



## **The New Zealand Europe Business Council Inc**

### **NEW ZEALAND EUROPE BUSINESS COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

#### Membership

Membership is at an all-time high. We are also particularly pleased that some Embassies accredited to New Zealand from Canberra, and more particularly relevant Trade Commissioners based in Sydney, have joined New Zealand Europe Business Council (NZEBC). After the amended Constitution came into force, allowing corporate NZEBC members, we now have 10 such members, and I'm particularly delighted that new corporate member, Ignacio Fernández de la Vega, is set to join the committee this year. Ignacio will bring with him valuable new connections to Spain and the tourism industry.

#### Diplomatic Breakfast Event – Europe House

In June 2025, we hosted 8 New Zealand Ambassadors accredited to Europe and over 50 invited guests. H.E. Trevor Mallard (Ireland), H.E. Mark Trainor (Russia), H.E. David Taylor (Scandinavia), H.E. Tara Morton (Spain), H.E. Jackie Frizelle (Italy), H.E. Paul Ballantyne (Poland), H.E. Craig Hawke (Germany) and H.E. Susannah Gordon (Netherlands). Each Ambassador spoke for about 5 minutes about the countries they were responsible for providing an update on the then-existing political and business environment. The event was highly successful, attendees gained useful insights, forged valuable connections and not only did it sell out, but there was a waiting list.

#### Economic Breakfast

In October 2025, we hosted an economic briefing breakfast at Europe House with keynote speaker, Jarrod Kerr, Chief Economist at Kiwibank introduced by Frank Olsson. It was an insightful presentation on the current economic landscape in New Zealand. Again, the event was also a sellout function with a waiting list.

Several EU Ambassadors in attendance shared their perspectives ahead of the EU-NZ Business Summit. Including, Austrian Trade Commissioner, Ulrike Straka, Slovak Trade Commissioner, Dana Krsakova, and Danish Trade Commissioner, Ulrik Dahl, who are all Sydney-based. Along with the Wellington-based Dutch Ambassador, Ard van der Vorst, and the Canberra-based Finnish Ambassador, Arto Haapea.

## Field Days

In 2025, NZEBC hosted an event and hospitality at Field Days 2025, the southern hemisphere's largest agricultural event, showcasing recent innovation in agricultural technology and manufactured goods. Spanning 4 days, the event consisted of over 1000 exhibitors and received a base attendance of 100,000 attendees. Vice President Martijn Bakker is again coordinating the 2026 arrangements.

From 10-13 June 2026, the agricultural field days will again be held at Mystery Creek Hamilton. NZEBC will host an event while several of the bilateral Chambers will have their own pavilions, and the EU Delegation will have a presence as well.

## European Union – NZ Business Summit 2025

In October 2025, the EU-NZ Business Summit was held at the Viaduct Events Centre. The stunning event involved 500 Delegates from NZ, Europe, Australia and the Pacific considering how best to promote trade growth between the EU and NZ. NZEBC was a key partner both in preparation for and during the Summit EU Commissioner for Trade and Economics Security, Maroš Šefčovič, attended with many EU Ambassadors from Wellington and Canberra, as well as several Trade Officials. They were joined by New Zealand Prime Minister, Christopher Luxon, and Minister of Trade, Todd McClay. There were various side events as well, such as the French Chamber of Commerce's carbon reduction function. Ireland and Spain also had separate programmes, as did the Central European countries whom arranged a function at our corporate member, DLA Piper's offices.

The overwhelming consensus appears to be that NZEBC was a key partner with an instrumental effect on the success of the Summit.

A particular acknowledgement must go to EU Ambassador and his team Lawrence Meredith and Team Europe Ambassadors and their teams. They worked so hard to make it one of the best Europe Business Summit's held in the world – and it was! We have also worked closely with the EU Ambassador's resident in Wellington. H.E. Patryk Błaszczak (Poland), H.E. Luis Alfonso Sánchez-Vellisco Sánchez (Spain), H.E. Laurence Beau (France), H.E. Nicole Menzenbach (Germany) H.E. Ard van der Vorst (Netherlands), H.E. Jane Connolly (Ireland) and H.E. Gábor Tamás Nagy (Hungary) It's no coincidence that shortly after the Summit, French Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness Nicolas Forissier visited New Zealand, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul as well as the Deputy Prime Minister of Poland Krzysztof Gawkowski.

The New Zealand Ambassador to European Union in Brussels H.E. Simon Draper is in regular liaison and contact while the Divisional Head of the Europe Division of MFAT in Wellington Dr Rod Harris and his team are very collaborative and effective.

The next step will be to seize the opportunity and follow up on the connections formed at the Summit. The fact that so many are attending this AGM today, including virtually from Sydney and Canberra, is a testament to that. Let's build upon it!

## NZ-EU FTA

Exports to the EU were almost \$9 billion up to December 2025. That's a 29% increase. Up nearly \$2 billion in 2 years. This growth has significantly exceeded forecasts and surpasses expectations. Butter exports are up 121%. Cheese up 400% and services exports are up 11% from Europe to New Zealand. I particularly observed the growing investment from Europe to New Zealand.

Some examples have been extremely high-profile such as Fonterra's sale of its consumer brands to Lactalis. Irish meat processor, Dawn Meats, also acquired 65% in Alliance Group in December 2025. More recently, Chanel has entered into a joint venture with Lammermoor Station in respect of certified organic fine wool. But there are many smaller yet important alternative investments which have been made, such as Pacific Bio Lubricants Limited, a subsidiary of the Czech company, Biona and an excellent example of growing interest in New Zealand's green technology industry.

Infrastructure is a particular highlight. This month, KiwiRail inaugurated its Christchurch yard, ensuring the long-term maintenance of the 66<sup>th</sup> Swiss Stadler locomotives, engineered with Swiss provision and manufactured in Spain with Ambassador Viktor Vavricka and Spanish Ambassador Luis Sánchez-Vellisco Sánchez attending.

Three bidders have been confirmed for the next section of the northern expressway between Auckland and Whangarei. Major European infrastructure companies are in each of the consortia including from Italy, France and Spain.

In December 2025, Auckland's Sylvia Park came to a standstill when 20,000 people attended the opening of Ikea. The Swedish Ambassador, Klas Moln, cut the ribbon of the store himself at the opening, alongside New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon.

The FTA can be described as "ambitious". It's groundbreaking and innovative and creates a huge opportunity having improved market access, lowered costs and the removal of trade barriers. We look forward to working with the businesses and our partners to maximise the opportunity.

## Horizon Europe Research Fund

New Zealand is an associated country in Horizon Europe, the world's largest multilateral research and innovation programme. This association creates a real opportunity for New Zealand researchers to work collaboratively with peers internationally and use scientific innovations and new technologies to address major global challenges, such as climate change, energy and health, and the United Nations' sustainable development goals. These projects are closely connected to business in New Zealand and represent ongoing commercial opportunities.

## European Business Organisations

NZEBC is a member of the worldwide network of European Business Organisations, chaired by Jason Collins from Australia. Having attended the meeting in Brussels last June I met with Jason, who is extremely collaborative and helpful to us in NZ. He visited us in Auckland for the Europe Summit and I believe their model is one worth emulating in New Zealand going forward with significant corporate and business members.

### Thank you

I acknowledge the huge contribution of the volunteers on the committee. I've already acknowledged the retiring officers, but I want to make a special mention of the Vice President, Martijn Bakker. Martijn's work, particularly on Field Days, has been outstanding and valuable. He's a real team player for Europe.

Frank Olsson is President Emeritus and has given the best transition I could hope for. Even now, he is still working so hard, particularly on membership and events.

Piotr Bieganski brings his technical knowledge to the table regularly, meanwhile Greg Shanahan is full of commonsense, professional expertise and offers great connections to the commercial community.

We couldn't have a better relationship than we do with the European Union Delegation in Wellington and in particular, Ambassador Lawrence Meredith and his team. All are so positive, collaborative and working constantly for Team Europe.

Part of our function is to be collaborative and work with other organisations. We do that with Simon Bridges and the Auckland Business Chamber. They led a business trade mission late-last year to Poland, Hungary, Romania and Czech Republic. This was the first such trade mission to Central Europe and included some of our members.

Roger Partridge and Oliver Hartwich from the New Zealand Initiative continue to be very supportive of NZEBC. They led business missions, which comprised one-third of last year to the Netherlands, a mission which I joined and which comprised one-third of NZ's economy, and previously to Denmark, Switzerland and Ireland. Next year, their trip is to Slovakia and Austria.

Then of course are the individual European business chambers. All are represented in NZEBC. They stick to their bilateral relationships, and we focus on wider EU issues and policies. Where there is no bilateral chamber such as Spain and Hungary, we are performing that function as best we can.

## Acknowledgement of Retiring Officers

We have four committee members retiring at this Annual Meeting.

Monique Surges is synonymous with European trade. She joined the German Chamber of Commerce in 1993 and became CEO in 2000.

The German Chamber has been a real powerhouse and so successful thanks to her dedication, hard work, intelligence and collaboration. She was a founding member of the NZEBC, having since served as President, on the committee and as Treasurer at various times. Monique – now a proud grandmother – thank you very much for all that you have done. As I say, your name and face are synonymous, not only with the German Chamber of Commerce, but NZEBC.

Secondly, Maureen Benson-Rea has been a key person in promoting the European relationship with the University of Auckland and the NCRE. The Foundation became Associate Member at the inaugural meeting of NZEBC in September 2005. Ironically, it was hosted at the British Consulate-General. Maureen, you've been a foundation member of NZEBC from 2005 until even today and have been a key committee member since 2015. What a length of service. Thank you for your contribution, dedication, intelligence and commitment.

Thirdly, Dr Adrian Blaser, the Honorary Consul for Switzerland. Dr Blaser became Treasurer in 2022, replacing Monique, and has been a hardworking and efficient Treasurer throughout that period. In recent years, he has also managed the database and sent out communications, always supporting as needed. Adrian continues his role as Honorary Consul for Switzerland, a critical part of Europe which just doesn't happen to be in the European Union!

Finally, Chris Linton. Chris has only been on the committee for a year but has worked very hard as a dedicated Secretary. Chris will now return to her functions as Honorary Consul for Finland, a role she has held for 8 years now, and to her position on the NZ Scandinavian Business Association. We look forward to seeing you in the future at our functions Chris.

Peter Kiely  
President  
NZ-Europe Business Council  
22 May 2026