

Speakers Bios



Elias Spirtoonias
Executive Director
American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

After graduating from the School of Mathematics, University of Athens, Elias Spirtoonias completed his graduate studies at the School of Electrical Engineering (M.Sc. degree and pre-Ph.D. studies) at Boston University. During his residence in the United States, he participated as a Research Engineer in several research programs in cooperation with other organizations and companies such as NASA, MIT, UNH in fields of analog and digital electronics, circuits design and applications. He returned to Greece in 1992 and after completing his military service in 1994, he held the position of Technical Director for the subsidiary of the Italian company Citec SpA, a company specialized in the design, production and application of voice and image processing systems. From 1997-February 2009, he worked for the Foundation of the Hellenic World, a major Greek private non-profit cultural organization, starting as a Construction Supervisor and continuing as a Managing Director of the brand new then Cultural Center, Hellenic Cosmos, an innovative, based on new technologies, theme park. During his tenure, he contributed significantly to the expansion, development, and operation of the Center and its establishment as one of the most known technology-driven theme parks in Greece and abroad. From March 2009, he holds the position of Executive Director of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce. Along with his colleagues and in cooperation with the Board have managed, in the midst of the economic crisis, to increase significantly the number of activities, undertake important initiatives, retain in high level memberships, foster advocacy, expand further the presence of the Chamber in the US and contribute to the evolution of the Chamber into one of the leading dynamic and reliable business organization in Greece. He serves as Treasurer of the American Chambers in Europe (ACE) Executive Committee.



Nikolaos Bakatselos
President
American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

Nikolaos Bakatselos is the Managing Director of Pyramis Metallourgia A.E. and Pyramis Deutschland GmbH. He was Member of the Board of Directors, and Deputy Managing Director, of Northern Greece Publishing S.A. He has held the position of Managing Director of Imperium AEEX, and Member of the Board of Directors of Egnatia Bank Securities S.A. He was a Member of the Board of Directors of Attica Bank from February 2014 until June 2016. He was a Member of the Steering Committee of the International Hellenic University from 2006 until January 2014 and Member of the Board and President of the Northern Greece Committee of EEDE. He is Member of the Committee Support CERTH, Trustee of Anatolia College, Member of the Board and Member of the Steering Committee of SVE and Honorary Consul of Belgium for Northern Greece. After being a Member of the Board of Directors of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce for several years, in June 2010 he was elected Vice President of AmChamGR and President of the Northern Greece Committee, and since June 2019 he was elected President of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce. In October 2019 he was elected as President of HEDNO by the General Assembly of HEDNO. Nikolaos Bakatselos holds a B.A. in Sociology from University of Reading and a MSc in Shipping, Trade and Finance from City University Business School.



Spiros Protopsaltis
Governor
OAED (Greek Public Employment Service)

Dr. Spiros Protopsaltis is Governor and Chairman of the Board of Directors of OAED Manpower Employment Organization and First Vice-Chair of the European Network of Public Employment Services. Previously, he was the director of Ed Policy Forward and an Associate Professor at George Mason University. During the Obama Administration, he served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education and Student Financial Aid for the US Department of Education, Senior Higher Education Advisor to the Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and Senior Policy Advisor to Congressman Polis of Colorado. He holds a PhD from the University of Colorado Denver, an MS from the New School University, and a BA *summa cum laude* from Northeastern University.



Dr. Venetia Koussia
Employment Committee Chair
American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

During her longstanding career, Dr. Venetia Koussia has acquired senior management positions in companies of various sectors, leading them successfully through highly volatile market conditions by designing and implementing socially responsible growth strategies. Having an active role in the world of work issues on a national, European, and international level and through her dynamic engagement in esteemed institutions, she participates in the design and implementation of initiatives aiming to improve the national competitiveness. These efforts are based on the following axes: The strengthening of an innovation ecosystem capable to nurture dynamic business. The enhancement of Boards' effectiveness to assist organizational resilience. The rethinking of the labor laws and social protection for the new economy and the new needs of the workforce. The emphasis needed on skills for jobs and "markets of tomorrow" rather than on jobs and occupations. Since November 2018 she has been appointed as the executive director of the Council on Competitiveness of Greece – CompeteGR. Since 2013 she serves at the Board of Directors of the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce (elected member for the last three terms). Through her Chair of the Employment Committee of AmCham has created several initiatives concerning skills and future world of work. Believing in the power of "actions" she devotes some dozens of hours annually from her personal time in assisting people to unleash their potential. Since Spring 2016 she is the owner and founder of VenetiaKoussia.net and acts as a trusted advisor to Boards and CEOs for People-Processes-Partnerships issues. Advocate of Lifelong Learning in February 2017 she acquired the Financial Times Postgraduate Diploma for Non-Executive Directors (NED) being among the first certified NEDs in Greece. She holds a Ph.D. in Corporate Strategic Planning for Banking Services and an M. Phil. in Agricultural Marketing and Market Research, both from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Her first degree (B.Sc.) is in Business Administration from the Deree College, American College of Greece.



Vicky Loizou
Secretary General for Tourism Policy and Development
Ministry of Tourism

Vicky Loizou is a graduate of Political Sciences and International Studies, and holds a master's degree on European Policies and Administration from the Panteion University of Athens. She is an expert on strategic planning as well as on market reforms planning and implementation. She has a wide and diverse experience in public administration, having served in senior positions consecutively with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Development. In particular at the Ministry of Development (2012-2015) she was responsible for monitoring and coordinating all market reforms and the cooperation with the European Commission and International Organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank. Since January 2016, she served as the Deputy Secretary of Strategic Planning for the New Democracy political party. She was offered the honorary 10th rank on the nationwide New Democracy ballot for the 2019 parliamentary elections. Following the elections, she was appointed Secretary General for the Coordination of Economic and Growth Policies and since August 2020 she is the Secretary General for Tourism Policy and Development.



Tiziano Barone
Director of Veneto Lavoro
Veneto Regional Government Employment Agency

Tiziano Barone, a graduate in statistical sciences, is the director of Veneto Lavoro, an instrumental body of the Veneto Region. The main activity of Veneto Lavoro concerns public employment services and management of active policies in public-private collaboration. He has been involved in employment policies since the labor reform of the late 1990s, especially as regards the reorganization of public employment services at regional and local level. He has developed numerous projects of territorial cooperation and institutional cooperation with countries joining the EU. Between 2008 and 2015 he covered managerial roles in multinational employment agencies with responsibilities on active policies, and industrial relations.



Olga Strietska-Ilina
Area Lead, Senior Skills and Employability Specialist
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Olga Strietska-Ilina is a Senior Skills and Employability Specialist at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland. She is an Area Lead of the work area Skills Strategies for Future Labour Markets, focusing on anticipating skills needs for the Future of Work, skills for trade and economic diversification, skills for environmental sustainability and climate action, and skills for technological change and digitalisation. Before 2008, Olga worked on skills forecasting for the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). Earlier on, she was a Head of the Czech National Observatory of Employment and Training and taught International Relations at the Central European University (CEU). Olga holds post-graduate degrees in Economic and Social Sciences from the University of Manchester, Society and Politics from the Central European University, and History and Ethnography from the Moscow State University named after Lomonosov. She published extensively on future skills, education, training, and broader social and cultural issues. She is a (co-)author of many policy papers discussed at the G20 and BRICS ministerial meetings. She is the main author and editor of several books, including "Skills and Jobs Mismatches in Low- and Middle-Income Countries" (ILO, 2019), "Skills for a Greener Future" (ILO, 2019), "Skills Needs Anticipation Systems and Approaches" (ILO, OECD et al, 2017), "Parallel Cultures" (Routledge, 2017 2nd edition) and "A Clash of Transitions: Towards a Learning Society" (Peter Lang Publishing 2007).



Eamonn Davern
Independent Employment Services Expert

Eamonn Davern's career has spanned 37 years managing, improving and advising on the delivery of employment and social security services in the UK and Internationally. He is now an independent expert working on a number of projects driving modernisation of public employment services for European Union countries and for developing economies for the ILO. His expertise includes strategic planning for public sector service transformation, in particular in the field of employment services. During a three-year secondment to the European Commission (DG Employment) he provided expert and technical advice for the effective functioning and modernisation of the European Network of Public Employment Services, an EU funded co-operation of 32 public employment services in the EU and EEA. Before working for the European Commission, he worked for over 31 years for the UK Ministry for Work and Pensions. He led the UK Public Employment Service International Relations Team and in this role as an International Public Employment Services Senior Policy Advisor was also responsible for the UK European Employment Service (EURES) operation and labour market migration issues. He has worked on a number of projects for modernising delivery of employment policy in Greece including a central role advising the Greek PES OAED during the 2011-2018 PES re-engineering project.



Lisa Simmons
Lead Vice President of Domestic and Global Operations
Maximus

Ms. Simmons is a 25-year veteran of Human Service Program Operations, including 23 years designing and implementing innovative programs to improve the lives of families, children, and vulnerable populations across the globe to include Italy, Singapore, South Korea, and Sweden. Since joining Maximus in 1996, she has consulted for and advised numerous private organizations and government agencies across the social service spectrum as they develop and administer human services public policy. As a leader in the Family and Economic Impact division, Lisa has oversight for 19 contracts, with more than 600 professionals who serve families throughout the country who receive temporary cash assistance, food stamps, medical assistance, childcare, child support and Social Security Income. She serves on Maximus Italy's Board of Directors where she oversees client relationship management and helps lead business development and expansion. She is also a valuable member of the Maximus Foundation Board of Directors where she helps guide the organization's charitable strategy and community engagement. She serves as corporate representative for the Congressional Black Caucus Institute and the National Black Caucus of State Legislatures. Lisa is the President of the National Council of Negro Women (NCCW), D.C. Section Two and a 30-year member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.



Ania Mendrek
Director, Business Development
MAXIMUS Global Group

Ania has worked in the welfare-to-work market for well over 15 years, from overseeing the delivery of programmes to solution design, stakeholder management and supply chain design and management. Most recently, Ania has been instrumental in bringing Maximus to set up their operations in Italy and Sweden. Prior to joining MAXIMUS, Ania worked with one of the London Local Authorities to design an innovative programme for youth who have been through the Criminal Justice System and who wanted to become entrepreneurs. Prior to

that Ania oversaw the delivery of award-winning European Social Fund funded projects, focusing on supporting the hardest-to-reach job seekers into sustainable employment. Always keen to share best practice without boundaries, Ania also provided advice to governments across Europe on designing Active Labour Market Policies, commissioning pilot projects around tackling long-term unemployment, youth unemployment and supporting people with complex barriers and health challenges into sustainable employment. With many years of operational, 'hands-on' experience delivering successful projects across the UK and Europe, Ania moved on to business development with a remit to design winning solutions that are innovative, cost-effective and aligned with customer needs. She has extensive experience in tenders which included Employment Programmes, Justice, Skills and Health. Her role involves concept design, partnership strategy and stakeholder engagement. She has been engaged in a discussion around Active Labour Market Policies and successful programme implementation with organisations such as the International Labour Organisation, Members of the European Parliament and the Employment Committee, the DG Employment and European Commission, as well as various EU Member States Employment Ministries and Public Employment Services, public and non-public providers of government services.