



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at a dinner with the President of the Hellenic Republic,
Prokopios Pavlopoulos
at Schloss Bellevue
on 9 June 2017**

The German poet Wieland once said that Athens makes all other cities look like mere villages. "Everywhere you look there are venerable monuments from ancient times and amazing works of more recent art of the purest taste," marvels his protagonist Glycera, who is positively enraptured upon seeing the Parthenon for the first time. Wieland, a contemporary of Goethe, never set foot in Athens. He hailed from Oberholzheim, a village near Biberach.

Mr President,

I am not sure whether you, a person accustomed to the beauty of Athens, will be enraptured at the sight of Kassel, but I can assure you that we, too, have had a Parthenon there for some time. It is a Parthenon of books on the Friedrichsplatz and is featured at documenta 14, the German part of which we will open together tomorrow. I find it impressive.

The artist Marta Minujín considers her Parthenon made of read and donated books to be a monument to democracy and education. She embraces the original function of the Parthenon as a repository for the treasure of the Delian League and rediscovers the collective value of precious treasures, thus transforming this into what one might call a currency of culture.

Indeed, this Parthenon symbolises documenta 14 and its slogan "creating together – learning from one another". Having these parts of the documenta interact with one another at two locations was an excellent idea and has already proved successful. It was a good plan and it has worked in practice. And I am delighted about this, especially for the organisers, of course, but naturally above all for the exhibiting artists, the public and our two countries – for Greece and Germany – and not least for both of us. It is wonderful, Mr President, that you

were able to accept our invitation to Kassel after we opened documenta in Athens together just a few weeks ago.

documenta 14 sends a message of unity, solidarity and community, which we need now in particular in Europe. The writing on the wall has been unsettling – most notably in the form of Brexit. We have witnessed the election campaigns in the Netherlands and France. We have seen the rise of national populist anti-European forces, and that is also why I am particularly glad about the election result in France. Naturally, the number of votes for the Front National is a cause of concern. However, I think one must also look at the result from the other side – Marine Le Pen could have won the election. The all-clear cannot yet be sounded in Europe. But in French President Macron, we have a partner and thus a chance of overcoming the European crisis. Europe must make use of this opportunity and show that it is capable of taking action. I hope all member states will agree that we must never relinquish the great legacy of European integration.

I know that you, Mr President, stand shoulder to shoulder with us as a committed European, also when we must talk about and negotiate on difficult topics. Without Greece, Europe's future is just as inconceivable as our common past.

Our common culture and our shared values strengthen us on this path. We do not want to level out all the differences between us. We cannot want this at all because we would thus forfeit the richness of European culture. However, we do want to work together on overcoming the European crisis and to hand the legacy of a peaceful and united Europe on to the next generations. This will take strength, but I am sure that we will manage it. And we have reason to be hopeful.

And so, Mr President, dear friend, may I now propose a toast to your well-being and to the well-being of the Hellenic Republic, as well as to all the things that unite us.