



**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
on the occasion of the first official visit of the
Portuguese President Rebelo de Sousa
in Schloss Bellevue
on 30 May 2016**

Two eventful years – for Portugal, for Germany, for Europe – have passed since my state visit to your country. Today I bid you very welcome here in Berlin.

You are paying a visit to friends. And our societies have close ties on very many levels. Many Portuguese citizens – around 120,000 – have made their homes here in Germany, and around 25,000 Germans live in Portugal. Then there are the many visitors, the tourists, who love the melancholy strains of fado or the wonderful Manueline architecture – it is this rich cultural heritage and the contrast with our own German culture that attracts many people from my country. Around 300 German enterprises are active in Portugal, employing 60,000 people. Investment in advanced technology and in services is increasing – and we can see that this is also a result of the successful structural change in the Portuguese economy.

Portugal and Germany have always been reliable partners at European level. And of course we hope that the new Government will uphold this tradition. Mr President, you recently emphasised that the Portuguese constitution, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, is firmly rooted in the European values of freedom and democracy. And the fact that the European Parliament was the destination for one of your first foreign visits was a visible sign of your support for the European idea. That is particularly close to my heart, and I am therefore very grateful to you.

The economic and financial crisis was a difficult time, especially for your country. We were deeply impressed by your domestic reforms, which, along with international support, helped to put the Portuguese economy back on a track of growth. And now, Mr President, we all join you in hoping that the path that is being followed, the path of the new

Government, will continue to lead straight ahead and not be pushed off course by populist influences.

We have also spoken of the challenges posed by the influx of refugees. And I am thankful for Portugal's stance and your reminder to Europe today that this is a joint task that concerns all Europeans.

We are coming together at a time when we are seeing a deep-seated crisis of confidence – also in connection with Europe's cohesion. Many people doubt whether the intentions of the previous generation can really be put into practice. In other words, how can Europe overcome these crises? These doubts are encroaching on those areas of politics in which policy is made. And that is why many people in Europe are no longer convinced that a Europe of prosperity and social justice can be attained. We need to respond to this and take a stand on it.

Despite all the weaknesses and problems we recognise, we, the convinced Europeans, need to work decisively to paint a different picture, we need to work to ensure that the historical achievements are not forgotten but can be brought back to the attention of the majority population – likewise the values that unite us, but which people sometimes lose sight of. People often forget what they have gained, and they only realise the true value of what they have when they lose it.

We know, and we remain convinced that our European Union stands for peace, stability and democracy. It stands for a liberal society. And it wants its citizens to get involved in decision-making and shoulder responsibility for the community. We want to preserve this – and defend it against scepticism and doubt. And the good thing is that our countries stand shoulder to shoulder in this task.

I now ask you to join me in raising your glasses to the President, to the Portuguese people and the growth and health of the Portuguese-German friendship! Your good health!