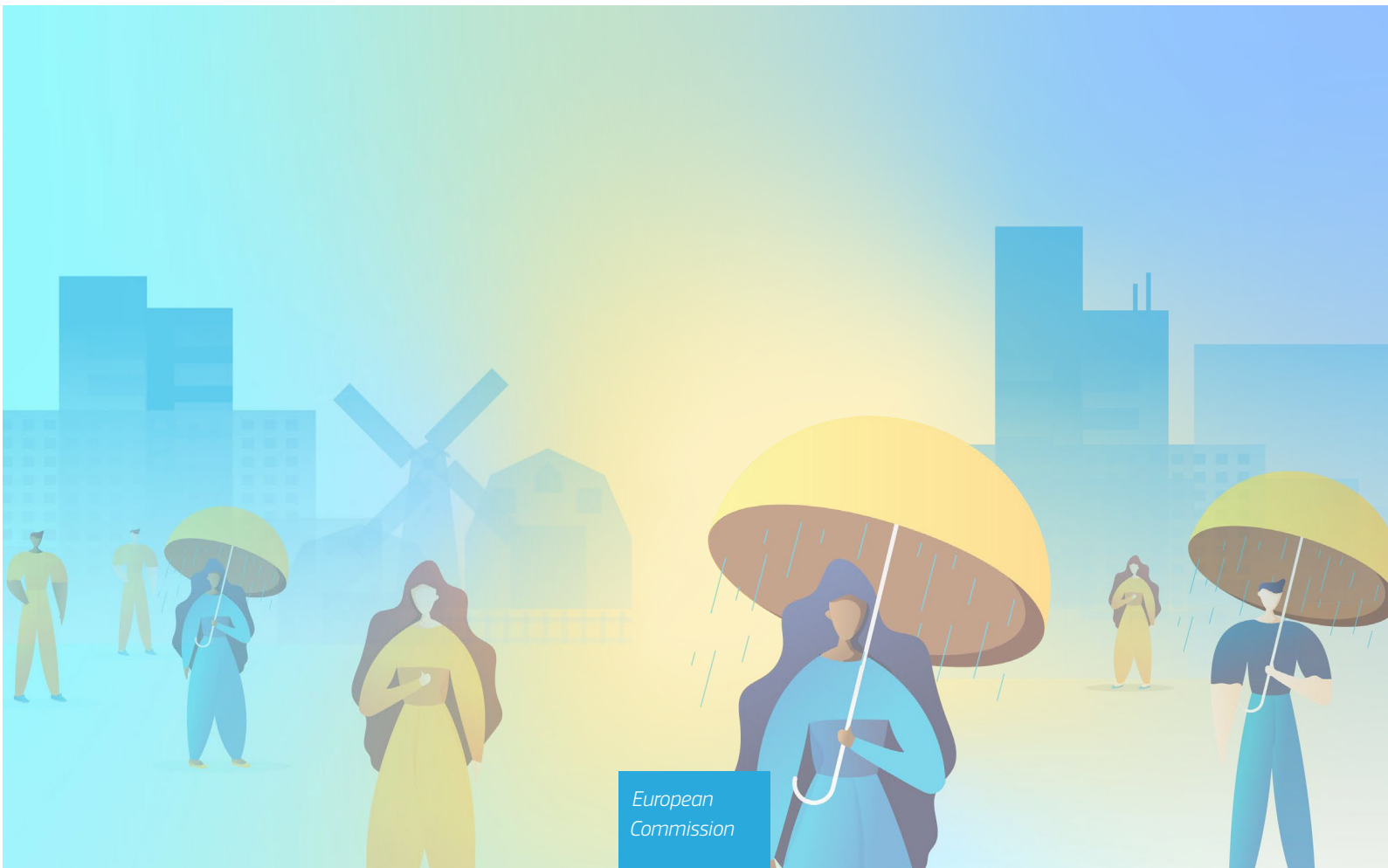
European
Commission

Loneliness in The European Union: Policies at work

6th June 2023

nhow Hotel Bloom - rue Royale 250 - Brussels

Speakers' biographies by session





Welcome and introductory words and High-Level panel discussion on strategic directions

Ms Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, European Commission



Since December 2019, Dubravka Šuica is Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography. Mrs Šuica a Croatian politician from the city of Dubrovnik, where she served for two terms as its first female mayor and was awarded the 2006 World Mayor Award. Dubravka Šuica entered politics in the 1990s as a Member of the Croatian Democratic Union and served as a Member of the Croatian Parliament and Vice-Chair of the EU Integration Committee. Between 2004 and 2009 she was a Board Member of the Union of the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Republic of Croatia. For ten years she was the Vice-President of Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. From 2013 to 2019 Dubravka Šuica served as a Member of the European Parliament and Vice-

Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee. In June 2019, Šuica was elected as first Vice-Chair of EPP Group in the European Parliament. Since 2012, she is the Vice-President of EPP Women.

Keynote speech

Ms Evelyn Regner, Vice-President, European Parliament

Evelyn Regner is Vice-President of the European Parliament and was first elected to the European Parliament in 2009. As trade unionist and member of the social democratic group, Evelyn Regner's main focus has always been on labour-related affairs, namely the improvement of workers' rights and lives, including their mental well-being. Ms. Regner dedicates her work fighting for more tax justice and reducing inequalities in Europe. She is the voice of workers and taxpayers when it comes to regulation of companies and financial markets and is standing up for women's rights and gender equality. In her current mandate, she was elected chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), member of the Conference of Committee Chairs (CCC) before being elected Vice-President. Evelyn Regner is member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). Additionally, she is also a substitute member of the tax committee (FISC) and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) where she initiated the pilot project on Loneliness in the EU.



Grounding policy in evidence

Mr Stephen Quest, Director-General, Joint Research Centre, European Commission



Stephen Quest is the Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) as of 1 May 2020 Prior to this, he was the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (TAXUD) and the Director-General for Informatics (DIGIT), driving the digital transformation of the Commission. His career spans more than 30 years in the European civil service, and has included work on the EU budget, social and environmental policy and four years as Assistant to the Secretary-General. As Director-General, Stephen is particularly focused on modernising organisational culture and promoting innovation within the Commission, both as regards the use of technology and empowering and involving staff in decision-making. He is particularly passionate about communication and the interface between policy and technology.



Plenary discussion: Understanding and addressing loneliness

- **Ms Katarina Ivanković Knežević**, Director, Social Rights and Inclusion, European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

Since September 2018 Katarina Ivanković Knežević is a Director for Social Rights and Inclusion in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Her area of activity is modernisation of social protection systems and wider social policies fostering social and labour market inclusion, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other relevant social policies of the European Union. Before the European Commission she was a State Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System of the Republic of Croatia, in which she was responsible for the management and implementation of the European Social Fund and other EU instruments aiming at human resources development. For the last 20 years her professional interests are human rights and gender equality, social policy and employment with particular accent to the labour market policies.



- **Dr Christopher Mikton**, Technical Officer, Department of Social Determinants of Health, World Health Organisation



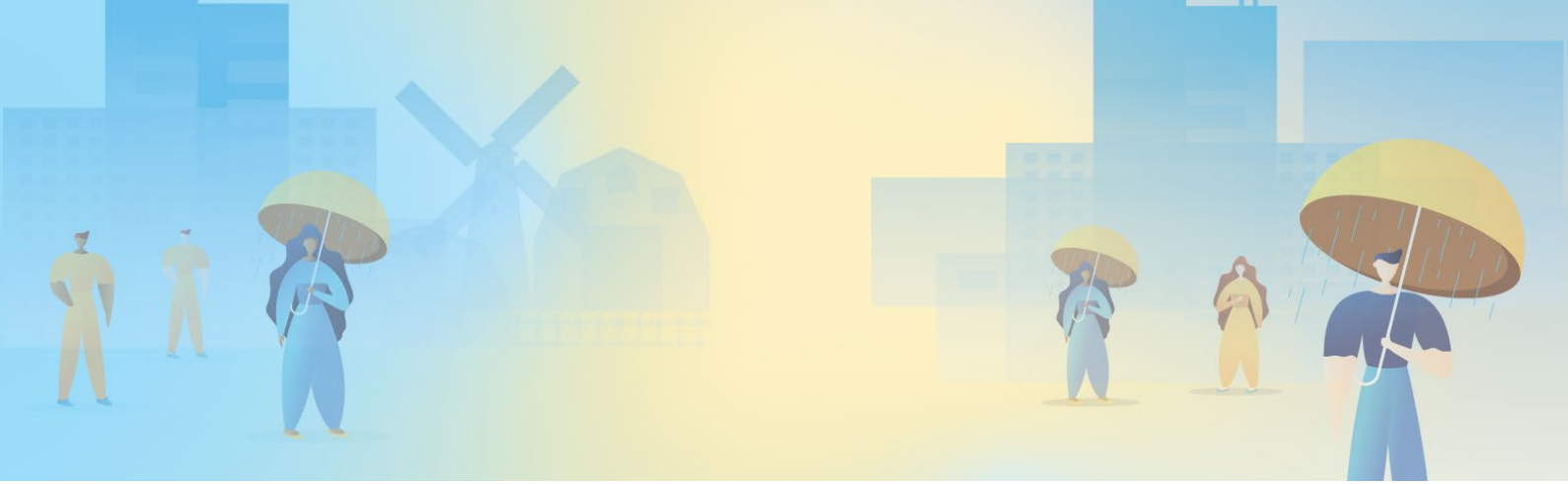
Dr Mikton, who joined the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit at the WHO in 2020, leads the work in three areas. The first is social isolation and loneliness across all age groups, where his focus is on building up the evidence base for this field and on establishing a Global Commission on Social Connection. The second area is the abuse of older people where his main activities consist of developing building up the evidence base in the field and implementing the five priorities for tackling the abuse of older people within the Decade of Healthy Ageing. The third area is data, research, and innovation within the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030, where the current focus is on developing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Decade.

- **Professor Maïke Luhmann**, Ruhr University Bochum

Maïke Luhmann is a professor of psychology at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany. She started studying loneliness in 2010 as a postdoc with John Cacioppo and Louise Hawkley at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on the prevalence, predictors, and outcomes of loneliness across the lifespan and on how loneliness is shaped by the greater physical and sociocultural context. She regularly consults policymakers and decision makers on loneliness, e.g., as a member of the enquiry commission "Loneliness" of the Parliament of Northrhine-Westphalia and as a member of the advisory board of the federally funded "Kompetenznetz Einsamkeit".



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- **Dr Marlies Maes**, Utrecht University



Marlies Maes is an Assistant Professor in Youth Studies, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She is interested in social relationships and the painful feeling of loneliness. She has extensively published on the topic of loneliness across the lifespan, as well as types and measurements of loneliness with a specific focus on children and adolescents.

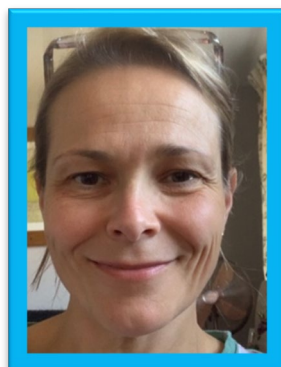
1st Parallel session: LONELINESS AND HEALTH

- **Ms Véronique Wasbauer**, Principal Adviser for non- communicable diseases, European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety

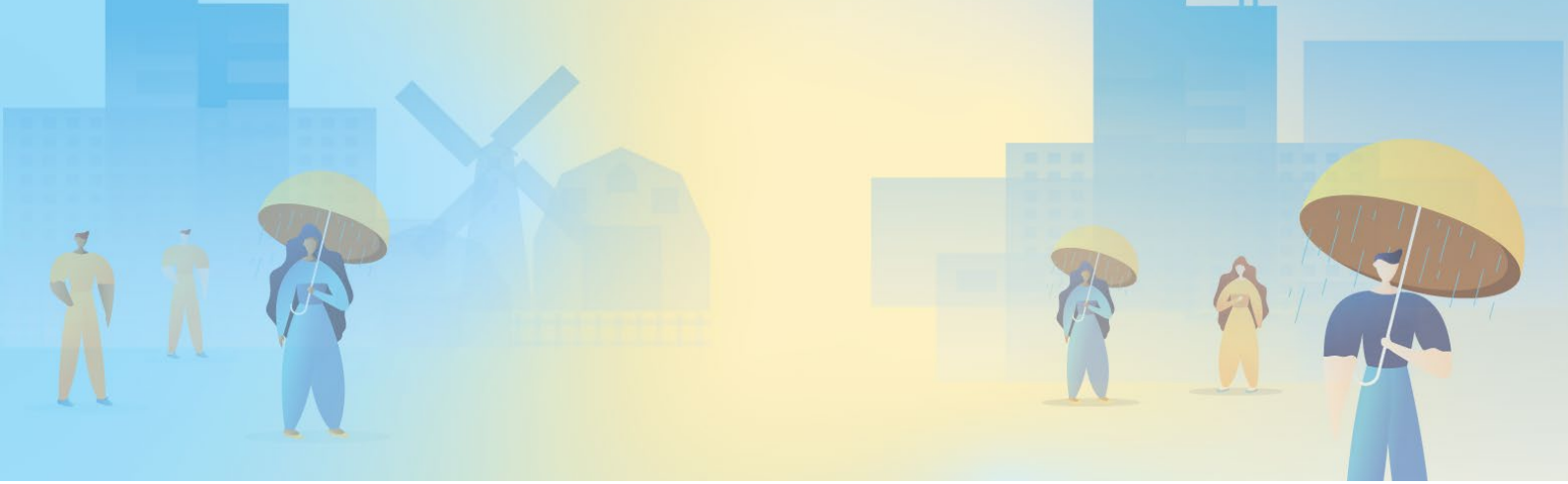


Véronique Wasbauer is currently principal adviser on non-communicable diseases at the European Commission, in DG SANTE. Previously she served as Director of an executive agency in charge of implementing various EU programmes, including the Public Health Programme. Among other functions in earlier stage of her career, she oversaw the reporting on a portfolio of Council activities, of the coordination of tasks in DG Employment and social affairs, of setting up the first European action plan on drugs and drug addiction. Prior to joining the Commission, she was a lawyer at the Luxembourg Bar.

- **Professor Pamela Qualter**, University of Manchester



Pamela Qualter is the UK's leading scientific expert on child and adolescent loneliness. Pamela has received extensive funding to examine loneliness and is currently working on a Medical Research Council funded grant focused on the development of a new measure of loneliness for youth, and a randomized control evaluation of an intervention designed for primary school aged children in the UK funded by the Kavli Trust. Pamela has a consistent track record with publications exploring the phenomenon of loneliness among youth, and her expertise involves large longitudinal studies, where she has explored the causes and consequences of loneliness, and the individual differences in the prospective profile of loneliness across the life-course.



2nd Parallel session: LONELINESS IN THE SOCIETY

- **Professor Manuela Barreto**, University of Exeter

Prof. Barreto's research focuses on the link between marginalization, social stigma, and social relationships. She has researched various aspects of loneliness, but her primary interest is on how it is shaped by processes of exclusion. She has also specifically researched the stigma associated with loneliness, and how it is patterned by gender, age, and culture. Her current aim in this area is to contribute to understanding loneliness as a problem with communities, rather than as an individual deficit, paving the way to more effective and less stigmatizing interventions.



- **Professor Alexander Langenkamp**, Goethe University Frankfurt



Dr. Alexander Langenkamp is an empirical social scientist at the Goethe University Frankfurt. He currently occupies a research position at the chair for quantitative methodology of the sociological faculty. He wrote his dissertation about the societal consequences of loneliness with a particular focus on political participation and polarization. His research lies at the interface between sociology, psychology and political science and focuses currently on the role of social relationships for social cohesion, participation, and inequality.

3rd Parallel session: LONELINESS AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Rebecca Nowland**, University of Central Lancashire

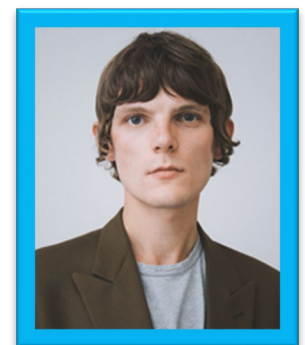
Dr Rebecca Nowland is a Senior Research Fellow at University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. Prior to her academic posts Rebecca worked for many years as a Childcare Manager (Early Years and Playwork) and Community Development Worker with Children and Families, working closely with Local Childcare Providers and Health Visitors in Cambridgeshire. Her current research centres on Perinatal and Child and Adolescent Mental Health, with a particular interest in the influence of peer relationships and loneliness on physical and mental health and social cognition. She is also interested in the relationship between loneliness and social technologies. She uses a variety of research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative designs, including physiological measurements and large-scale longitudinal data collection and analysis. She is particularly interested in the use of co-production with those with lived experience in research. Rebecca has widely published on loneliness in children, youth and adults in academic journals. Her work on loneliness has also received public interest and has featured widely in news media.





- **Dr Hannes-Vincent Krause**, Weizenbaum Institute, Berlin

Dr. Hannes-Vincent Krause is a scientist at the Weizenbaum Institute in Berlin, Germany. He studied Psychology at Humboldt University Berlin and earned his doctoral degree in Information Systems at the University of Potsdam. His research is dedicated to understanding how specific technological features and usage patterns of social media impact users' well-being, including important resilience and risk factors like self-esteem and loneliness. His work has been published in leading scientific journals (e.g., Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Current Opinion in Psychology) and conference proceedings (e.g., International Conference on Information Systems, European Conference on Information Systems).



Plenary discussion: Policy interventions, effectiveness, and challenges

- **Mr Edward Garcia**, Founder and Board Chair of the Foundation for Social Connection and Board Member of the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness

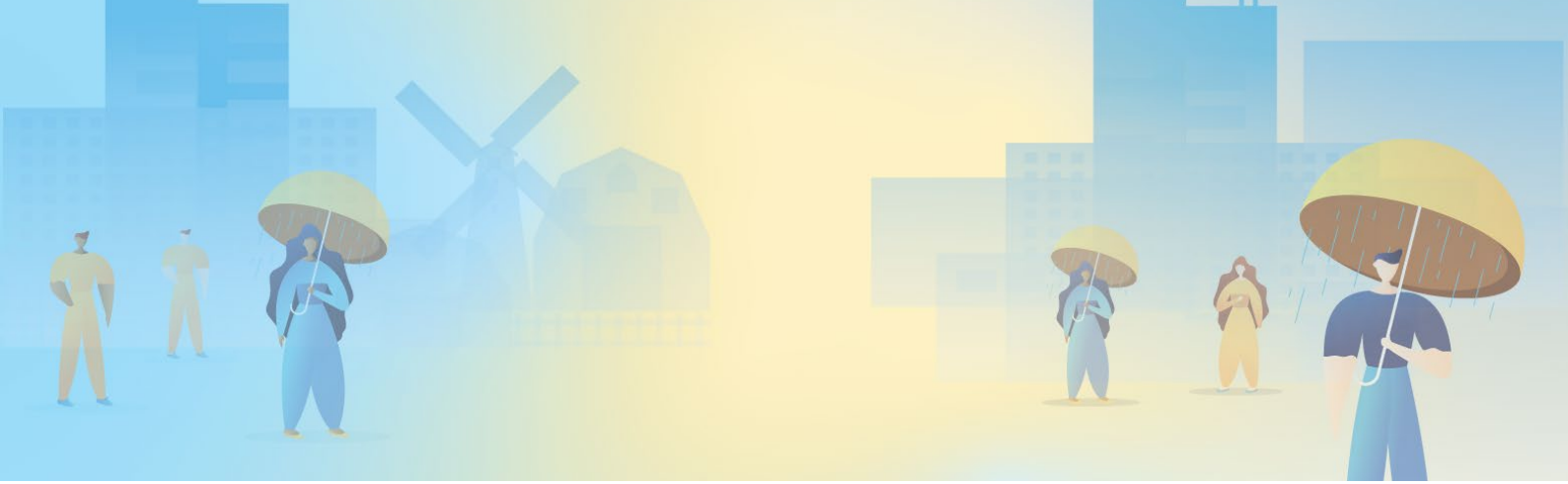


Edward Garcia is the Founder and Board Chair of the Foundation for Social Connection, a non-profit organization in the U.S. aiming to foster evidence-based solutions addressing social isolation and loneliness and is Board Vice-Chair to the Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness, a multi-stakeholder organization whose focus is to create awareness around social isolation & loneliness and to advocate for policy reform to combat this issue. Eddie is also the Co-Chair of the 'Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection' (GILC), a consortium of nations seeking to address and combat loneliness and promote social connection on a broader scale.

- **Ms Katherine Scrivens**, Policy Analyst, Centre for Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity, OECD

Kate Scrivens is an Analyst for the OECD Centre for Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE) and has been researching well-being frameworks and related topics for 15 years. She is part of the team that created the OECD Well-being Framework, leading work related to social connections and social capital. In addition, she has conducted research on well-being in Latin American countries, migrant well-being, and the policy use of well-being frameworks amongst other projects. She is now leading WISE's current efforts to advance measurement and policy action on social connections (and loneliness), as well as managing the Knowledge Exchange Platform on Well-being Metrics and Policy Practice, and the OECD World Forum on Well-being.





- **Professor Roger O’Sullivan**, Institute of Public Health Ireland



Professor Roger O’Sullivan is Director of the Ageing Research and Development Division within the Institute of Public Health in Ireland and visiting Professor at Ulster University. He is a member of the Loneliness Taskforce in Ireland, a founding member of the International Loneliness and Isolation research Network (I-LINK) and in 2020 he led the global “Coping with Loneliness, Isolation and Covid-19” study. Professor O’Sullivan was awarded membership through distinction of the Faculty of Public Health–UK in 2017 and in 2020 he was made Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America.

- **Dr Anu Jansson**, Director of Development and Participation, The Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older Adults and Research Coordinator, RECETAS

Dr. Anu Jansson has her background in occupational therapy and gerontology. She has studied loneliness of older adults and alleviation of loneliness for many years. She works as a Director of Development and Participation in the Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older People, and as a research coordinator in the RECETAS project at the University of Helsinki. She has launched and developed the Circle of Friends group model in 2006, based on the results of the randomized, controlled trial



- **Ms Kyra Haerkens**, Quality Coach, Join US



Kyra Haerkens, is a Quality Coach at Join Us, a non-profit organization in the Netherlands that has measurably reduced loneliness among younger people aged 12 to 30. This program has helped thousands of young people form more than 75 municipalities across the country. Kyra provides training, interventions and other professionalization meetings with the aim of tackling loneliness among young people.



High level panel discussion on strategic directions

- **Ms Dubravka Šuica**, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, European Commission (*see page 2*)
- **Ms Petra Noreback**, State Secretary to Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, Sweden



Petra Noreback has been State Secretary to Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health Jakob Forssmed since 2022. Ms Noreback has a Master's degree in Economics from the Stockholm School of Economics and Copenhagen Business School. She previously served as Chief Economist and Political adviser for her political party, the Christian Democrats, at the Parliamentary Secretariat in Stockholm.

- **Mr Ogura Masanobu**, Minister for Loneliness and Isolation, Government of Japan

Minister Masanobu Ogura has been in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation since August 2022.

Since he graduated from the Faculty of Law, the University of Tokyo in 2004, he joined the Bank of Japan.

He earned master's degree in Financial Economics from the University of Oxford. In 2012, he was elected to the House of Representatives for the first time (elected four times as of present).

He served as Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications and Director of the Youth Division, Liberal Democratic Party.



Moderator: Mr. Ali Al-Jaberi – ProModeration, senior moderator



Ali Al-Jaberi is a senior moderator and master of ceremonies of high-level events who works for the European Commission on a regular basis. He is a former Europe Correspondent for Associated Press TV, radio newsreader and foreign reporter for Trouw and De Standaard newspapers. Ali is a multiple award-winning public speaker and lectured in Public Policy, European affairs and International Relations at The Hague University. He chairs events on any topic in European policy making. His style is characterized by energetic presentation and a thorough understanding of the subject matter. See further www.promoderation.nl