



**Speech by Anthony Gooch Gálvez, ERT Secretary General
Forum Europa, 22 September 2026**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to be here today to introduce the new Chairman of the European Round Table for Industry for what is a most timely exchange.

Let me begin by thanking our kind hosts, Jose Luis and Diego Rodriguez for hosting this event today. I first met Jose Luis in the early 2000s accompanying my then boss and EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy to Madrid. Jose Luis was busy establishing the New Economy Forum into Spain's premier forum for high-level political, economic and societal debate. When I returned to Brussels in 2024, he and his son Diego were busy replicating their success by carving out a unique space in the crowded capital of the European Union. No mean feat, or as they say in Spanish, enhorabuena por haber puesto vuestra pica en Flandes o, mejor dicho, Bruselas.

It's great to see so many familiar faces join us here this morning and quite a few new ones too to introduce our still relatively new Chair for his first proper public outing in Brussels. This morning provides a timely

opportunity to set his and the organisation's vision out for what promises to be a make or break period in its and the European Union's fortunes, as Ministers gather later this week for the Competitiveness Ministerial and Heads of Government convene in mid-October to take stock of progress on the agenda to restore Europe's competitiveness. There is much riding on the coming four months under the Irish Presidency if Europe is to succeed in restoring its competitiveness by taking serious steps to complete the Single Market.

To set the scene for Sir Jon, let me begin with a little bit of history. The ERT was founded in April 1983 by 17 captains of European industry who "had a dream". In a moment that has several parallels with the situation we find ourselves in 43 years later, they gathered in the Paris offices of the ERT's first ever Chair, the CEO of Volvo Pehr Gyllenhammar. These were the days of 'eurosclerosis', with the EC seemingly unable to respond to the prevalent economic crisis brought about by a decade of high inflation, rising unemployment and declining growth. The organisation was entrusted to a Member whose country of origin was not in the then then European Community. He led the charge to, and I quote, "spur growth and to build up Europe's industry and infrastructure". The dream was the creation of a Single Market, allowing the free movement of goods, services, capital and people to beat a path from despondency to prosperity and

overcome their frustration at the prevailing paralysis in political leadership. Sound familiar?

Then, as now, Europe did not lack diagnoses. The gamechanger then was business coming forward with evidence, not just complaints, to cajole policymakers into action. In 1985, the then CEO of Philips, Wisse Dekker, presented his *Europe 1990 initiative*, a concrete plan for dismantling the barriers inside the Community. A few days later one Jacques Delors used it as the basis for a seminal speech to the European Parliament. Within months, much of its logic had found its way into the Commission's White Paper prepared by the Commissioner in charge, Lord Cockfield. This became the basis for the Single European Act of 1986 that served as the legal framework for the Single Market. I Business, the Commission and national capitals were, for once, pulling in the same direction. And the ERT spent the five years following the entry into force of the Act in 1987 deploying all their efforts to secure its implementation. In the words of the then President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, the ERT constituted “one of the main driving forces behind the Single Market”.

Fast forward to 1992, and the foundations and corner stones of Single Market had been laid, paving the way for a period of unprecedented economic prosperity, as the EC Twelve embarked on a giant leap in integration that would permanently transform Europe's economic landscape. Not content with this, ERT members proceeded to throw their

weight behind the small matter of Trans-European Networks included in the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, to connect Europe up through major infrastructural projects such as the Channel Tunnel connecting the UK to the continent, the Oresund Bridge connecting Denmark to Sweden, a series of high speed rail links and 12,000kms of motorways. This was followed by Economic & Monetary Union that resulted in the creation of a Single Currency in 1999.

Please do not confuse this trip down memory lane with a fluffy exercise in reminiscing about the good old days, not least because, in the early 1980s they were quite grim. Its purpose is to remind us of what we were capable of doing when we put our collective minds and efforts to a common goal of evidence-based integration and persevered. The trick now is to project that same spirit forward to today and the future.

In 2026, the ERT has grown from 17 to 60 Members spanning all the way from the West of Portugal to the East of Hungary, from the North of Finland to the Southern tip of Spain. The European Community of 12 that was then, has now transformed into a Union of 27 Member states with the ERT a consistent supporter of Enlargement over the last 40 years.

Frustrated by Europe's loss of competitiveness and seeing the Single Market, rather like the Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona, eternally incomplete, the ERT has once again been busy behind the scenes to

renew the necessary diagnoses by informing the reports produced by Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi in 2024. Five months ago in Nicosia, the three EU institutions committed jointly to delivering on One Europe One Market by the end of 2027. The number one priority is the completion of that Single Market . I liken it to a Rubik's cube with 6 sides that all need aligning to deliver on the whole:

- dismantling the obstacles and gold-plating creating 27 brick walls that our **goods and services** run into constantly
- creating a **unified corporate legal framework** applicable across all Member states, the so-called 28th Regime or EU Inc
- creating a **Savings & Investment Union** to ensure the EUR300bn in European savings going to the USA each year is redirected to create a pool of capital to ensure the wonderful start-ups born in Europe, the innovation, talent and IP that go with them, grow up and prosper here
- and completing two Unions left out of the original 1990s design due to their perceived sensitivity at the time: **Energy** and **Digital**

But “time and tide wait for no Man”, and time is not on Europe's side with deindustrialisation accelerating at the rate of knots a time of unprecedented geopolitical turbulence that has revealed some very uncomfortable and unhealthy dependencies. Security is top of mind be it

for dependable sources of energy, resilient supply chains, critical technologies or hard-core defence.

This is the context in which in May of this year, Sir Jonathan Symonds became the 12th Chairman of the ERT. He follows in the founding chair's footsteps hailing as he does from a country beyond but inextricably linked to the EU, the first Briton to take up the role.

After five years in the organisation, serving on the ERT Steering Committee and leading our work on R & D Innovation and Skills, as Chair of GSK, Jon brings a unique blend of knowledge, wisdom and judgement from what he himself proudly describes as a non-linear career path spanning everything from life sciences to financial services.

Who better then to help steer the ERT through troubled waters, as it strives once again to help the EU deliver on today's challenges to be the best version of itself in the face of adversity?

Please join me in give a warm welcome to ERT Chair, Sir Jonathan Symonds.