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**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at the gala celebration in honour of the 60th anniversary  
of the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and  
Commerce  
Lisbon  
24 June 2014**

Thank you so much for the twofold pleasure that this opportunity to speak before you affords me. Firstly, I am delighted at the chance to be here together with you, President Cavaco Silva, and to address some closing remarks to a gathering of people who want to move both of our countries forward – move them forward together. And secondly, I am happy that the anniversary celebration today has such a fitting title: “In Touch for 60 Years”.

I would like to take up this title – and, of course, I’d like to do so with an eye to the institution that we are celebrating today, the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce. But I also wish to speak about our two countries, and the intense connections that tie us together. What are the things that connect us and have connected us? And what are the things that could connect us tomorrow?

I think a touch of self-assurance can be helpful given that our perceptions of one another in everyday life are sometimes limited to brief snippets of reality. It is actually always a positive sign when ordinary, everyday life dominates the relationship between two countries: it testifies to normality and harmony. But the reality of political cooperation is so much more than this. It is so much more than the press release after a meeting in Brussels. And economic interconnectedness is so much more than the imported family car and the power drill on the one side, the crate of port wine and the beach holiday in the Algarve on the other side. And so much more than numbers and figures. Numbers may very well show positive trends, such as Germany’s status as Portugal’s second-largest trading partner.

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But numbers cannot tell us about the character that each partner brings into a relationship. And they cannot tell us about the attitude that we bring to our encounters with one another – in good times and bad times alike. That is what I will be talking about today: character and attitude, Portugal and Germany.

I would like to start with bilateral relations in the narrow sense of the term. Sixty years ago the signs were comparatively favourable for our bilateral relations: Portugal was one of the few countries in Europe that had not had to suffer German occupation during the Second World War. Émigrés such as Alfred Döblin, Lion Feuchtwanger and Heinrich Mann had found asylum in this country, as had more than 100,000 people persecuted by the Nazi regime. Most of them managed to depart for America via Lisbon.

In the early 1950s, when Germany had to re-invent and re-orient itself after all the crimes, the profound annihilation of all things civilised, that had been committed during the Nazi era, Portugal was one of the first countries to open up to the young Federal Republic, both economically and in other ways. In 1954 the Basic Law of West Germany was a mere five years old, and the economic miracle known as the *Wirtschaftswunder* – which subsequently became so famous – was only just beginning to yield a noticeable increase in prosperity for the public. Machines made in Germany found their way onto Portuguese production floors, and a wealth of other Portuguese products joined Portugal's famous wines on the shelves of German shops.

Yet products were not the only thing that began moving between the two countries. Exactly ten years after the founding of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the one-millionth guest worker, Armando Rodrigues de Sá, a carpenter from Vale de Madeiros, was ceremoniously welcomed to Cologne. He was presented with a moped. And that moped is now exhibited in the Haus der Geschichte museum in Bonn. Hundreds of thousands of the guest workers from those days went on to become citizens of the Federal Republic. Their children and grandchildren experience Germany as their home, as their homeland. Many of them have gone to university and have made the immigrant dream – especially the dream of upward mobility – into their own reality. And those who returned brought with them stories from Germany that in turn shaped Portuguese people's image of my country and its people.

Our mutual trust and closeness grew stronger during these times. Through the many migrant families, Portugal, a country with a rich cultural and historical heritage, came to appreciate Germany as a place to get an education and earn a living. And Germany – or at least the part west of the Wall that called itself the Federal Republic – unfortunately I was not there – pinned major hopes to Portugal and

the Portuguese people, who succeeded in liberating themselves from dictatorship through the Carnation Revolution of 1974. When I visited the Parliament just now, I was very moved by the impressive pictures of an exhibition documenting the journey from dictatorship to a functioning democracy.

That was forty years ago now, and it is remarkable how much the country has achieved since then. It has overcome its former political and economic isolation. It has introduced democracy and a market economy. And not least, it has won Europe over.

Yes, it has won Europe over. I say this quite deliberately. The history books may say a lot about how the Federal Republic of Germany and other European neighbours helped Portugal along its way into the European community, how they supported it, but the protagonist of this success story was Portugal itself. This success was wrought by the people living here, who created an unparalleled process of catching-up and advancement from the 1970s to the 1990s. In these years, Europe became a boon for Portugal – but it also became a perennial challenge. And all of us can sense that our political and economic decision-makers still face more challenges in leading the project of the European Union to future success.

In the end the financial and economic crisis of 2008 was a wake-up call not only to Portugal. We – all of us – had to recognise that Europe, and especially the eurozone, is every bit as imperfect as each of its member states. But our community also showed that it was capable of learning and adapting. A few weeks ago Portugal announced its exit from the European rescue programme – what a wonderful success story. Portugal is in the process of reining in the crisis through a resolute programme of reforms.

The recent news is encouraging not only for Portugal, but also for Europe on the whole. It aligns with promising developments in other eurozone countries such as Ireland and Spain. These trends show that Europe is right to take an approach based on solidarity and stability, and that while consolidation and structural reforms are difficult, they remedy the causes of the crisis rather than just treating its symptoms, and this gives us reason for confidence.

But this confidence should not obscure the fact that we need to take further action. We – and once again I mean all of us – need to pool our strengths now to solidify economic growth and to increase employment. This is the only way to systematically improve the situation from the ground up. Here I am particularly thinking of the high, unacceptably high, level of youth unemployment. None of us in Europe can afford to stand by passively accepting this.

We Germans know very well that the crisis and its consequences have placed serious burdens on the Portuguese public. We know how

many families have had trouble scraping together the money they need for rent, for medicine, often even for enough food. People justifiably wonder when their willingness to make sacrifices will be rewarded with an improvement in their living conditions. Some people expressed their disappointment through their votes in the recent European elections, while others steered clear of the ballot box entirely.

So how should the European Union engage with these sorts of questions, concerns and reactions? Nobody has any simple solutions to offer. But in recent years we have gained enough experience to know that it is worthwhile to stick steadfastly to the path of reform that one has started and to explain this reasonably to the public. It is worthwhile to work for fresh acceptance of the European project. The project that we Europeans adhere to remains a forward-looking one. Wherever possible, I would like to encourage people not to interpret the crisis as a failure. We should see it as a challenge, and also as a mandate to assume new responsibility for Europe together through innovative ideas.

My first talks here in Lisbon have given me the impression that exactly this kind of self-assurance is being gained right now. Portugal is in the process of finding a new balance for itself, economically and in other ways too. I would also like to use my visit to offer encouragement to all those who are pointing out to their fellow countrymen the new opportunities that are opening up alongside the major tasks and burdens. If the reform process succeeds – and there are many indications that it will succeed in Portugal –, it can give rise to new prosperity as well as new fairness. When old structures are dismantled, new hope emerges – especially for the younger generation, who often feel themselves to have been left in the lurch these days.

As I have already suggested, I am deeply troubled by the high rate of youth unemployment in some parts of Europe, and I think about it a lot. Formally speaking, the affected member states bear the first responsibility for tackling this problem, but in view of our shared future we are really all responsible, as neighbours in Europe and as fellow human beings. That is why it is important to me to take up the topic of vocational training during this visit, and to explore the question of how our bilateral relations can help to overcome the problem of youth unemployment. Tomorrow morning I will be visiting a Portuguese-German vocational training centre in Palmela. Cooperation in the area of dual-track vocational training has now been going on for almost thirty years. What began in 1983 as an initiative of the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce, together with twelve German companies who were trying to meet their demand for skilled workers, has since grown into a countrywide movement. And I am very grateful to all the enterprises from Germany which have

played an active role here. Portugal created the necessary legal foundation for this development. Today more than 90 per cent of graduates of dual-track vocational training succeed in finding steady employment, either at the company that trained them or elsewhere. I am happy to be able to assure you that the Chamber and its German vocational training partners will keep doing their utmost to develop this successful system in future. In my view, creating future prospects for the younger generation has been and remains a cornerstone of German-Portuguese relations.

Investment policy is also one of the top priorities on our bilateral agenda. Unfortunately, the Federal President does not have at his personal disposal a budget with the title "Future" which would give him the liberty to make big promises, but I do have high-level representatives of German businesses at my side. They have confirmed to me that German companies, including those in the automotive, pharmaceutical, optics and tourism sectors, are keenly interested in investing in Portugal. This interest is motivated not only by ties of friendship with Portugal, but also by Portugal's strong future prospects as a business location. Portugal possesses qualified, reliable and highly motivated skilled workers. Its economy has far more different facets than the stereotypes that persist in the minds of some Europeans would suggest.

As many people as possible should know that the positive trends underway in Portugal are by no means happy coincidences, but rather are part of a development wrought by Portugal itself, a strategy. Portugal is succeeding ever more in seizing opportunities on the global markets. This success reflects the profound restructuring of the Portuguese economy in favour of competitive products and services. I am certain that German companies will keep contributing their part to this development. I am not just referring to the well-known large companies: many small and medium-sized German businesses have also bolstered Portugal's economic strength and exports in the past. I feel very optimistic that this engagement will only intensify in the future.

As you may have noticed, I would like to add more to the lovely title of this event: being in touch and staying in touch. I have come here to thank the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce for all that it has accomplished and to encourage it in its future tasks. What you have achieved in the past sixty years was good for our bilateral relations and good for our work together in Europe. May this remain so in the future!