Subject to change.
Translation of advance text.

The speech online:
www.bundespraesident.de

Speech
by Federal President Joachim Gauck
during his state visit to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Institut Pierre Werner
on 4 November 2014
in Luxembourg

It's lovely to be with you this morning at the Institut Pierre Werner. This is a very special place where people from Luxembourg, France and Germany come together to get to know each other and exchange views. It's a house of European friendship and cultural inspiration, where we can learn from one another. It's thus an institution in keeping with the spirit of Colpach which you, Ms Goetzinger, have just evoked so vividly. I would like to thank you most sincerely for taking us on a journey through the history of ideas.

So let us carry on in pursuit of the spirit of Colpach, an approach which has been part of Luxembourg's identity for decades. In doing so, I would like to not only look back but also forward and ask what this spirit means to us, to all of us, in Europe today.

We heard that in the 1920s, during the brief interlude of peace between the two world wars, renowned intellectuals and politicians gathered at the residence of Aline and Emil Mayrisch to denounce nationalism and totalitarianism. They were cosmopolitan men and women who longed for reconciliation between Germany and France, for a stable peaceful order on our continent. They dreamed of transforming differences into diversity. There is no doubt that the pioneering intellectuals of the European project met in Colpach.

Some of those who took part in the discussions at the time viewed this magnificent European cosmos as a wonderland. However,

MEMBER OF STAFF RESPONSIBLE Ferdos Forudastan
ADDRESS Bundespräsidialamt
11010 Berlin
TEL / FAX +49 30 2000-2021/-1926
E-MAIL presse@bpra.bund.de
WEBSITE www.bundespraesident.de

we know that the hope of peace and international understanding was not fulfilled, or at least not then. The Great War, which broke out exactly one hundred years ago 1914, was not the last on Europe's blood-soaked soil. Just a quarter of a century later, the Second World War began when Germany attacked Poland. It brought with it a hitherto unknown level of destruction and – as a result of the horrific crime perpetrated by the National Socialists, the systematic annihilation of the European Jews – our continent experienced an unprecedented betrayal of all civilised values.

Germans also brought great suffering to Luxembourg's population during the two world wars. I want to remember that today. On 2 August 1914 – two days before the invasion of neutral Belgium – German troops invaded neutral Luxembourg on their way to France. Many people in the Grand Duchy suffered hunger and hardship during the occupation. German soliders also occupied your country during the Second World War. An entire generation was forced to fight for the Wehrmacht or to perform labour service. Thousands of Luxembourgers were arrested or deported, and hundreds perished.

We Germans must not – and indeed will not – forget the unjust treatment to which Luxembourgers were subjected during the war years. And we are eternally grateful for what you did for us after the war. For it was you who offered the hand of reconciliation. We accepted this gift with astonishment and gratitude.

The men and women who worked to bring about economic, political and cultural cooperation in Europe after 1945 were influenced by these horrific past experiences, the suffering inflicted on millions. What connected them across borders was their longing for a political order based on the normative foundation of human rights and the dignity of the individual. They sought ways to guarantee peace and security, freedom and democracy on an enduring basis.

The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, of which Luxembourg, France and Germany were members, marked the first major step on the long road to joint institutions, on the long road to a united Europe.

Luxembourg has been helping to shape European integration for many years. Located at the interface between the areas where Germanic and Romance languages are spoken, your country strove early on to mediate between France and Germany. Many Luxembourgers, for example Joseph Bech or Pierre Werner, one of the fathers of our single currency, were among the first champions of the European idea. To this very day, politicians from your country have influential roles in European institutions. What's more, European justice is at home in your capital and the town of Schengen has become the by-word for European freedom of movement. Luxembourg

undoubtedly symbolises European integration, and its citizens have internalised the spirit of Colpach.

However, I am concerned that this attitude, this founding idea behind the European Union, is in danger of weakening in some parts of Europe. Today, we are faced with a quandary:

On the one hand, we are living more Europe than ever before. Never before have our countries been so interconnected, never before has there been so much exchange across borders. One impressive example of this is the cooperation among Luxembourg, Lorraine, the Rhineland-Palatinate, the Saarland and Wallonia. Moreover, I'm thinking, 25 years after the revolutions in Central Eastern Europe, of the eastward enlargement of the European Union. Young people in particular– the Erasmus generation, as we like to call them – feel more at home in Europe than ever before. They study, work and party together, and they share at least one language.

On the other hand, eurosceptic voices are expressing blanket criticism of our joint institutions in many countries. Anti-European parties, which propose a return to the nation-state and want to end European solidarity, are enjoying ever greater support.

I regard this as a dangerous development. For this is not a question of one or the other; rather it is about both together. The nation-states remain indispensable in Europe: the reference point for identity as well as the basic unit of democracy. However, any European country on its own would be much too small to be politically effective in the international arena and to live in security. Today the same applies to large countries as it does to small ones: nothing is possible if neighbours are not friends and allies. Our states would no longer be able to do what citizens expect – indeed demand – of those governing them.

What is more, today we in Europe stand for shared values and interests which we can only effectively champion with combined forces on the international stage. Even in our immediate neighbourhood, crises and wars have made us aware that the European peace project is by no means an idea from a bygone age.

However, euroscepticism also shows us that rational arguments are not enough to win over doubters, for European integration is a complicated project. What we need is a shared sense of belonging, which is what individuals from Luxembourg, France and Germany sought and found in Colpach in the interwar years:

The older institutions become, the less likely the young generation is to question their existence. The post-war generation, influenced by the mass murders on our continent, knew and sensed that our shared Europe is not an accident of history. Rather, it bears

witness to the fact that we have learned the lessons of history. It protects us from aberrations and temptation.

Today, the profound purpose of our European institutions is sometimes in danger of being forgotten. One of the major tasks of the present and of the future is therefore to make it clear time and again. We have to look back to realise what a long road we in Europe had to travel to arrive at where we are today. We have to pass on knowledge of our shared history to young people in order to make our European house fit for the future.

This includes familiarising ourselves with the views and perspectives of our neighbours. We in Europe, no one will deny this, have a shared history. However, every country has its own narrative. It recounts history as the history of the own nation. First and foremost, we see things from our own perspective. My hope is that we will be able to learn even more about the perspectives of other nations in Europe and to take them into consideration: their suffering and their dreams, their traumas and their triumphs. This will enable us to tell our European history as a shared history.

That’s why I was so pleased when in early August I laid the foundation stone for a Franco-German memorial together with France's President Hollande at Hartmannsweilerkopf, part of a ceremony to mark the outbreak of the First World War. And that’s why I am so pleased that there are institutions such as the Institut Pierre Werner. The events it organises and the commitment it shows help to ensure that the common European purpose can grow.

The post-war generation is now gradually leaving the political arena. We will miss the energy and visionary spirit of these founding fathers. The next generation will now rely on its own judgement and on the institutions and initiatives it finds in place. They are places for self-appraisal and places for encounters in which the sense of belonging together can be consolidated. For solidarity, the ability to compromise and cultural diversity in Europe can only flourish in a climate of mutual trust.

What is more, we should not slacken our efforts to create a European public space, an agora, in which views can be exchanged and discussed frankly across borders.

I would like to see a pioneering spirit and real dedication on many fronts: let’s be courageous and dare to do something new, in the media as well as in the academic world and the cultural scene! Europe is a process which needs a steady flow of new impetuses and ideas, as well as new cultural fora and formats, in which we can experience how it is to live side by side in diversity.

Karl Jaspers, the German philosopher, who was one of the guests in Colpach, once said, “To bring freedom to mankind means to get

them to talk to each other". My hope is for this idea to be as successful throughout Europe as it has been here at the Institut Pierre Werner.