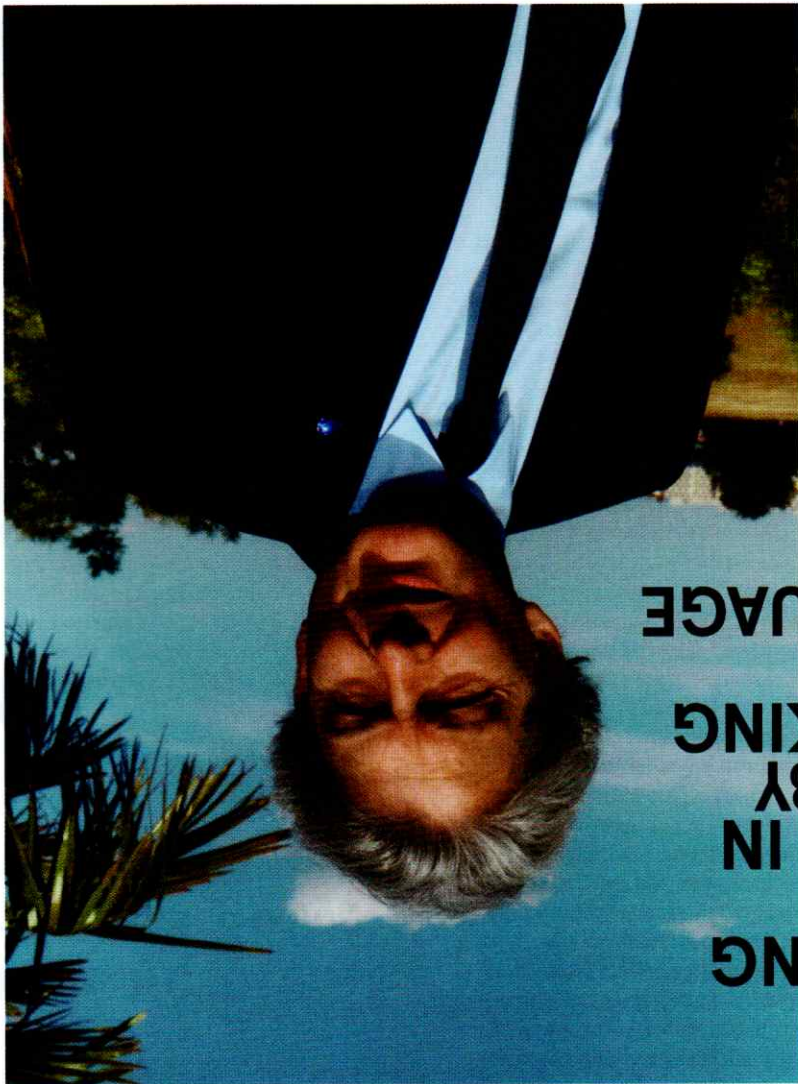


As the EU Commissioner for its internal market, Thierry Breton is in charge of writing digital policy to rein in the technology giants, from search to social – and because he's a former insider, they actually listen



KEEPING TECH FIRMS IN LINE BY SPEAKING THEIR LANGUAGE

Thierry Breton,
photographed
by WIRED in July
2020, in Paris

Thierry Breton's career could not be more different from a typical Eurocrat's. The French commissioner responsible for the European Union's internal market and shaping its digital policy describes himself as an engineer, a scientist, an economist, an entrepreneur, a professor, a CEO – and a politician. Over the course of his career, he has launched a software-engineering startup, led major tech and telecom companies such as Thomson, Atos, and France Telecom, acted as France's economy and finance minister, and taught global governance at Harvard. In the 1980s, Breton also had some success as a writer of science-fiction novels – in which he (rather presciently) envisioned a world run by technology billionaires where my ideas and thus my company.” The resulting co-written novel, *Softwar*, became a best-seller in France and was translated into a dozen languages.