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May 2023 Brussels

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European Commission

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Opening

Signe Ratso

Signe Ratso is Deputy Director-General and a member of the Management Board of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission. She is Chief negotiator, responsible for negotiations of association agreements with third countries associated and future potential associated countries to the EU R&I programmes Horizon Europe and Euratom, association policy and its interlinkages with EU R&I international cooperation strategy.

She is also responsible for Open Innovation and for citizens' engagement and social innovation in research and innovation policy.

As a member of the Management Board she oversees some of the priority areas of the Commission in DG R&I.

Before joining DG R&I she worked in different senior management positions in DG TRADE since 2006.

Signe Ratso has always been involved in international affairs. Before joining the Commission she worked as Deputy Secretary General (from 1994 to 2005) at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Estonia.

She has two University degrees from Tartu University in Estonia.



Dr. Nikolai Ardey

Executive Director Volkswagen Group Innovation

Dr. Ardey has a career of 25 years in automotive industry. He worked for BMW and Audi in management functions in powertrain strategy, development, and E-Mobility from 1998 until 2019. After that he moved to Volkswagen AG where he is working today as Executive Director Group Innovation in the transformation of mobility.

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Herald Ruijters

Herald Ruijters is Deputy Director General (acting) and Director, responsible for Investment, Innovative & Sustainable Transport in DG Mobility and Transport. As regards investments in transport, his main responsibilities are the funding instruments Connecting Europe Facility and Horizon Europe and the financing instrument InvestEU. He is also responsible for the relationship with the EIB and with national and promotional banks. As regards innovative and sustainable transport, he assumes responsibilities for the development of the trans-European transport network, of the urban mobility framework, of alternative fuels infrastructure, of intelligent transport systems, as well as of passenger rights, social aspects and equal opportunities. Since 1997 and until 2017, Mr Ruijters held several positions in DG MOVE, as Head of Unit developing the TEN-T, as advisor to the European Coordinators, and in different roles developing the road safety policy. Before joining the Commission, he held various positions in The Netherlands related to transport. Mr Ruijters holds degrees from Nijmegen and Amsterdam Universities in both French literature and European Studies, and was post-graduated at the Centre Européen Universitaire in Nancy, in European Law, and in Business Studies at the University in Leuven.

