



**Université Grenoble Alpes and the Global Initiative for Loneliness and Connection organize the first meeting in France on policy, research, and action against social isolation on Friday 18 March 2022 from 9:00 am on the Saint-Martin-d'Hères campus, Grenoble.**

This international event, organized with the support of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and accredited under the French Presidency of the European Union, convenes a cadre of political leaders, researchers, and other thought-leaders from across the globe to catalyze a platform to address social isolation, loneliness, and social connection within France and the European Union (EU) more broadly.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made us acutely aware of the challenges posed by isolation, but the situation of social isolation has been studied for several years by scientists. Based on the work of scientists and feedback from experiences and initiatives carried out particularly in Europe, this event will allow the emergence of a framework for the development of a multisectoral plan in terms of social ties, mobilizing the various actors to set up mechanisms for monitoring loneliness and social ties at the national level and subsequently throughout the European Union.

## Location

### ► In person, by invitation

Amphithéâtre de la Maison de la création et de l'innovation, MaCI  
339 avenue Centrale - 38400 Saint-Martin d'Hères

The presentations are in French or English, with instantaneous translation available to all participants.

### ► Livestream of the event's highlights for the wider public

# Program of event

## Section 1 - Raising awareness and sharing of prior experiences in research and policy frameworks

 This section will be **livestreamed on Youtube**.

9.00 - 9.15

**Opening of the day and overview by Dr. Hans Rocha IJzerman, organizer of the event.**

9.16 – 9.25

**How will the World Health Organization tackle loneliness?**

Video from Dr. Etienne Krug, Director of the Department for Social Determinants of Health at the World Health Organization

9.26 - 9.55

**How social connection influences health.**

Presentation by Prof. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Professor at Brigham Young University

Coffee Break

10.16 - 11.15

**Moderated interview with Dubravka Šuica, the European Union's Vice President of the Commission for Democracy and Demography.**

Interview led by Judith Merckies and Edward Garcia, with input from the audience.

11.16 - 11.35

**How to set up a national surveillance system for loneliness.**

Presentation by Prof. Andrew Steptoe, Head of the Department of Behavioural Science and Health at University College London.

11.36 - 11.55

**Reducing loneliness in the UK: What does the UK campaign teach us?**

Presentation by Paul Cann, Co-Founder of the UK Campaign to End Loneliness.

11.56 - 12.05

**The United Kingdom's Experiences and Future Outlook**

Video from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) Nigel Huddleston of the The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Lunch break

## Section 2 - Creating a French surveillance system of loneliness and social connection and creating multi-sectorial French working group for social connection

13.06 - 13.35

**How can we reduce loneliness? The introduction of a systemic, socioecological framework.**

Presentation by Edward Garcia, Director of the Global Initiative for Loneliness and Connection.

13.36 - 14.15

**What possibility exists for surveillance of loneliness and social connection in France?**

Roundtable Discussion with input from the audience.

14.16 – 14.45

**Which actors will commit to participating in a working group on social connection?**

Outlining and committing to key development steps and oversight needed for the development of a France-specific strategic action plan. Roundtable Discussion with input from the audience.

Coffee break

## Section 3 - International Evidence Frameworks for Practitioners

 This section will be **livestreamed on Youtube**.

15.16 - 15.35

### **Interventions to tackle loneliness across the EU**

Presentation and discussion by Minna Nurminen and Elizabeth Casabianca from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

15.36 – 15.55

### **What are the gaps in evidence for social isolation interventions? How can we build up the future evidence base?**

Presentation by Dr. Christopher Mikton, Technical officer at the World Health Organization.

## Section 4 - Wrapping up the event

15.56 – 16.40

**Outlining and committing to key development steps needed to develop European Union-wide surveillance mechanisms as well as working groups for loneliness and social connection for the development of an EU-wide strategic action plan.**

16.41 - 17.00

**Closing of the day. Prof. Yassine Lakhnech, President of Université Grenoble Alpes**

## Biographies and photos

### **Dr. Hans Rocha IJzerman (organizer of the event)**

Associate Professor at Université Grenoble Alpes



Hans Rocha IJzerman is an associate professor of social psychology at Université Grenoble Alpes, chair of the social cognition group at LIP/PC2S, and director and co-founder of the Annecy Behavioral Science Lab. He is one of the leading voices in promoting “big team science” in psychology, being a (co-) founder of the Psychological Science Accelerator and the Collaborative Replication and Education Project. Some of his work in science reform belong to the top-cited in the field.

More substantively, Dr Rocha IJzerman is the founder of a subfield of research called social thermoregulation, the idea that like many other animals, humans are closely involved in co-regulating each other's body temperature. Trained in the

“Strange Situation” – an attachment-based assessment for infants - Dr. Rocha IJzerman was coordinator of PhD training at the Dutch Kurt Lewin Institute in interpersonal relations for 4 years, and wrote a major popular science book on his research on the biological foundations of interpersonal relations (Heartwarming), which has been published with WW Norton and translated into Chinese, Korean, and Russian. He was educated at Saint Vincent College in the United States (BSc) and at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (MSc) and Utrecht University (PhD) in the Netherlands. His work has received several awards and has been given wide international attention across various news outlets. Dr. Rocha IJzerman is a junior member of the Institut Universitaire de France, a service of the French Ministry of Higher Education to which 2% of professors are elected their research excellence, as evidenced by their international recognition.

## **Prof. Julianne Holt-Lunstad**

Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and the Martin B. Hickman distinguished scholar at Brigham Young University



Julianne Holt-Lunstad is a professor of psychology and neuroscience, and the Martin B. Hickman distinguished scholar at Brigham Young University. She is also the founding scientific chair of the U.S. Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness and Foundation for Social Connections.

Dr. Holt-Lunstad's research is focused on understanding the long-term health effects, biological mechanisms, and effective strategies to mitigate risk and promote protection associated with social connection. Her work has been seminal in the recognition of social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for early mortality. She serves as a scientific advisor and consults regularly for organizations across sectors aimed at addressing this issue. She has provided expert testimony in a US Congressional Hearing, expert recommendations for the US Surgeon General, served as a member of the UK Cross Departmental Loneliness Team, a member of a National Academy of Sciences consensus committee, and a subject matter expert for the Gravity Project and Commit to Connect the national clearinghouse of

interventions. Her work has been widely recognized within her discipline including several awards and is regularly highlighted in major media outlets.

## **Vice-President Dubravka Šuica**

European Union's Vice-President of the Commission for Democracy and Demography



Since December 2019, Dubravka Šuica is Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography. Mrs Šuica a Croatian politician from the city of Dubrovnik, where she served for two terms as its first female mayor and was awarded the 2006 World Mayor Award. Dubravka Šuica entered politics in the 1990s as a Member of the Croatian Democratic Union and served as a Member of the Croatian Parliament and Vice-Chair of the EU Integration Committee. Between 2004 and 2009 she was a Board Member of the Union of the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Republic of Croatia.

During ten years she was the Vice-President of Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. From

2013 to 2019 Dubravka Šuica served as a Member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee. In June 2019, Šuica was elected as first Vice-Chair of EPP Group in the European Parliament. Since 2012, she is the Vice-President of EPP Women.



## Judith Merkies



Judith Merkies is a former Member of the European Parliament (2009-2014) from the Netherlands and previously worked for the European Commission. Her main focus is (disruptive / social) innovation and digitalization policy in the European Union, leading to a book on the need for policy for new sustainable business models 'The Leasing society'.

After the end of her mandate in the EP, she has worked as a lawyer in European Law in Frankfurt and Brussels, as a moderator of political and tech events and has taught at the Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg on E-Government in Mannheim.

In 2017, Merkies initiated Loneliness in Europe ([www.lonelinessineurope.eu](http://www.lonelinessineurope.eu)), an organization advocating the need for a targeted policy against loneliness and on creating togetherness in society. The platform aims to highlight the need for policy and best practices on how to solve or mitigate loneliness and mental health difficulties. Loneliness in Europe has successfully advocated the issue with the EU and

with its member states, resulting in a pilot project on loneliness by the European Parliament, a study performed by the EU, a proposal for loneliness policy and a platform in Hessen (Germany) and a European Conference on loneliness in Berlin in 2020.

## Prof. Andrew Steptoe

Professor of psychology and epidemiology at University College London, Head of the Department of Behavioural Science and Health, and Director of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)



Andrew Steptoe is professor of psychology and epidemiology at University College London, where he is Head of the Department of Behavioural Science and Health, and director of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). He graduated in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University and completed his doctorate at the University of Oxford.

He was head of the Department of Psychology and Chair of the Academic Board at St. George's Hospital Medical School before moving to University College London in 2000, where he was British Heart Foundation Professor of Psychology (2000-2016) and Director of the Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care (2011-2017). He is

a Fellow of the British Academy, the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Society of Biology, and the Academy for Social Sciences. Dr Steptoe's research is primarily focused on links between psychological and social processes and physical health, and on population aging. He is author or editor of 22 books and around 940 journal articles and chapters.

## **Paul Cann**

**Co-founder of the Campaign to End Loneliness and Programme Advisory Group Chair**



Paul Cann is the co-founder of the Campaign to End Loneliness, and he chairs its Programme Advisory Group. He is a charter member of the charity Independent Age and an Associate of the International Longevity Centre. In 2016 he was invited by the Australian Association of Gerontology to be their International Visiting Fellow. Paul's recent focus has been on the role of creative arts in later life, and this included the commissioning and performance of a pioneering choral work 'The Voyage' dedicated to the Campaign to End Loneliness on the universal theme of journeying through life and loneliness, which brought younger and older people together to make music. He is Chair of the award-winning community arts enterprise Entelechy Arts; he also chairs the community singing initiative Sound Resource, and the Rodolfus Foundation, which inspires and trains enthusiastic singers from 8 upwards into young adulthood. His special interest is the impact of participation in creative arts on health, well-being and loneliness.

Mr. Cann has had a rich career in a variety of different posts, including as a lead of a range of voluntary organizations for almost 30 years, as a teacher, as a civil servant at the Cabinet Office (including a post as Private Secretary to the Arts Minister), and a stint in the private sector including a senior management role at the newspaper 'The Independent'. From 2004 to 2007 he was Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing.

## **Edward Garcia, MHS-PH (co-organizer of the event)**

**Founder and Executive Director, Foundation for Social Connection & Co-Chair, Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection**



Edward Garcia (Eddie) is the Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Social Connection – a US-based non-profit organization dedicated to the translation of scientific research to real-world solutions to address social connection. He sits on the Board of Directors for its sister-organization, the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness – a non-profit advocacy organization fighting to raise national awareness and policy change to combat the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness within the US. He is also the Co-Chair of the Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection, a partnership with 11 countries across the globe focused on raising global awareness, supporting knowledge dissemination, and the development of systemic, nationally-based strategies to address social connection.

Eddie's 20 years working in US-government health care and social services programs has made him knowledgeable in a multitude of health and social policy issues. He has led and been actively involved in numerous multi-stakeholder coalitions aimed at improving our nation's health care delivery and financing systems and served within the US Department of Health and Human Services and US Congress between 2006-2016. Eddie holds degrees in political science and comparative health politics from Boston University and a Master of Health Science in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Eddie works and resides in Washington, DC USA.

## **Minna Nurminen**

Socio-economic analyst at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre



Ms Minna Nurminen is a Finnish social policy professional working at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). In her role as Socio-Economic Analyst, she focuses on loneliness, fairness and gender equality.

Prior to joining JRC, Minna gained international experience in research, policy and advocacy while working at UN Women, International Labour Organization and the European Commission. As a social scientist, Minna holds an MSc degree in Comparative Social Policy from the University of Oxford and a Master's degree in Social and Public Policy from the University of Helsinki.

## **Elizabeth Casabianca**

Socio-economic analyst at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre



Ms. Elizabeth Casabianca is a Socio-Economic Analyst at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. Her main interests lay in the field of applied microeconomics and microeconometrics, international economics and fairness. She particularly looks to carry out research with specific policy implications.

Prior to joining the JRC, Elizabeth worked as an applied economist in a research and advisory company based in Italy, where she was mainly involved in analysing the implications of economic policies on income distribution. Prior to that, she held a post-doc position at the Polytechnic University of Marche. She has also collaborated with the Trade, Gender and Development Section of UNCTAD, particularly on capacity building activities. Elizabeth has teaching experience at university level and she regularly presents her research at international conferences.

## **Dr. Christopher Mikton**

Technical Officer at Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing; Department of Social Determinants of Health; Division of Healthier Populations - World Health Organization



Christopher Mikton's areas of responsibility cover elder abuse, social isolation and loneliness, ageism and the Decade of Healthy Ageing "enabler" of data, research and innovation.

Dr. Mikton is a dual Swiss and American national. Before joining WHO's Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit, he worked for 8.5 years in WHO's Prevention of Violence Unit. He has also worked in academia in the UK and as a clinical scientist for the United Kingdom's Ministry of Justice and Department of Health's Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder Programme, as well as for the International Committee of the Red Cross. He was educated at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom (PhD and MPhil ) and McGill University in Montreal, Canada (BA).

## Find out more

### Université Grenoble Alpes

A multidisciplinary institution located in the heart of the French Alps, Université Grenoble Alpes is renowned for its scientific and technological research activities, aimed at providing essential training to students and faculty and at addressing societal issues. One of the top 150 universities in the world in the Shanghai ranking, the university's impact is brought to life through its nearly 60,000 students, 10,000 of whom international, and more than 7,700 staff spread over several campuses. Working in tandem with its research partners and drawing on the presence of its considerable scientific resources, UGA has developed its research and innovation policy on an international scale. We push the boundaries of knowledge by providing support to its disciplines and encouraging cooperation and dialogue between them to build the interdisciplinarity required to tackle the socio-economic and cultural issues we face today.

<https://www.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr>

### Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection

The Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection (GILC) is comprised of national organizations committed to ending the pressing global problems of loneliness and social isolation. They support the dissemination of national, system-wide approaches to building social connections.

<https://www.gilc.global>

### French Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2022

The Presidency of the Council organizes and chairs meetings, works out compromises, delivers conclusions and ensures the coherence and continuity of the decision-making process. It ensures good cooperation between all Member States. The French Presidency of the Council of the EU runs from 1 January to 30 June 2022.

<https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu>