



BUNDESPRÄSIDENTIALAMT

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**Toast
by Federal President Joachim Gauck
on the occasion of a gala dinner
held at the invitation of the
Grand Duke
on 3 November 2014
in Luxembourg**

Allow me, also on behalf of Daniela Schadt and my delegation, to express my sincere gratitude for the cordial and warm welcome we have enjoyed in your country, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. We have been well received and made to feel at home.

But, if we are honest, we didn't really expect things to be any other way. Our nations have been bound together in friendship for decades; we were both founding members of the European Economic Community; we both went to great lengths to help Europe grow together; we both wanted to establish the European institutions and have worked to strengthen them wherever we were able to do so; and we have both made the European Union our project.

The President of the European Commission hails from your country. Germans know him – not only, but primarily – from the television. Many of us remember well how, a few months ago at prime time and in impeccable German, he entered our living rooms, as it were, and spoke up for the European project in the European presidential debate. For me, this was a great European moment as election campaigns were being fought across national borders. This is a testament to just how close our family of nations has become, and this is especially true of relations between Luxembourg and Germany.

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While it is no secret that Luxembourg is one of the European Union's smaller members, it is a Europe in miniature where three languages – German, French and, of course, Luxembourgish – are spoken. Luxembourg is an essential interface between the Francophone and Germanic linguistic and cultural spheres. The people of Luxembourg are well acquainted with the lay of the land on both sides of their country's borders – and so it is that Luxembourg is called on time and again to mediate this central European question: the relationship between Germany and France.

This is why I am looking forward to tomorrow's event at the Pierre Werner Institute, which bears the name of that great European progressive thinker and is an excellent symbol of the cooperation between Germany, France and Luxembourg.

Luxembourg is also, incidentally, an ancient Franconian heartland and recalls the Father of Europe, Charlemagne, just as Luxembourgish is reputed to resemble the language spoken by this first great unifier of our continent. Is this perhaps one of the reasons why the people of Luxembourg were such committed Europeans from such an early stage? I think it is. There is no doubt that you know, from the perspective of Luxembourg, precisely what is at stake if Europe does not work. While big countries can always pretend to themselves, ultimately to their own detriment, that they can go it alone and that they perhaps do not need any partners, Luxembourg is wiser precisely because of its smaller size.

It is therefore entirely justified that Luxembourg is home to so many and to such important European institutions. If it appears at first sight that Luxembourg is disproportionately represented, then this is a reflection of the disproportionately great commitment to Europe on the part of Luxembourg and its citizens. Hence, it is most fitting that the citizens of Luxembourg are the only people to have been awarded the renowned International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen – and the German Federal President Karl Carstens, one of my predecessors, delivered the citation.

Luxembourg as a Europe in miniature also means that almost half of its population consists of people of other nationalities, including almost 15,000 Germans. If we also consider the many commuters – it is estimated that some 40,000 commute daily from Germany alone – then we can see that our bilateral relations are supported by close personal connections.

Our economic relations are extremely strong and vibrant, and they are a major focus of my visit. I am looking forward to opening the German-Luxembourg Business Conference with you, Your Royal Highness, and to putting the new turbine of the Vianden pumped storage plant into operation.

Our two countries also enjoy close cooperation in the area of research and education. The first Max Planck Institute outside Germany to focus on legal questions opened here in Luxembourg one year ago. A Max Planck Institute for International Regulatory Procedural Law couldn't enjoy a better location than here in Luxembourg, the centre of European jurisdiction.

And when I visit the Schengen-Lyzeum, I would like to pay tribute to the special cooperation between our two countries in the area of education.

Our close cooperation in education is only natural against the backdrop of our shared traditions and culture. The German language also unites us. I was also very pleased that you, Your Royal Highness, attended a meeting of German-speaking heads of state for the first time a few weeks ago. It was a very great honour to be able to introduce you to my home town of Rostock.

And Daniela Schadt and I are particularly delighted that, ever since our first meeting with you, we have enjoyed such a friendly and warm rapport.

And so I am pleased to be here with you in Luxembourg, this wonderfully hospitable country. Allow me therefore to invite you to join me in a toast to the health of Your Royal Highnesses, the Hereditary Grand Duke and to Minister of State Bettel, to the health of the people of Luxembourg and to the friendship of the close neighbours Luxembourg and Germany.