



Ambassador's Activities

2013

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

at the 40th Anniversary Gala of ESCP Europe Business School

15 March 2013

Mr Director, Professor Gougeon,

Mr Dean, Professor Husson,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Thank you for inviting me for the second time to your annual gala dinner.

The *Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris*, through its London campus, plays an essential role providing management training for students from France, the UK and many other countries.

The Financial Times – which puts your school at the top of its international ranking every year – wasn't wrong.

And that great newspaper is often very accurate in its judgment. It also reported that, according to a study carried out by the British diplomatic service, French diplomacy is the best in the world! That's actually what my friend Simon Fraser, the FCO's Permanent Secretary, said in an interview with the FT.

As part of the study – which no doubt reached a fair conclusion – business people from Britain but also other countries were also interviewed.

As the business people you are – or will soon be – you should expect to come into ever greater contact with diplomats, even though it doesn't seem obvious at first glance.

Economic diplomacy is, moreover, one of the priorities set by Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. Last month he told the *Ecole normale supérieure*: “It's now the express role of our ambassadors – who are France's standard-bearers abroad – to lead Team France Export in their countries of residence.”

I currently devote 30% to 40% of my time to conducting economic diplomacy. That's somewhat the case this evening: apart from the pleasure of joining you on the eve of major rugby matches for France and England (France against Scotland to avoid being last, and

England needing to beat Wales to win the Grand Slam), I'm conducting both academic and economic cooperation.

To begin with, academic cooperation. **The heads of your school have long understood its importance, putting particular emphasis on student mobility**, with its campuses in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The existence of this European university training contributes to the creation of an international commercial culture, and the skills acquired in this way will be appreciated throughout your professional lives. This experience in fact enables you to hone your linguistic skills, while learning to live and function positively in other cultural contexts.

In addition to the personal benefit you can expect to gain from this mobility, it has an extremely positive impact on the European economy in general, which is based on the exchange of ideas and examples of "best practice", the expansion of networks and the creation of a certain type of dynamic professional, equipped with thorough training in his or her commercial specialism and in management methods. Moreover, it clearly doesn't exclude other experiences of mobility to other continents.

But I'm also conducting economic cooperation, and I'm talking to you about Europe and Europe's future. From now on, all our efforts are focused on growth in Europe, and I can tell you how much we're working to strengthen the European Union's integration and ensure that – as we'd like – our British friends remain alongside us in this adventure, the European enterprise, a 60-year-old political project in which we've invested so much. Together let's hammer out this message in the United Kingdom: yes, Europe needs reforms!

This reminds me of Ronald Reagan's joke that the 10 most frightening words in the English language are: "Hello, I'm from the government and I'm here to help!"

Yes, Europe has overcome its difficulties, and now we're taking on the Euro Area crisis in order to bring back growth – it takes time – and curb unemployment, particularly among young people. Yes, Europe needs the UK, and the UK needs Europe.

In our globalized world, size matters. Small is beautiful, but big is necessary – because big is powerful. It's a question of dimension. Politically, Britain is too small on an international scale to be able to assert her interests alone. Only concerted action with other EU member

states enables Britain to be heard among the growing, competitive “nation-continents” (China, Brazil, India etc.), and this is true even for international trade.

The EU, with the weight of its 500 million citizens and one-fifth of global GDP, remains the world’s largest economy and trading block. It permits economies of scale and international leverage in many fields. Those who believe in a free trade agenda need a big country like the UK on the inside, arguing for it.

Here in London, as young students you must campaign for this, make people understand the positive things Europe enables, including all our trade, and prepare us Europeans collectively to be stronger and better equipped against international competition.

Dear friends,

I wish you all – alumni, students, teachers and other staff of the school, as well as partners in the business world – every success in your endeavours and, first of all, an excellent evening!