

WHO IS WHO ON STAGE



Smail Alihalali is Chief of the Division of Circular Economy and Green Industry at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna. Since joining UNIDO in 2007, he has held key positions including Chief of Responsible Materials and Chemicals Management and Emerging Compliance Regime and led global programmes on resource efficiency and eco-industrial parks. Previously, he was Director of the Morocco National Cleaner Production Centre and worked at CNESTEN. He holds master's degrees in nuclear safety engineering as well as mechanical engineering.



Deliloglu Alpaslan is Country Manager & Chief Sustainability Officer at IKEA Austria. Before joining the Austrian team in 2019 he was Deputy Country Manager in Switzerland and Commercial Director in Turkey. He studied international relations, politics and economics at Kirikkale University (Turkey) to "make the world a little better". Establishing new business areas remained a constant companion of his career there and still is today. Sustainability and innovation are particularly close to his heart. He also has very ambitious and innovative plans for Austria: one of his goals is to bring about a change in awareness when it comes to the topic of sustainability



Thomas Arnoldner studied business management at the Vienna University of Economics and Business and the Stockholm School of Economics. He began his career at Alcatel Austria in 2003, becoming CEO of Alcatel-Lucent Austria in 2013. Following Nokia's acquisition of Alcatel-Lucent, he developed the post-integration strategy and led Nokia's European growth strategy. He was on the executive board of T-Systems Austria and CEO of A1 Group. As of September 1, 2023, he is Deputy CEO.



Jack Barrie is a Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House, specializing in the circular economy, policy, international trade, geopolitics, finance, and the SDGs. He advises UNECE on sustainable value chains and is part of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's Global Circularity Protocol Technical Working Group. Barrie recently published the first Global Stocktake for National CE Roadmaps with UNIDO. He holds a PhD in circular economy innovation and regularly advises public and private sector leaders globally.



Cathrine Barth is co-founder of Nordic Circular Hotspot and Head of Circular Economy, Natural State. She is a recognized expert in circular economy and sustainability, with a dedicated career within system design, business model innovation and strategic promotion of circular and sustainable practices. She has led significant innovation and communication projects in the circular economy. From 2024, she has a part-time position as an Assistant Professor for the NMBU (Norwegian Life Sciences) Business School to develop and teach Circular Economy at management level.



Daniel Cronin is an entrepreneur, lecturer, and keynote speaker, known for co-founding AustrianStartups, a leading platform for entrepreneurship in Austria. With a decade of influential work in Austria's startup ecosystem and considered as one of the leading experts and trainers on pitching, he also created the Train-the-Trainer program for the European Innovation Council (EIC) on pitching and lectures at several universities. Cronin has spoken at global conferences on startups, innovation, and corporate-startup collaboration and has hosted over 400 events on startups and innovation.



Pieter De Maeght is Technology Attaché at Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) based in Munich, Germany. He holds a master's in chemical engineering from KULeuven and a master in business administration from Vlerick Business School. With over 15 years of experience in the chemical and material science sectors, De Maeght now focuses on Digital and Health Tech at FIT, with a special interest in biotech, AI, and robotics.



Nina Eisenmenger is an Associate Professor of Industrial Ecology at the Institute of Social Ecology, BOKU Vienna. With over 20 years of interdisciplinary research and teaching experience, her work focuses on sustainable resource use and Material Flow Accounting/Analysis methods. She contributes to policy fields such as resource efficiency, circular economy, and international supply chains. Eisenmenger has been involved in science-to-policy processes with the European Commission, Eurostat, Austrian Ministries, the OECD, and the UN. Since 2023, she has been a member of the Austrian Circular Economy Task Force, advising the Austrian government.



Leonore Gewessler is the Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology in Austria since January 7, 2020. She holds a degree in political science from Vienna. Prior to her ministerial role, she worked as office manager in the office of the district head of the 7th district of Vienna, managed the Europa-wide active NGO Green European Foundation in Brussels and served as Political Director of Global 2000 – Friends of the Earth Austria. She was also a board member of Friends of the Earth Europe, contributing to sustainability and environmental advocacy across Europe.



Stefan Grafenhorst is Vice President of Sustainability & Corporate Communications at Greiner, a major plastics and foam producer. He spearheads the company's sustainable transformation towards a circular business model. Prior to Greiner, he advised on policy in the German Bundestag and worked for an industry association. His career began in strategy consultancy in Brussels before dedicating several years to development aid work in Zimbabwe. Grafenhorst holds degrees in Political Science from Bremen, International Relations from Brussels, and an MBA from Vienna University of Economics and Business.



Ina Gruber has served as Head of Swiss Business Hub Austria at the Embassy of Switzerland in Vienna since 2019. She aids Swiss SMEs in internationalization and business development. After completing her dissertation on economic growth and climate change in West Africa at the University of Bonn, Gruber was a lecturer in economics and environmental management in Chile. She then worked as an economic advisor at the Embassy of Switzerland in Santiago, where she built the Trade Point Chile in 2016 before moving back to Austria in 2019.



Philipp Horner has over 10 years of professional experience in the automotive and steel industries. After leadership roles within voestalpine High Performance Metals in Operational Excellence & Purchasing, he assumed the role of Chief Sustainability Officer in July 2022. Together with his team, aiming to make performance sustainable, he developed and implemented the sustainability concept inSPire – Sustainable Performance.



Karin Huber-Heim holds the City of Vienna Endowed Professorship for Circular Economy & Transformative Business Models at University of applied Sciences Vienna. She is Chair of the "Task Force Circular Economy" launched by the Austrian federal ministries of climate action, environment, energy, mobility, innovation and technology, and labour and economy, in Summer 2023. She is Executive Director of the Circular Economy Forum Austria, a joint initiative of key players from business, science, design, politics and society, which she co-founded to support the business community in the transition to a circular economy.



Thomas Jakl, former chair of the European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) Management Board and president of ECHA between 2008-2012, currently serves as Deputy Director General of the Austrian Environment Ministry, overseeing Chemicals Policy. He focuses on legislation regarding chemical substances at national, European, and UN levels. Additionally, he is president of the Governing Board of PARC, a 400 million Euro initiative under the EU's research program "Horizon Europe," dedicated to risk assessment for chemicals.



Ladeja Godina Košir is the Founder and Director of Circular Change and Co-Chair of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform in Brussels. Recognized globally as a circular economy authority, she has co-authored Circular Economy Roadmaps for Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Chile. She collaborates with CE teams worldwide and contributes to think tanks like Chatham House, was a finalist for The Circular Leadership Award 2018 (Davos WEF) and featured as #EUwomen4future by the EU Commission in 2020.



Berthold Kren has been CEO of Holcim Central Europe since 2020 and is responsible for cement, concrete and gravel in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. Coming from the waste management industry, the Montanuniversität graduate joined Holcim (formerly Lafarge), the world's leading cement manufacturer, in 2005. He holds several supervisory board positions in participating companies, is involved in CEOs 4 Future and the Senate of the Circular Economy, among others, and has been President of the Association of the Austrian Cement Industry since 2022.



Maximilian Mauthe, in his capacity at the Federation of Austrian Industry, represents the interests of Austrian industries in decarbonization endeavours. His expertise spans climate, energy, and environmental policy at both national and European levels. Previously, he held positions at OMV, BusinessEurope, and the Federal Chancellery of Austria, among others. Mauthe holds a master's degree in international & European politics from The University of Edinburgh and a bachelor's degree in economics from Vienna University of Economics and Business.



Hans Mayrhofer has served as Secretary General of the Ecosocial Forum Austria & Europe since 2014, which organises the "Wintertagung," Austria's foremost agricultural information and discussion forum. A certified sustainability and circular economy expert, he is also a seasoned keynote speaker. As a passionate farmer in the Bucklige Welt region, he also manages the local energy supply company. With a background in agricultural economics, he started his career as an agricultural policy advisor and later held positions in the BOKU Rectorate and the cabinet of Agriculture and Environment Minister Berlakovich.



Marijana Novak is Director at Circle Economy and spearheads the Circularity Gap Reporting Initiative, a global benchmark for circularity. With a background in Advanced Mathematics and Sustainable Finance, she integrates data and research to measure circularity's impact. Novak collaborates with multilateral institutions, governments, and research organizations, developing methodologies and monitoring protocols. She creates an information architecture to support circular economy practitioners worldwide. With over 10 years of experience in data, technology, and risk modeling, she aims to enhance sustainability decision-making by uniting public and private data sources.



Andreas Rajchl was previously with the Austrian Financial Market Authority (FMA) and the European Commission DG FISMA Sustainable Finance Unit and now heads the Green Finance and Sustainable Economy Department at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology. His expertise spans financial regulation, stability, and sustainable finance, with experience in EU sustainable finance strategy, green loans, and preventing greenwashing. In his current role at the Ministry, he leads a team dedicated to sustainable finance, climate economics, and just transition.



Manfred Renner has a doctorate in mechanical engineering and specializes in material development and process engineering crucial for the circular economy. In 2022, he assumed leadership at the Fraunhofer Institute for Environmental, Safety, and Energy Technology UMSICHT in Oberhausen. With over 600 employees, the institute focuses on Circular Economy, Carbon Management, Green Hydrogen, and Local Energy Systems. Additionally, Renner chairs Responsible Process Engineering (RPE) at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at Ruhr Universität Bochum, shaping systemic circular economy development.



Patrick Schröder is a senior research fellow of the Environment and Society Centre at Chatham House. His research and policy engagement focuses on the global transition to an inclusive circular economy highlighting the need for international policy coordination, closing the investment gap, the role of global trade and the contribution of the circular economy to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Herbert Seitner is Senior Director of Enterprise Commercial, Consulting Services & Sustainability and Member of the Management Board at Microsoft Austria and drives the digital transformation of the company's largest clients in Austria with a focus on ecological sustainability. With 20 years of international management experience, previously served as Senior Commercial Manager at Microsoft Austria and has profound experience in finance, sales, business development, strategy and leadership.



Agnieszka Sznyk is President of the Board at INNOWO and holds a PhD in sustainable development. She advises Poland's Circular Economy Working Group and is a member of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Sznyk founded the Polish Circular Hotspot and international Circular Week campaign. She previously coordinated ecological campaigns at WWF and received an award for her NGO sector contributions as best PR specialist. With INNOWO she focuses on innovation for sustainable progress, particularly in circular economy initiatives, aiding decision-makers in policy development for sustainable production and consumption.



Christian Tauber is an expert in digital innovation and currently leads the Competence Center Future Market at CANCOM Austria. There, he oversees a team of developers, architects, UX designers, and product managers, collaborating on innovative digital products and customized software development projects. He advises CANCOM clients on navigating new business challenges and serves on the Management Board of the Gaia-X Hub Austria, advocating for secure and transparent digital infrastructure development. Tauber is a dynamic innovator with a background spanning from product management to cloud strategy as well as electrical engineering and business administration.



Dorothee Teichmann is a senior economist in the Circular Economy and Sustainable Development Division at the European Investment Bank (EIB) with over 12 years of experience in research, development, innovation, waste management, and circular economy. Based in the EIB Vienna office, she has worked extensively with JASPERS, a joint EIB and European Commission initiative supporting infrastructure projects financed by EU funds. With a PhD in economics from the University Paris-Dauphine, Dorothee specializes in cost-benefit analysis and plays a key role in advancing sustainable development initiatives.



Christoph Thun-Hohenstein serves as Director General for International Cultural Relations at the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International. With a background in law, political science, and history of art from the University of Vienna, he held various positions in the Austrian Foreign Ministry and directed the Austrian Cultural Forum New York. Thun-Hohenstein was Managing Director of departure, the Creative Agency of the City of Vienna, and served as General Director and Artistic Director of the MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts. He initiated and directed the Vienna Biennale for Change (2012-2022) and most recently, the Vienna Climate Biennale.



Andreas Tschulik leads the Integrated Product Policy, Environmental Management, and Environmental Technology department at the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology. His team oversees circular economy, eco-design, the Austrian and European Eco-label, greening public procurement, environmental and sustainability management, EMAS and the promotion of environmental technologies, thus playing a pivotal role in shaping policies and initiatives to advance environmental sustainability and innovation within Austria.



Peter Ulm is a Vienna based Real Estate Developer, CEO of Empira Management GmbH and Managing Partner of allora Immobilien GmbH. With nearly 30 years of experience in various roles within the real estate sector, he focuses on inner city brownfield developments with the aim to create climate neutral quarters. Additionally, Ulm serves as Vice President of the Association of Austrian Project Developers (VÖPE).



Patrizia Ilda Valentini has been working for the Renault Group for 23 years. As Head of Mobilize in Austria, she oversees new mobility concepts, intelligent charging solutions, the circular economy, and the counseling of electrification of car fleets. She studied commercial science at the University of Economics in Vienna and at the Financial University in Adelaide, Australia, and is an integral systemic coach. Since 2022, she has been an ambassador and member of the advisory council of the Austrian Automotive Transformation Platform, an initiative of the Austrian Climate and Energy Fund.



Nina Vaskunlahti is Ambassador of Finland to Austria and Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna (excl. OSCE) since September 2023 and served both at the European Commission and Finnish Permanent Representation to the European Union as Deputy Permanent Representative. With a master's degree in political sciences from the University of Turku, her diverse career includes postings in Mexico, Australia, Russia and secondment to the Office of the High Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has held key roles such as Under-Secretary of State for International Trade and Ambassador to India, Bangladesh and Turkey. H.E. Ms Vaskunlahti champions international cooperation and dialogue, guided by values of equality, innovativeness, and trustworthiness and with a strong advocacy for gender equality.



Robert Zadrzil is Country Manager Austria at UniCredit and was Chief Executive Officer of UniCredit Bank Austria for many years. He is also President of the Austrian Banking Association. He began his career at Bank Austria in 2001 and subsequently held various senior leadership positions. He is also Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Schoellerbank, Austria's leading bank in Private Banking and Wealth Management, as well as Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Oesterreichische Kontrollbank, Austria's central financial services provider for the export industry.