

European Think Tank School 2013

Building Management Capacities

TRAINERS BIOGRAPHIES



Pieter Cleppe, Open Europe, Brussels Office

Pieter is the Head of the Brussels office of Open Europe. A trained lawyer, he has been practicing law in Belgium and has worked as a cabinet advisor and speechwriter to the Belgian State Secretary for Administrative Reform and as an analyst at the Belgian Itinera Institute, which he helped establish. Pieter received his legal training at the Catholic University of Leuven, and also studied law and economics at the universities of Hamburg, Bologna and Vienna.



John O'Connell, Taxpayers' Alliance

John joined the TaxPayers' Alliance in February 2009 as an intern and has since risen to become the Research Director. He has written major reports on quangos, government capital procurement, regional business policy and local government pensions. He co-authored the influential paper [How to Save £50 Billion: reducing spending for sustainable public finances](#), released in conjunction with the Institute of Directors. He also uncovered how local councils were spending Preventing Violent Extremism grants, finding more detailed information than could be gathered by Parliamentary Questions

John also oversees the work of the [2020 Tax Commission](#), whose final report will map out a simpler and less burdensome tax system for the UK.

John has a weekly Local Government column for the ConservativeHome website, providing insight and commentary on the big issues facing councils and taxpayers. He frequently represents the TPA on television and radio, including prominent appearances on flagship news broadcast and documentaries such as Radio 4's PM and File on 4. He also regularly speaks for the TPA at events, delivering speeches on the TPA's campaigns and research.

Before work at the TPA John worked in retail management, spent a short time at the Hampstead and Highgate Express, and then Dods (the political communications firm). He attended Nottingham Trent University, where he received a bachelor's degree in Politics, and then University College London, where he obtained a Masters degree in European Public Policy.



Tim Evans, The Cobden Centre, The Adam Smith Institute (UK)

Dr. Tim Evans is working with The Cobden Centre, he is the Chairman of the Economic Policy Centre, Chairman of Global Health Futures Ltd, a Consultant Director and a Senior Fellow with the Adam Smith Institute.

Dr. Tim Evans is a former President and Director General of the Centre for the New Europe (2002-2005) in Brussels. Between 1993 and early 2002 he was the Executive Director of Public Affairs at the Independent Healthcare Association in London where he oversaw the political affairs and public relations of the UK's independent health and social care providers. In that role he was widely credited as being the major driving force behind the '2000 Concordat' which was described by the Financial Times as the most "historic deal in 50 years of British healthcare". Prior to that, in 1991-1992, he was the Chief Economic and Political Adviser to the Slovak Prime Minister – Dr. Jan Carnogursky – and was Head of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit. In the late 1980s he was the Assistant Director of the Foundation for Defence Studies.

In 1993, he was awarded his PhD from the London School of Economics and in 2011 gained an MBA. A political sociologist specialising in economics, he has taught at a number of academic institutions over the years including teaching post-graduate students Social Policy at London's Guildhall University and the Economics and Politics of the Future on the Strategic Command Course of Britain's national Police Staff College at Bramshill. In 2007 he was made a member of the Mont Pelerin Society.



Wolf von Laer, European Executive Board, European Students for Liberty

As a student Wolf was deeply involved with the Free Democratic Party in Germany and its youth group Julis. He also co-founded the Liberal Youth Group at the University of Erfurt and organized events about topics like Neoliberalism, the Future of the Energy Supply, State Surveillance and more.

The Financial Crisis of 2008 compelled Wolf to write articles and research the topic extensively in order to find a better explanation. Since then he has studied the Austrian School of Economics and has published a book in German titled *The Problems of the Established Central Banking System — Free Banking as an Alternative?* at the Liberal Institute.

In 2007 Wolf enrolled at the University of Erfurt in a Bachelor program called “Staatswissenschaften” (Science of the State). In April 2011 he graduated with a double major in Economics and Social Sciences. From 2011-2012 he received his Master’s degree from the Austrian Economics Program under Dr. Jesús Huerta de Soto in Madrid, Spain. Since September 2012 Wolf is a PhD student in Political Economy at Kings’s College London.



Alexander McCobin, Students for Liberty

Alexander is Executive Director of the Students for Liberty. During college at the University of Pennsylvania, Alexander began the University of Pennsylvania Libertarian Association to promote discussion and education of libertarian ideas on campus and expand his horizons regarding the power of the message of liberty. In the summer of 2007, he was an intern at the Reason Foundation, working on privatization efforts around the U.S. At the same time, he also ran a nonprofit organization to promote youth debate education to underserved students in the greater Philadelphia and mid-Atlantic region. In May, 2008, Alexander graduated from Penn with a B.A. in philosophy and economics and an A.M. in philosophy. He spent the following year working as a Koch Associate at the Cato Institute focused on marketing and development. He is currently a third year graduate student at Georgetown University pursuing his Ph.D. in philosophy with areas of interest in political philosophy and business ethics.



Tom G. Palmer, Atlas Network

Tom is Executive Vice President for International Programs of Atlas Network. He previously served as Vice President for International Programs at the Cato Institute and Director of the Center for Promotion of Human Rights. He is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and Director of Cato University, the Institute’s educational arm. He is the author of *Realizing Freedom: The Theory, History, and Practice of Liberty*. He received his BA from St. Johns College, MD, his MA in philosophy from The Catholic University of America, and his doctorate from Oxford University.



Zilvinas Silenas, Lithuanian Free Market Institute

Zilvinas joined the Lithuanian Free Market Institute (LFMI) in 2006 after graduating from Wesleyan University, USA. Having started as a Junior Analyst on Economic Policy and International Trade, Z. Silenas became Senior Analyst at LFMI in 2009. On December 12, 2011 he was appointed LFMI’s President. Besides his active involvement in Economic Policy, Z. Silenas has broadened LFMI’s scope of activities to include Energy, Transportation and other sectors in need of privatization and deregulation. Zilvinas has experienced inner workings of the Establishment through his active involvement in the governmental “Sunset” and “Sunrise” commissions that focus on sizing down state functions and expenditures. Z. Silenas contributed to LFMI’s key role in revealing the origins of the crisis to the society and formulating the anti-crisis action plan to the national authorities.

Having a passion to pass on his knowledge to youngsters, Zilvinas teaches IB Economics at his former high-school and educates teenagers through the LFMI’s interactive economics program.