Meet the speakers



Pål Molander

Dr. Pål Molander is the Chief Executive Officer of the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA). He is the current Chair of the Board of PEER and of its Norwegian member, CIENS. He previously served as Director General of the National Institute of Occupational Health (STAMI) in Norway and as Adjunct Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Oslo. Molander has chaired several government-appointed commissions and expert groups and serves as chair and board member of several companies.



Katrin Böhning-Gaese

Katrin Böhning-Gaese is Scientific Director of the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Professor for Biodiversity in the Anthropocene at Leipzig University, and currently serves as Vice President of the Helmholtz Association. From 2010 to 2024, she was Director of the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre. As a biologist and recipient of the German Environmental Award, she investigates the impacts of climate and land-use change on biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as the contribution of biodiversity to human well-being. The elected fellow of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, of the Academia Europaea, and member of various other advisory bodies actively contributes to science-based policy advice and public discourse.



Berien Elbersen

Berien Elbersen is a Senior Researcher in spatial environmental assessments at Wageningen Environmental Research. Trained as a geographer at Utrecht University, where she also obtained her PhD, she has over 30 years of experience in national and international projects on agri-environmental impact assessment, sustainable land use, and biomass sourcing for the circular bioeconomy. She currently coordinates the Horizon Europe project BALANSED, focusing on land, biomass, and sea use in the transition to a sustainable bioeconomy.

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Joachim Maes

Joachim Maes is Team Leader in the Sustainable Freshwater Management Unit of DG Environment, European Commission. He has worked at the European Commission since 2008, initially as a scientist at the Joint Research Centre in Ispra, where he delivered scientific support to the EU's biodiversity strategy, focusing on ecosystem services and natural capital. He later became Team Leader for Spatial Analysis in DG REGIO, supporting the Cohesion Policy. Trained as an aquatic ecologist, he studied in university the interactions between freshwater and marine ecosystems.



Leif Schulman

Leif Schulman has served as Director General of the Finnish Environment Institute since 2021. Previously, he was Director of the Finnish Museum of Natural History for more than a decade. His career has focused on the interface between science and society, with particular emphasis on developing knowledge infrastructures that support public needs and evidence-based decision-making. He has promoted public understanding of science and served in a wide range of expert roles nationally and internationally. Schulman holds a PhD in biodiversity science and an MSc in botany.



Kurt Vandenberghe

Kurt Vandenberghe was appointed Director General of DG CLIMA on 16/01/2023. Until then, he was the Green Deal and Health advisor to President von der Leyen since 1/12/2019. He joined the European Commission in 1996.

After reading French and Italian literature at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL) and obtaining a degree in Public and International Affairs at the University Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve (UCL), Vandenberghe gained a Master of Arts degree in International Relations at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (S.A.I.S.) in Bologna, Italy and Washington DC, US.

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Maria Sommer Holtze

Maria Sommer Holtze is Director of the Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture (DCA) and Danish Centre for Environment and Energy (DCE) at Aarhus University. She holds a degree in biology and a PhD from GEUS, where her research focused on pesticide leaching to groundwater. Before joining the university, she spent nearly ten years at the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, including several years as Head of Department. Her career spans research, public administration and the private sector, giving her extensive experience in connecting science and policy and supporting evidence-based decision-making



James Morrison

As of 1 September 2025, James Morrison is Director of the 'Healthy Planet' Directorate in DG Research and Innovation. Prior to that he was Director of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (2021-2025), served as Head of Cabinet for the Commissioner for Security Union (2016-2019), Director of Policy Coordination in the Secretariat-General (2014-2016), Chief of Staff to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2009-2014), and Head of Cabinet for the Commissioner for Trade (2008-2009). Before joining the Commission, he spent over 20 years working across the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK Representation to the EU.



Vadim Kononenko

Vadim Kononenko leads on strategic foresight at the European Environment Agency. In his work, he explores emerging trends, risks, and opportunities shaping Europe's climate and environmental policies. His work spans a range of topics, supporting policy-makers navigating uncertainty through futures thinking, horizon scanning, and scenario development to deliver on environmental, social and economic sustainability and long-term resilience. Vadim worked previously at the European Parliament's Research Service and the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. He was a senior visiting fellow at the Egmont Royal Institute in Brussels, and a visiting fellow at the International Institute for Security Studies.

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Stuart Wainwright

Dr Stuart Wainwright OBE is Chief Executive of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH). The UKCEH is the UK's national institute for the science of land, water and air, carrying out world-class environmental science with impact. Stuart has extensive leadership experience across the UK government and the research sector, spanning strategy, science and policy.

Before joining UKCEH in June 2023, he was Director of the UK Government Office for Science and held senior roles in the British Government's Cabinet Office and Defra, covering science, security, resilience and the environment. He was awarded an Honour for services to crisis preparation and response.



André van Lammeren

André van Lammeren has been General Director of the Environmental Sciences Group (ESG) at Wageningen University & Research since May 2025, which includes Wageningen Environmental Research (WENR). Previously, he served for over eight years as Deputy Director General of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), building extensive experience at the science-policy interface. Trained as a physicist, he earned a PhD and spent ten years as a climate researcher at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) before moving into senior leadership roles in government and environmental research.



Jan Marco Müller

Jan Marco Müller is Team Leader Global Approach, Multilateral Dialogue and Science Diplomacy at the European Commission, DG Research and Innovation. He was instrumental in establishing the Partnership for European Environmental Research PEER, having worked for PEER members UFZ, JRC and CEH and serving as first secretary of the network.

Later in his career, he managed the office of the first Chief Scientific Adviser to the President of the European Commission and helped setting up the Commission's current Scientific Advice Mechanism. Following assignments at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the European External Action Service (EEAS), he is currently with the European Commission's DG Research and Innovation, where he coordinates the development of a European Union Framework for Science Diplomacy.

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PEER is a partnership of eight of the largest European environmental centres. The partnership was founded in 2001. Our aim is to combine forces with a joint strategy in environmental sciences and to enhance research on ecological sustainability.

PEER member centres carry out basic and applied research combining dif ferent disciplines from natural and social sciences. Research covers all fields of the environment, particularly addressing the interaction between man and nature. The PEER network has a wide range of knowledge and expertise that is contributing and supporting both nationally and globally to the work in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and bet ter future for us all.

Vision

To be a world leader in integrating knowledge and expertise or sustainable development.

Mission

- To build a strategic partnership of major European public environmental research centres;
- to lead a European Research Area that strengthens the knowledge base for the sustainable development of a changing world;
- and to foster innovative interdisciplinary research and cross-cutting approaches in support of national and European policy-makers, industry and society.

Centers

Currently, PEERconsists of eight member institutes. Together they

- employ approximately 5,800 persons
- gather an annual budget about 600 Million
- have a vast experience in participation i major international networks and programmes (link taking further down to Networks-section)
- actively are involved in a number of projects funded by the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Development.

The PEER Centers are:

- **CIENS** Oslo Centre for Interdisciplinary Environmental and Social Research
- **DCE** Danish Centre for Environment and Energy, Aarhus University
- **INRAE** French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment
- **JRC** European Commission - Joint Research Centre
- **Syke** Finnish Environment Institute
- **UFZ** Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research
- **UKCEH** UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- **WENR** Wageningen Environmental Research

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