

# José Maria Gil-Robles

## our companion and friend has passed away



José Maria Gil-Robles died on 14 February 2023. He was 87 years old. And a great European. We loved him for his kindness, for his humanism. He was our companion, first in the European Parliament, then at Confrontations Europe, and more recently at *Open World*, *Regards croisés*, the ASCPE film society.

He and Philippe Herzog entered the Parliament at the same time, in 1989, and left at the same time, in 2004. José Maria Gil-Robles was President of the Parliament from 1997 to 1999. These years were marked by a broader reflection on democracy, and both men encouraged the involvement of European civil society actors in European construction.

He was Spanish and never forgot his roots, or the battles he fought in his country to transition away from dictatorship and open up to Europe and the world.

José Maria Gil-Robles was a lawyer, he held the Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Madrid and was a member of the Royal Academy of Economic and Financial Sciences of Spain. After the European Parliament, he was Honorary President of the European Movement International. He then succeeded Bronislaw Geremek and Henri Rieben as President of the Jean Monnet Foundation in 2008 until 2015.

• In a moving tribute, Gilles Grin, Director of the Jean Monnet Foundation, applauded “this great European, this incredibly humane and kind man, who the Foundation’s members and those involved in its work had the privilege and joy of meeting in Lausanne. We are inconsolable over his passing.”

• Philippe, a member of the Foundation’s board, reacted with warmth and sadness: “President Gil-Robles was one of the great European humanists.

*I was lucky enough to know him, and he became a friend. I will never forget his support when, as a member of the European Parliament’s Institutional Committee, his commitment allowed the adoption of my own-initiative report on the participation of citizens and social actors in EU action and policies. A report that, without the support of the EPP vote, would never have been adopted. Although his boldest proposals were not subsequently implemented by the Parliament itself, his spirit has left its mark.”*

*When I was president of the Confrontations Europe association, we organised a Tour of Europe, at Claude’s initiative, to bring Europeans together as part of the big enlargement, and we invited President Gil-Robles to give a conference on European education in Madrid. He repeatedly showed interest in our work, even very recently following the publication of my latest book, *Les failles de la raison. Pour un nouveau discours de la méthode.*”*

*There was never a shadow of sectarianism in Gil-Robles, only concern for unity in diversity, faithful to the spirit of construction, whose meaning was expressed clearly by Jean Monnet: “we are not making a coalition of states, but uniting people. It is a choice for which we are all responsible.”*

We were proud to be his friends. And in a Europe and world plagued by so much doubt and violence, it is important that we remember these men of conviction who, like José Maria, were deeply committed to the future of Europe.

Claude FISCHER HERZOG  
Honorary President of Confrontations Europe  
Director of ASCPE, Les Entretiens Européens & Eurafriains



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