

## Biographies of the presenters, panellists, and moderators



**Tibor BÍRÓ**

Institute for Environmental Sustainability, Ludovika University of Public Service

Tibor Bíró is a professor at the Ludovika University of Public Service and head of the Institute for Environmental Sustainability. Between 2017 and 2024, he was Dean of the Faculty of Water Sciences at LUPS, formerly Dean and Deputy Rector of Károly Róbert College and Dean of Szent István University. He is currently the University Project Director of the National Laboratory for Water Science and Water Safety. He has 30 years of teaching experience as a university lecturer. He has been mainly involved in teaching subjects related to water management and environmental management. He is experienced in teaching almost the whole spectrum of water management, from hydrology, agricultural water management, water resources management to water quality protection. His research interests include adaptive water management, environmental assessment, water quality management and remote sensing. Among others, he is a member of the Committee on Soil, Water Management and Crop Production of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Vice-president of the Hungarian Hydrological Society and of the Scientific Council of the National Water Directorate General, Vice- Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee for Disaster Management. During his work in the Hungarian scientific and professional committees he participated in the solution and evaluation of important water management and environmental problems.



**Tamás CSERNECZKY**

Collectivo Szakértői Kft. (Hungary)

Tamás Cserneczy is the CEO and founder of the Collectivo Expert Community. In these roles he works with several experts on many fields. Most of his professional time is focused on evaluation of development programs funded by the European Union.

He has been involved in the evaluation of structural and rural development funds (ex ante, implementation, ex post) for more than 20 years. He participated in the ex-ante evaluation of the Hungarian KAP Strategic Plan, and in the DNSH analyses of operational programmes. Now he is leading the expert team, which prepare several on-going evaluations of the Hungarian KAP Strategic Plan, and the ex-post evaluation of the Hungarian Rural Development Plan. He is committed to promoting adaptation to climate change and the transition to sustainable farming.



**Ildikó DOMIÁN**

Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Water Management (Hungary)

Ildikó Domián is a water management officer in the Department of Agricultural Water Management at the Ministry of Agriculture. She is mainly involved in the establishment process of sustainable water management communities and in tasks related to possible international projects (contacting, translation). The main tasks of our organizational unit are to support the establishment of sustainable water management communities (former irrigation communities) that provide the framework for cooperation between farmers intending to irrigate in Hungary, to assist in the process of their certification and to register these communities and to expand the supply of irrigation water through own investments. In addition, our Department performs the delimitation of the irrigation districts that are the actual operational area of irrigation communities and prepares environmental district plans to facilitate authorisation procedure. The Department also fully performs the official tasks related to public proceedings of agricultural wells used for agricultural irrigation purposes. It carries out analysis of the environmental impact and international practices in agricultural water management. The institutional unit contributes to the implementation of irrigation model projects aimed at the reconstruction of tertiary works and operates irrigation systems that have become state property. In addition, we regularly and actively participate in various events and conferences in order to promote irrigated agricultural cultivation and farming.



**Mátyás Viktor FARKAS**

WWF Hungary Foundation (Hungary)

Mátyás Viktor Farkas is environmental biologist and climate expert at WWF Hungary. He started his studies at University College London in Environmental Biology, from where he moved on to complete an MSc in Applied Ecology under an Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

At WWF Hungary, he works as a climate adaptation expert, and focuses especially on the water management sector. Under the LIFE MICACC and LOGOS4WATERS projects he gathered 7 years of experience in assessing climate impacts and bringing NWRMS from conceptualization to operation with small rural Hungarian local municipalities. He is especially interested in the concept of green infrastructure, and in implementing conservation projects that bring a multitude of societal benefits in the field and climate adaptation and beyond.



**Petr FUČÍK**

Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation (Czechia)

Petr Fučík is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Hydrology and Water Protection at the Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation. Petr does applied research in small catchment hydrology, water quality, land drainage, irrigation, agricultural and watershed management and soil science. His specialization lies in hydrology and hydrochemistry of tile drainage and assessing the efficiency of drainage-related NSWRM on water balance and water quality. In the H2020 OPTAIN project, he is responsible for the Czech case study and participates in setting the parameterisation of measures for modelling purposes.



**Matjaž GLAVAN**

University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Agronomy Department (Slovenia)

Assist. Prof. Dr. Matjaž Glavan is a researcher at the Department of Agronomy, Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, where he works in the Center for Agricultural Spatial Planning and Agrohydrology. He specialises in environmental planning and is currently teaching Integrated agricultural land management and the use of GIS systems in agriculture. His research focuses on modelling spatial, economic and environmental impacts of various agricultural and environmental policies related to food security, water resources, flood safety and achieving environmental and nature protection goals on agricultural land. He also specialises in watershed modelling with the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) model, which allows research on the impacts of agriculture on water quality and quantity from various perspectives (historical land use/cover, agri-environmental measures, climate change).



**Gábor HARSÁNYI**

Deputy director, Chief engineer, Middle Tisza District Water Directorate (KÖTIVIZIG) (Hungary)

Gábor Harsányi is the Deputy Director and Chief Engineer of the Middle Tisza District Water Directorate since 2023. He is a certified civil engineer, having obtained his degree from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. He is responsible

for preparing and facilitating the maintenance and development of water management facilities for inland water protection and water utilization purposes. His duties also include participating in development projects, creating and improving water management models, and conducting geodetic surveys. He has extensive experience in the planning, maintenance, and operation of water management facilities and flood protection.



**Anikó JUHÁSZ**

Ministry of Agriculture (Hungary)

Anikó Juhász is the Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture since 2018. Between 2015 and 2017, she served as the Director General of the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics (AKI) in Budapest. She obtained her university degree from the University of Horticulture and Food Industry in 1997, and her PhD from the Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration at Szent István University in 2010. She has seventeen years of experience in research related to food supply chains and related policies, with a particular focus on the Common Agricultural Policy. Since 2012, she has been a project and programme evaluator for calls relevant to agriculture under the EU's research framework programmes. From 2017 to 2022, she was Co-Chair of the Strategic Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS SWG) of the European Union's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR).



**Péter KAJNER**

Living Rivers Programme Project Manager, Tisza River Area, WWF Hungary Foundation (Hungary)

Péter Kajner is an economist, human ecologist. He is the Living Rivers Programme Project Manager for Tisza River Area at WWF Hungary Foundation. He is a lecturer of Sustainable Rural Development at the Master Studies of Human Ecology at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). WWF's Tisza Programme aims to reconnect as many of the former floodplains as possible to the river, to improve the natural condition of these areas and to develop new, environmentally friendly farming and land use, which will also provide local communities with a good livelihood. To achieve the objectives, scientific research is being carried out and concrete nature-based water retention model projects are being implemented in the pilot areas. Experts work to improve the policy and CAP subsidies framework. Besides these, the Tisza Programme has a strong emphasis on communication, awareness raising and stakeholder involvement.



**Zehra Kavakli KARATAS**

Forest Engineer, MSc./ Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Türkiye (Turkey)

Zehra Kavakli Karatas is a Forest Engineer who graduated from Bartın University in 2012 and completed a Master's degree in Environmental Science and Policy at the University of South Florida in 2019. Currently working at the General Directorate of Combating and Erosion, she specializes in GIS, Remote Sensing, Data Analysis and Visualization, Decision Support Systems (DSS), and Dry Land Ecosystems. With extensive expertise in environmental science and policy, she is responsible for GIS-based mapping of areas sensitive to desertification. She also leads a project focused on developing a decision support system (DSS) utilizing land cover, land productivity, and carbon stocks indicators, aiming to contribute to the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. Additionally, she manages the cooperation with stakeholders to collect data for National Strategy and Action Plan for Combating Desertification Türkiye and leads a project that monitors and evaluates this plan through web-based systems.



**Ádam KOVÁCS**

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

Adam Kovacs is a civil engineer with specialization in water quality management. He graduated from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. He received a PhD in water resources management from the Vienna University of Technology. He worked in the academic sector as professor and research assistant for 12 years focusing on water quality modelling and management. Since 2013 he has been working as the Technical Expert on Pollution Control at the Permanent Secretariat of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). He coordinates the technical work of the ICPDR Pollution Management Expert Group, Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group and Nutrients Task Group.



**Péter KOVÁCS**

Special Advisor - General Directorate of Water Management of Hungary (Hungary)

Graduated as a civil engineer, started his professional carrier at a regional water directorate/environmental authority as a staff engineer. He has worked for various ministries between 1997 2024, in different positions, mainly responsible for implementation of the Water Framework Directive, water quality management and international water issues. He is now responsible for water related international issues Head of Delegation to the ICPDR, EU Water Director, Bureau member of the UN Water Convention, Board of Governor in the World Water Council, Governmental Commissioner for 5 transboundary water commissions with neighbouring countries and responsible over 50 MoU on water resources management with non-neighbouring countries.



**Gregor KRAMBERGER**

Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS) –  
Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor (Slovenia)

Gregor Kramberger is a Specialist Adviser at the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor, specializing in agricultural economics. He is a case study leader in the H2020 OPTAIN project, where he focuses on the collection, validation, and analysis of farm-level data to assess the economic, social, and environmental feasibility of sustainable water and land management practices, known as NSWRMs. In addition to his research, he works daily with farmers from this region, providing expert guidance on farm economics, taxation, CAP measures, business planning, subsidy applications, and investment strategies to enhance farm profitability and sustainability. Through his involvement in EU-funded research and policy advisory, he contributes to evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that sustainable agricultural solutions align with both economic and environmental objectives.



**Tatenda LEMANN**

Center for Development and Environment (CDE), University of  
Bern (Switzerland)

Dr. Tatenda Lemann, Chair of the WOCAT Executive Team and Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern, Switzerland, holds a PhD in Geography and Sustainable Development. His doctoral research, conducted in the Ethiopian highlands, focused on the impact of Sustainable Land Management on discharge and sediment load. With over a decade of experience, he has contributed to various H2020 projects, coordinates several WOCAT-related projects worldwide and leads capacity-building initiatives in sustainable land management. In the H2020 OPTAIN project, he is involved in the Swiss



Case Study and leads the work package on identifying and documenting Natural/Small Water Retention Measures.



**István MADARÁSZ**

Ministry of Agriculture (Hungary)

Istvan Madarasz is head of unit in the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture. He is currently responsible for the agri-environmental subsidy schemes financed from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), and also supervises those non-CAP agri-climatic dossiers that are derived from Union law (RED agri chapter, LULUCF, UNCCD, Ammonium reporting, air quality agri chapter, carbon farming, etc.). Formerly, he was the lead expert for the preparation of the Hungarian CAP Strategic Plan's so-called green architecture. During his professional carrier, he also gained experience in agricultural statistics and economic analysis.



**Péter MOLNÁR**

General Directorate of Water Management (Hungary)

UNCCD National Focal Point

Péter Molnár is the head of Irrigation Department in the General Directorate of Water Management, Hungary. This department's main tasks include irrigation management, coordination of irrigation development, operative water scarcity management and drought monitoring. He is the national focal point of Hungary for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) since 2012. In the second half of 2024, he chaired the Working Party for International Environmental Issues (WPIEI) Desertification, representing the EU in the UNCCD 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP16). He is also member of the WFD CIS Water Scarcity and Drought Working Group. In the H2020 OPTAIN project he is the Case Study Leader of the Kebele stream, Hungarian case study.



**Marton PESEL**

General Directorate of Water Management (Hungary)

EU Strategy for the Danube Region

With an academic background of civil engineering and economics, Marton Pesel is the Head of the International Department of the General Directorate of Water Management of Hungary. As such, he is involved with the transboundary water management issues, bilateral relations and water diplomacy issues. He is active in EU funded projects not only as project manager but as project consortium leader in Horizon Europe and Interreg projects. He plays a significant role in shaping the Danube river basin management as coordinator of Priority Area 4 (water quality) of the EU's Strategy for the Danube Region and as member of several Expert Groups of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.



**Josselin ROUILLARD**

Senior Fellow, Ecologic Institute (Germany)

Dr. Josselin Rouillard is a Senior Fellow specializing in Water Policy and Management at the Ecologic Institute. His work focuses on the intersections between water and agriculture, fostering learning and knowledge exchange at both policy and implementation levels. Recently, he has concentrated on promoting sustainable water use in the face of drought and water scarcity, as well as on restoring freshwater ecosystems within rural landscapes. With extensive expertise in EU water and agricultural policies, Josselin has a deep understanding of their implementation across Europe.



**Brigitta SZABÓ**

Institute for Soil Sciences, HUN-REN Centre for Agricultural Research (Hungary)

Brigitta Szabó is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Soil Physics and Water Management at the Institute for Soil Sciences, HUN-REN Centre for Agricultural Research. Her research focuses on soil physics, soil database construction and harmonization, and the prediction of soil properties at local, regional, and continental scales. She specializes in data mining techniques and the mapping of soil hydraulic properties. She is actively involved in national and European soil database constructions, develops pedotransfer functions for Hungarian and European scale applications, works on the implementation of prediction methods in R packages and web interfaces, and derives soil hydraulic maps for Hungary and Europe. In the H2020 OPTAIN project she participates in analysing the water and nutrient retention effectiveness of Natural/Small Water Retention Measures in Hungarian case studies.





**Levente SZABÓ**

KITE Zrt. (Hungary)

Levente Szabó, PhD is the CEO of KITE Zrt. In 2002, he obtained a degree in agricultural economics and engineering with a specialization in finance, accounting and marketing at the University of Debrecen. In the same year, he began his career at KITE Zrt. as a sub-center risk manager, and in 2006 he was promoted to deputy risk management director. In 2007, he had the opportunity to expand his professional knowledge as an agronomic sales consultant. From 2009, as the director of the Central Hungary region, he managed the trade and sales staff of the four sub-centers of KITE Zrt. From January 2013, he worked in the position of deputy CEO for agronomical sales, and since November 2014, he has been managing the company as the CEO of KITE Zrt. He received his doctoral (PhD) degree in 2024 (doctoral thesis: Comparative efficiency analysis of field crop production technologies based on georeferenced data for conventional crops).



**István SZAMOSVÁRI**

General Directorate of Water Management, Water Management, Drainage and Irrigation Division (Hungary)

István Szamosvári is the Head of the Water Management and Drainage Department/Assistant head of Division at General Directorate of Water Management. His work focuses on territorial water management with great emphasis on retention/keeping water or inundation. He also participates on projects focusing on resupplying of water systems. He has a special interest in global approach to water retention/resupply with regard to territorial water balance. He is involved in “Water to land!” program. He also participates in forming an action plan for reservoirs with conflicted water balance.



**María Medina VIDAL**

Forest and Desertification Policy Officer  
Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (Spain)

Maria is an architect with background in landscape, spatial and urban planning, and ecosystem restoration projects. Currently, she works at the Ministry for the Ecological

Transition and the Demographic Challenge of Spain, as National Focal Point for the UNCCD, and as a project manager for the implementation of the Mar Menor restoration actions, a set of coordinated projects for the restoration of a polluted coastal lagoon in southeast Spain.



**Martin VOLK**

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ,  
Department of Computational Landscape Ecology (Germany)

Martin Volk is Director of the Department of Computational Landscape Ecology and Head of the Integrated Modelling and Optimization Group at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ in Leipzig, Germany. Here he is also deputy head of the research unit “Ecosystems of the Future” and a professor at the Institute of Geosciences and Geography at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. His research focuses on scale appropriate analysis, evaluation and management of landscape scale water and matter dynamics. He also works on the analysis of trade-offs between the management of natural resources, ecosystem services and biodiversity. Other work relates to model development, erosion modelling and process controlling factors in landscapes. Martin has extensive experience as partner and coordinator of national and European international research projects and is also coordinator of the H2020 project OPTAIN.



**Danila VOLPI**

Disaster and Risk Management Unit, Joint Research Centre,  
European Commission

Danila Volpi is a climate scientist at the European Commission Joint Research Centre, where she works within the Drought Team of the Disaster and Risk Management Unit. Her research focuses on advancing the European and Global Drought Observatories, with an emphasis on enhancing the characterization of drought risks across all sectors and timescales - seasonal, decadal, and multidecadal. She has contributed to the development of the World Drought Atlas and is currently engaged in analysing and developing worst-case scenarios related to drought and compound hazards, aiming to improve resilience and preparedness for extreme climate events.



**Felix WITING**

Department of Computational Landscape Ecology, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ (Germany)

Felix Witing is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Computational Landscape Ecology at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Germany. He specialises in research on the sustainable management of agricultural landscapes, taking into account a wide range of ecosystem services and processes. His expertise lies in the model-based assessment and management of water, nutrient and carbon fluxes at different scales, as well as trade-off analysis and spatial optimization techniques. He is the project manager of the EU H2020 project OPTAIN, where he is contributing to a harmonised approach to investigate the efficient allocation and combination of Natural/Small Water Retention Measures within 14 case studies and across three biogeographical regions of Europe.



**Marina XENOPHONTOS**

Nature Conservation, Directorate General for the Environment, European Commission (DG ENV.D3)

Marina Xenophontos is a Policy Officer in the Unit of Nature Conservation at Directorate for Environment of the European Commission. Her work within the Conservation Unit (D3) at the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV), is to ensure implementation the EU Nature Directives in a Member State (Ireland), contributing to the protection and sustainable management of Europe's biodiversity.

Her work focuses on ensuring compliance and effective application of the Habitats and Birds Directives, supporting national authorities in their efforts to conserve natural habitats and species of community interest. She also contributes to the development of the upcoming Water Resilience Initiative, helping to integrate biodiversity priorities into water management frameworks.

Additionally, she is engaged in the preparation of technical guidelines for the monitoring and assessment of habitat types, contributing to robust and harmonised data collection and reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. Driven by a commitment to nature conservation, evidence-based policymaking, and cross-sector collaboration to ensure a resilient and biodiverse future for Europe.