

Speech by H.E. Sylvie Bermann
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom
for the UK launch of Créative France
Shoreditch, 23 February 2016

Mme Pénicaud,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We're gathered today for the UK launch of the Créative France campaign. And it seems to me entirely appropriate to do so here in Shoreditch, in the heart of London's temple of innovation, Tech City.

Muriel Pénicaud, CEO of Business France, will speak in greater detail about Créative France and the underlying ambitions of this publicity campaign. For my part, I'd just like to make a few observations.

First of all, I want to emphasize and welcome the ever-increasing scale of the Franco-British partnership in every field, especially trade and investment.

Our two countries trade goods worth more than fifty billion euros a year, a figure that is growing steadily; more than two thousand British businesses employ over a hundred and fifty thousand people in France, over three thousand French businesses employ nearly four hundred thousand people in the UK, and partnerships are developing in every sector of activity; France is the second-largest investor in the UK, and the UK is the third-largest investor in France.

I happen to believe that our membership of the same single market, in an organization called the European Union, plays no small part in this. But that's not the topic for this evening!

France and the UK share many values and a special affinity for innovation and creativity. From Paul Smith and Zaha Hadid to Anish Kapoor and Terence Conran, J.K Rowling, Jonathan Ive and many more, there's never been any question of our British friends' talent in the area.

New generations in France have picked up the baton and are keeping alive the creative spirit that contributes to our identity. Thousands of SMEs and start-ups are at the forefront of technological innovation, and every day they're inventing products, services and solutions for tomorrow's world. They're continuing to make France a land of innovation, exporting this national heritage to every continent.

I'm delighted that France can now highlight its most innovative and creative side in the UK, and not just in the fields of luxury goods and gastronomy; we don't intend to imitate the very fine "GREAT Britain" campaign, but our country is seeing strong development by young businesses that are looking abroad and, of course, towards London.

In this regard, Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron has just announced the creation of the French Tech Hub in London, a network seeking to coordinate all the French Tech players in this city.

We live in a globalized world, and creativity knows no borders. Indeed, it builds bridges between cultures and ideas. We must promote these bridges, partnerships and links, particularly between our two countries, which are such close friends.

In this room we have twelve highly talented French entrepreneurs who are living proof that creativity isn't just a concept. They've enjoyed top-class training, the rich diversity of an industry, and a culture that fosters innovation. I'd like you to meet them and discover their products and services in every sphere of activity.

Our ambition is to promote French initiatives and expertise in creativity and innovation, in a variety of fields (technology, industry, fashion, gastronomy, science, the arts and so on). Over the year, the Créative France campaign in the UK will be involved with many events. Rest assured that you'll be kept informed of them!

Thank you.