



Pfalzkeller, 28. November 2015

**Executive Master of European and International Business Law, E.M.B.L.-HSG  
2014/2015**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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Dear members of the E.M.B.L. Graduation Class of the University of St.Gallen 2015  
Dear family members of the graduates  
Esteemed members of the Directorate of the E.M.B.L-Program  
Ladies and gentlemen

In my capacity as Minister of Education of the Canton of St.Gallen and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the University of St.Gallen I would like to welcome you in the Pfalzkeller, which is part of the historic government building and the UNESCO world heritage. I couldn't think of a more appropriate place for a graduation ceremony to be held - an excellent location for excellent people. Personally and on behalf of the Board of Governors of the University of St.Gallen I would like to say to the graduates: congratulations to everyone of you! I feel honoured to speak to you today and to celebrate with you this most important evening. I know that you all have worked hard and persistently to arrive here, and I imagine you sitting there, experiencing a whole mixture of feelings: relief, excitement, joy and gratitude. You have every reason to be proud of yourself. To get to this point was an important achievement to which I commend you. The personal competencies that got you here – passion, commitment, tenacity, open minds to learn – will be important throughout your lives. Nurture them. They will be equally important than what you have learned in the E.M.B.L.-program.

Apart from the diploma, I would also like to congratulate you on your choice to earn a degree from the University of St.Gallen. Even if dimensionwise we probably can't keep up with other institutions, we are surely proud of our outstanding programs. As you all know, our University gets consistently high scores across various international rankings and especially the E.M.B.L.-program was recently listed among the world's most innovative law programs by the Financial Times. In keeping with the motto: small, but beautiful. Or as the mentioned newspaper stated: „The University of St Gallen, arguably one of the business school world's best kept secrets.“<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/1b993140-39d3-11e4-83c400144feabdc0.html#axzz3rAQnzG8u>



With a degree from the University of St.Gallen you not only benefit from its excellent reputation in the market place, but also from an exclusive, global network. I can assure you, you'll find yourself in best company since important personalities in economy, politics and even nobility are holding memberships in our Alumni organization. Whatever your plans for the future are, the E.M.B.L. provides you with all necessary knowledge skills in order to move forward to the next level of your career and to be successful on the international stage. In an increasingly globalized world know-how at the interface of economy, law, finance, culture and politics is in greater demand than ever. Additionally, what we need are good decision makers, skills to solve complex problems and entrepreneurial personalities, whose actions are informed by social responsibility for the benefit of the economy and society. You are empowered to make a difference. Historical context and global perspectives, demanding professional standards, the high value placed on critical thinking, discipline and the lessons of team-work --these have provided the compass points for your careers and are the grounding for your life-long learning.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I was elected as a member of the government I was 37 years old and a father of two kids. Our third child was born the following year. Entering a high level position at a young age can be exciting but also frightening. It usually comes with a lot of pressure, expectations and responsibility you have to cope with. I would like to share with you 4 insights of what I have learned in the past years in office, hoping they might be useful to you.

First of all - don't give up! Situations like standing in front of the parliament trying to convince congressmen not to cut the budget for education when funds were scarce, made me fight even harder. Losing a battle doesn't mean losing the war. Like Theodor Heuss, a former German President (1884-1963), said: "Falling is no disgrace, but staying down is." Sometimes people might not share your point of view or simply envy your success. When I was running for second term in office I suddenly faced opposition from people, who had assured me their support before. However, I took no personal offense, convinced the voters with results and hence was re-elected. Disappointments and failures are part of the game, from which you learn and help to improve your skills. In other words: If you lose, don't lose the lesson and if you're going through hell, keep going. Don't give up!

Second: Stick to your values! Sometimes it seems easier to concede, in order to avoid disruption and displeasure. However, it's easy to see this strategy is a dead end. The most successful leaders are those who make decisions based on their genuine beliefs and values -



not politics. It is my strong belief that honesty, integrity and loyalty mostly pay off in the long run. Say what you mean and mean what you say. The diploma you will be awarded today is a door opener not only jobwise, but also gives you the chance to pass on your values in the corporate world.

My third insight: Stand by your decisions! Good decisions need time. Don't let others rush you and surround yourself with inspiring and competent people. Once all options have been carefully considered and you've made up your mind, stand by your decision and take responsibility. This way you may not win a popularity contest, but you will certainly gain credibility. As a politician, I am loyal to my party. This doesn't mean for me to blindly follow my party's guidelines. For example I am convinced we need harmonized standards for all cantonal school systems in whole Switzerland, because it's too expensive and complicated if every canton runs its own system in a small country like ours. I will stand by my decision, even if I go against the tide.

And last but not least: Have no fear! When I took office almost eight years ago, I was not only the youngest member of the government, but I was also the first and only minister of my party that has ever been elected in the Canton of St.Gallen. I admit, although I was very happy about my success, I could have imagined more comfortable situations back then. But I realized, fear is a paralyzing power, and I started to ask myself: What am I afraid of? Is it the opinion of others? Is it the burden of this office? Is it to fail my own expectations? It's vital to liberate oneself from these fears and focus on what is important. The opinion of others: You can't control. The burden of the office: You will learn how to handle. And one's own expectations, well, you need to stay realistic in order to meet them. Having said this, I agree with President Franklin Roosevelt who once said "The only thing we have to fear is fear in itself".

Ladies and gentlemen, as young graduates there will be moments where you will face a dilemma in moving forward. I hope what I have shared with you today, can help you to make the right choices. You're now armed with an important tool needed to forge ahead. Your journey ahead will be about what you've learned along the way, what you do with the education and experience you've gotten in your journey to graduation. I wish you good luck and all the best in the future.