

## Speakers and panelist on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Widening the Reach of EU Missions Through EEA and Norway Grants

#### Ragna Fidjestøl

**Managing Director at Financial Mechanism Office, EEA and Norway Grants**



Ragna Fidjestøl is the Managing Director of the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels, the Secretariat for the EEA and Norway Grants. As a Norwegian Diplomat, she has held different positions in the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, including in the Norwegian embassies in Paris and Hanoi and the mission to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. From 2021 to 2023 she was the Policy Director for the EEA and Norway Grants in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She has previously worked 7 years in the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels, as Bilateral Coordinator and Head of the Country and Bilateral Department. She has a Master in Economics and Business Administration.

#### Rune Vistad

**Director of Department for International Cooperation, Research Council of Norway**

Rune Vistad has extensive leadership experience and expertise in research policy. He has held three director positions in the Research Council of Norway and is currently the Director for the Department for International Cooperation.



He has previously worked 10 years in Brussel in the Financial Mechanism office where he was the Head of the Programmes Department and has held a number of positions in the Norwegian administration. Vistad has a Master of Science from the University in Trondheim (NTNU).

Vistad is the Norwegian representative on the board the NordForsk and the Board of Directors of the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

## Panel 1

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### **Agnieszka Ratajczak**

**Director at the Department of International Cooperation of the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) Poland**



Agnieszka Ratajczak - Director, Department of International Cooperation, National Centre for Research and Development, Poland; Plenipotentiary for International Cooperation to the Head of NCBR

Experienced public sector executive, provides strategic advice to the NCBR top management, based on her deep domain expertise and established experience. For the past 20 years Agnieszka has held managerial positions in institutions dealing with scientific policy and research funding. Agnieszka has been with NCBR since 2011 with the aim to develop international cooperation and enhance NCBR international visibility. Prior to NCBR, Agnieszka worked as Director of European Affairs and Deputy Director of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Agnieszka is an expert in the design of programmes focused on supporting innovative, research-based projects. A new area in her portfolio includes acceleration programmes for young technology-based companies seeking global expansion. A long-standing member of international committees and bodies dealing with both R&I policy and funding, Agnieszka also sits on the Committee for Internationalisation at the National Agency for Academic Exchange.

### **Ovidiu Cîmpean**

**State Secretary at the Ministry of Investments and European Projects, Romania**



Ovidiu Cîmpean is a State Secretary at the Ministry of Investments and European Projects (MIPE), where he holds a pivotal role in managing the EEA and Norway Grants.

Coordinator of M100 - Mirror Mission Cities Hub Romania, a national hub designed as a support platform for the Romanian cities in their transformation processes towards smart and climate-neutral cities by 2030.

With over 15 years of experience, Ovidiu has been the development director at Cluj-Napoca Municipality, being in charge with European funded projects.

He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations and European Studies from Babeş-Bolyai University, providing a solid academic background for his career.

Additionally, Board president of Civic Imagination and Innovation Center (CIIC), a platform that encourages community engagement, citizen involvement in decision-making, and the development of a strong local participatory governance system in Cluj-Napoca

## **Zuzana Dostálová**

**Head of the EEA and Norway Grants Department at the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic**



**Zuzana Dostálová** is working as a Head of the EEA and Norway Grants department in the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. Since 2019 she has been working as a Programme Manager of the Czech Research Programme under EEA and Norway Grants, working on the programme for applied research, experimental development and innovation since its Call for Proposals over to the project implementation phase. In 2023 she co-organised the conference SOILCON, focusing on the synergies of the EEA and Norway Grants with the EU Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe".

## **Michal Miedzinski**

**Economic and policy researcher at the Joint Research Centre**



Michal Miedzinski, Economic and policy researcher at Joint Research Centre, European Commission. Miedzinski specialises in policy analysis, foresight and evaluation in the area of innovation and sustainable development. His work is focused on public policies and innovations transforming the world towards the long-term sustainability.

## **Eva Tzika**

**Policy Officer DG MARE of the European Commission**



Eva Tzika is a policy officer in the Directorate-General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) of the European Commission. She has been coordinating marine/maritime research and innovation in DG MARE under Horizon Europe program, also as part of the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters secretariat, for more than five years. Previously she has been engaged in planning and sustainable development activities. Her background is on planning and regional development with a master's degree on maritime spatial planning

## Panel 2

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### **Andreea Strachinescu**

**Head of Unit "Maritime Innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment" (A1), DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, EC**



Andreea Strachinescu, Head of Unit Maritime Innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment in the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, is responsible for promoting innovative and emerging technologies and solutions and ensuring broad dissemination of marine knowledge and research. The Unit she manages fosters innovation and provides policy input to Horizon Europe research and innovation program, and it aims to create a better understanding of the ocean resources and advocate their sustainable use. It is also in the lead for providing policy input to the investments strategies for the blue economy.

Prior to this position, Ms. Strachinescu was Head of Unit responsible for New Energy Technologies and Innovation in the Directorate General for Energy, European Commission, in charge with the development of policy and actions on non-nuclear energy research and innovation.

### **Jelena Vidovic**

**Research Programme Officer, Unit 'Research and Innovation', DG Agriculture and Rural Development, EC.**



Jelena Vidovic is Research Programme Officer at the European Commission, DG AGRI, working on the Horizon Europe Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'. Before joining DG AGRI, she dealt with international cooperation in research and innovation at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.

Jelena Vidovic received her PhD in the field of Geosciences from the University of Zagreb (Croatia), specializing in environmental impact assessments in marine environments, while at the University of Vienna (Austria) she studied historical ecology of the Northern Adriatic Sea. Jelena Vidovic also has an extensive experience in H2020 project management and stakeholder engagement, establishing an international network of experts - World Forum on Raw Materials.

## **Jan-Willem van de Loo**

**Senior Expert at Unit "Combatting Diseases" DG Research and Innovation**



Jan-Willem van de Loo joined the European Commission in 2003. He is a Senior Expert on cancer research and innovation. As the Cancer Theme Lead within the Horizon Europe Cancer Mission he's responsible for science and stakeholders. In 2021, he led a team co-creating the Mission on Cancer. Other policy initiatives include contributions to the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, public-public and public-private R&I partnerships. He has extensive experience with collaborative project management, international cancer research and innovation policy activities and stakeholder interactions. He graduated in Biology at the University of Utrecht in 1991, following a year at the UWMadison Medical School Graduate Program. He worked as a junior scientist on blood coagulation at Sanquin, Amsterdam and obtained his PhD in cell biology at the Centre for Human Genetics at the University of Leuven in 1999. He held three postdoctoral positions in cancer research, including a Marie-Curie postdoctoral fellowship at the European Institute of Oncology in Milan.

## **Philippe Tulkens**

**Head of Unit, Climate and Planetary Boundaries (B3), DG Research and Innovation, EC**



Since 2021 Philippe Tulkens is appointed Head of Unit ‘Climate and Planetary Boundaries’ in the Research and Innovation Directorate General of the European Commission. The Unit co-programs EU R&I activities in the areas of climate change, biodiversity, nature-based solutions and environmental observation. R&I outcomes are used by the team to transfer knowledge and contribute to the design of EU policies in the areas covered by the European Green Deal. Since May 2022, he is the Deputy Mission Manager for the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Over the previous years, he worked as deputy Head of Unit on accelerating clean energy innovation in the context of the Energy Union and as policy assistant to the Deputy Directorate General of DG Research and Innovation. He holds a PhD in climate physics and worked throughout his career at the interface between climate science and policies, in academic institutions, for the Belgian government, for the Chairman of the IPCC and, since 2006, for the European Commission.

## **Philippe Froissard**

**Head of Unit “Strategy, Policy Coordination and Urban Transitions”, Clean Planet Directorate, DG Research & Innovation, EC**



Philippe Froissard holds the position of Head of Unit at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. He is deputy Director-General for Planet, People and Science for Policy - Clean Planet - Strategy, Policy Coordination & Urban Transitions.

## **Panel 3**

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### **Adrian Curaj**

**Director of the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, Romania**



Adrian Curaj is the General Director of the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding – UEFISCDI, and professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration. He had been working as a consultant for the World Bank, UNESCO, UNIDO, ETF and EC for studies in Tertiary Education, Science and Innovation, and Foresight. Adrian CURAJ is a fellow of the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS). Since July 2021 he is the President of the Romanian Advisory Council for Sustainable Development.

Adrian Curaj is also a former minister of education, science and innovation.

## **Joerg Niehoff**

**Deputy Head of Unit, ERA Spreading Excellence and Research Careers, (A4) DG Research and Innovation, EC**



Joerg Niehoff is Deputy Head of Unit for “ERA, Spreading Excellence and Research Careers” in DG Research & Innovation. Joerg has more than 15 years of experience with the coordination of national research policies and programmes and European Partnerships. He started his professional career as a researcher at the Fraunhofer Institute for Laser Technology, as a Technology consultant, and Head of Office Brussels for VDI, Europe’s largest Engineering Association. Joerg holds degrees in engineering and in industrial engineering and a PhD from the RWTH Aachen.

## **Marnix Surgeon**

**Deputy Head of Unit, Common Missions and Partnership Service (G4) , DG Research and Innovation, EC**



I am currently the deputy Head of Unit of DG RTD’s Unit G4 ‘Common Missions and Partnerships Support Service’. I am a PhD in materials engineering by training and joined the European Commission in 2006. During my time in the European Commission I have worked on numerous R&I related files, including the Europe 2020 strategy, the development of Horizon 2020, the international cooperation strategy for Horizon 2020, the most recent European Research Area Communication and most recently European Partnerships and EU Missions, where I was directly responsible for drafting the 2023 Communication on EU Missions assessment.

# Widening the Reach of EU Missions Through EEA and Norway Grants

**Widening countries are crucial for the success of the European Missions – can EEA and Norway Grants help create synergies and inclusion?**

## ***Background***

Norway, together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, have through the EEA and Norway Grants supported numerous initiatives in Widening countries since 2004, including bilateral research programmes, climate and environmental programmes, business, and regional development programmes. During the current funding period (2014-2021), the EEA and Norway Grants channelled 2,8 billion EUR to over 6000 projects. ([www.eeagrants.org](http://www.eeagrants.org))

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) has acted as donor programme partner in bilateral research programmes since 2006 and developed close relations to several sister organisations in Widening countries that are administrating these EEA and Norway Grants programmes.

Together, RCN and these organisations carried out a series of events in 2023 to boost Widening participation in EU Missions and Horizon Europe by reducing the information lag, bringing updated information about the Missions activities and plans, and by showcasing that capacity and expertise relevant for the Missions has been established in many EEA and Norway Grants projects.

The events covered all the 5 EU-Missions: Cancer Mission in Bucharest (14-15.02.2023 by UEFISDI), Soil Mission in Prague (18.09.2023 by TACR) and Ocean Mission in Portugal (17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 by DGPM), Climate Adapt and Cities Mission in Warsaw (21-22nd November 2023 by NCBR). Their primary target group were participants from EEA and Norway Grants projects that are thematically relevant to the Missions.

## ***Goal***

We believe that there is a synergy potential between the investments in capacity in Widening countries made by the EEA and Norway Grants and the EU Missions. We also believe that we all need to act to address the information, coordination, and implementation lags, which are affecting the participation of Widening countries in new and emerging Horizon Europe and ERA initiatives, including the EU Missions.