

Speakers Biographies

15 years Canada-EFTA Event

27 November 2024 from 16:00 to 19:00 in Room Silva Casa of the World Trade Institute, Bern

Moderator: Prof. Isabelle van Damme, Director of Studies, World Trade Institute Bern

Isabelle completed her studies in law at the University of Gent (Cand. Jur and Lic. Jur.) in 2002 and at Georgetown University Law Center (LLM) in 2003. After working a year at Georgetown University Law Center, for Professor John H. Jackson and the Journal of International Economic Law, she wrote her PhD on ‘Treaty Interpretation by the WTO Appellate Body’, under the supervision of Professor James Crawford, at the University of Cambridge (2004-2007). Following her master studies and during her PhD, Isabelle interned at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Appellate Body Secretariat, worked at the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs of the UN Secretariat, and was a Global Law Fellow at Columbia University. After completing her doctorate, Isabelle worked as a College Lecturer, Director of Studies and the Turpin-Lipstein Fellow at Clare College, University of Cambridge, where she taught EU law, public international law and WTO law. She next joined the Geneva office of a US law firm, where she worked on WTO disputes, and also served as a référendaire in the Chambers of Advocate General Sharpston at the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

Prior to her appointment to the University of Bern and the World Trade Institute, Isabelle was a partner at a Brussels-based law firm, where she practiced international (trade) law and EU law and managed that firm’s pro bono programme. In that role, she acted for several governments in WTO and FTA dispute settlement proceedings, including in disputes relating to national security and sustainability, and parties in CJEU proceedings. She also advised clients on the negotiation of trade and investment agreements, and compliance with export control and sanctions legislation. Isabelle has been a Visiting Lecturer at the Université Catholique de Louvain and has also taught at the University of Luxembourg, the Graduate Institute, KU Leuven, the World Trade Institute, and the Academy of International Economic Law and Policy.

She continues to teach a seminar on EU trade and policy at the College of Europe in Bruges. She is currently also serving her second term as Executive Vice-President of the Society of International Economic Law. On 23 June 2022, the European Commission added Isabelle to the “List of Candidates for Appointment as Arbitrators and TSD Experts”. Isabelle is a member of the editorial boards of SEW (Tijdschrift voor Europees en economisch recht), EU Law Live, the Cambridge Journal of International and Comparative Law and the Revue belge de droit international. Since 2024, she also sits on the editorial advisory board of the Journal of International Economic Law. Her main publications include Treaty Interpretation by the WTO Appellate Body (OUP), EU Foreign Subsidies Regulation (Concurrences, co-authored), Commentary on the WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement (CUP, co-authored), and the first and second editions of The Oxford Handbook of International Trade Law (OUP, co-edited). Isabelle’s current research focuses on the administration and enforcement of EU sanctions legislation and procedural law of WTO and FTA dispute settlement mechanisms.

Patrick Wittmann, Ambassador of Canada to Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Patrick Wittmann studied at the University of Toronto and graduated with a BA Hons in History and Political Science in 1989. He continued his education at Oxford University, obtaining an MPhil in International Relations in 1991. He worked as a special assistant to the head of the UN peacekeeping operation in Mozambique before joining Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1995. During his time in Canada, he was the director of the UN and Commonwealth Affairs Division and of the International Defence Relations Division. He also served as the first Canadian political adviser at the North American Aerospace Defence Command in Colorado. Most recently, he was assistant secretary to the Cabinet, foreign and defence policy, at the Privy Council Office. In January 2022, he was appointed ambassador of Canada to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, with a 4-year mandate. He is fluent in English, French and German. He is married to Catherine Stewart; they have 3 sons.

Roger Gschwend, Head of World Trade at SECO

Mr Roger Gschwend, born 15 February 1976, Swiss citizen, holds a master degree of laws of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and an LL.M. of the University of London, United Kingdom. He has also acquired a CAS in mediation at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland.

From 1996 to 2004, Mr Gschwend worked for Swiss Customs. After acquiring his law degree at the University of Zurich, he joined the Legal Service of the General Directorate of Customs in Berne in 2002.

From 2002 to 2004, Mr. Gschwend was seconded to the General Directorate of Taxes and Customs of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium. His focus was on an e-government initiative "eCus-toms" aimed at connecting European customs systems.

From 2006 to 2012, Mr Gschwend joined EFTA in Geneva, first as an Officer on customs and origin matters and, from 2010 as a Senior Legal Officer. In that capacity, he supported negotiations on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Gulf Cooperation Council, Hong Kong, China, Peru, India, Montenegro, the Customs union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Serbia and Ukraine. He also supported various meetings of the Joint Committees established under these and other FTAs and participated in technical cooperation projects, e.g. with Morocco.

From 2012 to 2015, Mr Gschwend worked for a private company, ABB Switzerland, as a Senior Legal Counsel and Trade Compliance Officer. He was in charge of the Trade Compliance Programme of that company (customs, embargoes, export control) and for general legal advice. He also represented ABB Switzerland in Swiss trade associations.

From 2015 to 2024, Mr Gschwend headed the Division of International Economic Law at the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). He managed a team of international trade advisors and acted as a negotiator in international negotiations on various trade agreements (including

Canada, Chile, Georgia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mercosur, Mexico, Philippines, Türkiye, United Kingdom), in particular regarding general and institutional provisions, dispute settlement, competition and trade remedies. He has also negotiated the Competition Agreement between Switzerland and Germany of 2022.

In October 2024, Mr Gschwend took his current role as Head of World Trade at SECO.

Ambassador Frank Büchel, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the WTO

Frank Büchel, is the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations Office at Geneva, WTO, EFTA and other International Organisations in Geneva. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Büchel served as the Deputy Secretary-General of the European Free Trade Association in Geneva since 2021, directing the third-country trade relations division in the Association's Secretariat.

From 2014 to 2021, he was the Liechtenstein member of the board of the Association's Surveillance Authority in Brussels, responsible for the free movement of services, capital, and persons, as well as the enforcement of competition rules within the European Economic Area in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Between 2007 and 2013, he provided independent advisory services to regulators and companies in network and related industries, with a particular focus on telecommunications. He worked in the same field at the Association's Surveillance Authority from 2002 to 2007.

Prior to this, he served as the Deputy Director of the independent national regulatory authority for telecommunications and broadcasting in Vaduz, Liechtenstein from 1999 to 2002.

Mr. Büchel has a law degree from the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, obtained a Master of Laws in Comparative Law from the University of Miami School of Law, United States, and completed post-graduate studies in European Commission Competition Law at King's College London, United Kingdom. He was admitted as an attorney-at-law to the New York Bar in 1999 and as a solicitor to the Supreme Court of England and Wales in 2005.

Rodrigo Polanco, Senior Researcher and Lecturer, World Trade Institute Bern

Rodrigo Polanco is a senior lecturer, researcher, and academic coordinator of Master Programmes at the World Trade Institute (WTI), University of Bern, and a Legal Adviser for Spanish and Portuguese-speaking jurisdictions at the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law. In addition, he is a lecturer at the University of Luzern and a visiting professor at the University of Chile, where he also is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Economic Law (Revista de Derecho Económico).

Rodrigo holds a Bachelor and a Master of Laws from Universidad de Chile, an LL.M. in International Legal Studies from New York University and a PhD in Law from the University of Bern. He has published extensively as an author and editor in leading international academic publishers and

international journals on investment, trade, tax and environmental law. He is co-founder of the Electronic Database of Investment Treaties (EDIT).

Rodrigo coordinated the WTI/SECO Project, which supported regional competence centres for trade law and policy in Peru, South Africa, Vietnam, Indonesia and Chile, and the SNIS Project “Diffusion of International Law: A Textual Analysis of International Investment Agreements”. In addition, he served as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Luzern (“The Governance of Big Data in Trade Agreements: Design, Diffusion and Implications – NFP 75”) and as an assistant professor and director of international affairs at the University of Chile’s Faculty of Law.

He is co-founder and member of the board of Fiscalía del Medio Ambiente (FIMA), a Chilean non-profit environmental organisation, serving at the editorial board of their environmental law journal (Justicia Ambiental).

Prof. Michael Hahn, Director of the Institute for European and International Economic Law

Michael Hahn is the Director of the Institute for European and International Economic Law of the University of Bern Law School and a Director at the World Trade Institute; in addition, he is, since 2008, a Honorary Professor at the University of Waikato Law School, Hamilton (New Zealand) and, since 2005, a Visiting Professor at the Europa-Institute of Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany. Michael holds a Doctorate from the University of Heidelberg and an LL.M. from the University of Michigan Law School, where he served as a research assistant to John H. Jackson. Before joining the University of Bern, he was a Full Professor at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland and at Waikato Law School, Hamilton, New Zealand. He received his basic legal training (1st and 2nd State Exam) in Germany, was a Research Fellow at the Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public and Public International Law and a Senior Lecturer at Saarland University and the University of Halle-Wittenberg. Michael Hahn has been retained several times as visiting professor in all continents; recently, he held the Marcel Storme Visiting Chair at Ghent University Law School and was a visiting professor at the University of Macerata. Michael teaches and publishes in English, French and German; he advises sovereign and private clients in questions of international economic law and EU internal market law. He is a co-author of Matsushita/Schoenbaum/Mavroidis/Hahn, *The World Trade Organization – Law, Practice, and Policy*, 3rd edition, OUP: 2015).

Prof. Manfred Elsig, Deputy Managing Director and Director of Research of the World Trade Institute

Manfred Elsig is Professor of International Relations, Deputy Managing Director and Director of Research of the World Trade Institute of the University of Bern. From 2013-2017 he was the Director of the NCCR Trade Regulation. He studied at the universities of Bern and Bordeaux and earned a degree in political science. He worked from 1997 to 1999 at the Swiss Federal Office for Foreign Economic Affairs. He later joined the Political Science Institute at the University of Zurich and

received his PhD (Dr Phil) in 2002 with a dissertation on European Union trade policy. From 2002 to 2004 he worked for UBS financial services group and as a personal advisor to the Minister of Economy of Canton Zürich. In 2004-2005 he was a teaching fellow at the International Relations Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science. From 2005 to 2009 he worked as a post-doc fellow at the World Trade Institute and at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. From 2009 to 2013 he was an Assistant Professor at the World Trade Institute.

His research focuses primarily on the politics of international trade, regional trade agreements, European trade policy, international organisations, US–EU relations, and private actors in global politics. He has published in international peer-reviewed journals including *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *European Union Politics*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Review of International Organizations*, *Review of International Political Economy*, and *World Trade Review*. He has been visiting lecturer/visiting professor at the University of Zurich, the University of Geneva, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Thunderbird School of Global Management. His courses include international political economy (IPE), international relations theories, international institutions, globalisation and European integration, and research methods.