



European Union
Delegation to Singapore

Speech at EuroCham AGM
By EU Ambassador to Singapore Artis Bērtulis

Your Excellency Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Dear Jens Ruebbert, President of EuroCham

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, friends,

It is a true honour to stand before you today at this Annual General Meeting, as EuroCham celebrates its 25th anniversary - a milestone that reflects not just longevity, but the depth and dynamism of the EU-Singapore relationship.

Over these past twenty-five years, our partnership has reached extraordinary heights. In 2004, the EU established its Delegation in Singapore, giving our diplomatic ties a physical and permanent home in the Lion City.

From that foundation, we have built a relationship defined by ambition and action. Together, we have negotiated and concluded a series of landmark agreements, giving our cooperation structure, stability, and institutional strength.

On the economic front, we now enjoy one of the most advanced bilateral regulatory frameworks in the world. The EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement of 2019 was a game-changer, and this year, on the 1st of February, we took another bold step forward with the entry into force of our Digital Trade Agreement.

These achievements did not happen by chance. They were driven by the vision and persistence of European and Singaporean businesses, with EuroCham at the vanguard.

I arrived in Singapore just eight months ago, and in that short time, I have been struck by the parallels between Singapore's spirit of innovation and Europe's own.

Whether in artificial intelligence, fintech, the green transition, or trade resilience, our approaches align - rooted in pragmatism, ambition, and a shared belief in progress.

This is a country that does not just adapt to change; it shapes it.

And in this dynamic environment, underpinned by legal certainty and a forward-looking mindset, our economic relationship has flourished like never before.

The numbers speak for themselves.

Since 2019, bilateral trade in goods and services has increased by more than 20%, amounting to over SGD200 billion a year, a strong proof of the benefits of the EU-Singapore FTA.

Singapore is today the EU's 5th largest trade in services partner in the world...and we are each other's fifth most important investment partner.

Last year, the EU was leading the list of fixed asset investment commitments in Singapore, well ahead of China, the US and Japan.

These figures are impressive, but they only tell part of the story.

Behind the data are real partnerships and real impact: European SMEs scaling up their operations here in Singapore; Singaporean firms investing in European infrastructure; joint ventures and research collaborations that push the boundaries of what is possible.

We are working together on sustainable transport, digital connectivity, and clean energy, while strengthening people-to-people ties that bind our societies closer. Above all, this cooperation is creating jobs, driving innovation, and generating wealth on both sides.

Our partnership extends far beyond trade. In the digital realm, the EU-Singapore Digital Partnership provides a platform to ensure that future technologies benefit our societies and support our shared prosperity.

On the green transition, Singapore's Green Plan 2030 and the EU's Green Deal are complementary visions for a sustainable future.

We are already collaborating on decarbonisation, renewable energy, and sustainable aviation fuels—areas where European and Singaporean companies can lead the world together.

Yet, as we gather here today, we must also acknowledge the challenges we face.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past twelve months, the EU and Singapore have navigated an increasingly uncertain economic environment - one we did not choose, but one we must confront.

The rules-based international order has come under severe strain. Wars, energy shortages, and the weaponisation of trade have tested our resilience.

But in these trials, we have seen the strength of our partnership. The EU and Singapore share a fundamental belief in an open, rules-based international system - a system that is not just the foundation of prosperity, but the guarantor of peace and stability for our citizens.

In this moment, like-minded countries must stand together to uphold these principles.

The launch of the EU-CPTPP trade and investment dialogue last November is a perfect example of this collaboration in action.

And I would like to recognise Minister Balakrishnan's leadership in making this partnership a reality.

Now, I would like to address a criticism I sometimes hear from our Singaporean partners: that the European Union is too slow in its decision-making. Let me be clear and honest.

Yes, Europe must - and can - improve. But we should also recognise what our process represents.

Reaching consensus among twenty-seven Member States, across multiple levels of government and diverse political traditions, representing over 450 million people, is inherently complex. Yet it is also inherently democratic.

This process ensures transparency, accountability, and stability - the very qualities that make Europe a reliable partner. A seemingly small detail - but Singapore can rely on the data and transparency that Europe provides.

We are a Europe that stands by universal values, that is open and predictable, and that offers one of the largest and most integrated single markets in the world.

These are not small achievements, and they are too easily taken for granted. But let me assure you: we are not complacent. We are determined to become more agile, more competitive, and more responsive, because our future depends on it.

As we look ahead, my team at the EU Delegation - and our broader "Team Europe" of Member State Embassies - are committed to deepening the EU-Singapore relationship even further.

Next year, we will celebrate another significant milestone: the 50th anniversary of EU-ASEAN relations, with Singapore at the helm as ASEAN Chair.

As natural allies, we will continue to advance our shared agenda, and we count on the continued support of EuroCham and our Singaporean partners to make this vision a reality.

Thank you.