



**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
at a luncheon with Italian President Sergio Mattarella
at Schloss Bellevue
on 18 January 2019**

It is not immediately apparent, but Schloss Bellevue is also Italian in spirit. The view of the palace garden that we just enjoyed is not as breathtaking as the view of Rome from the Palazzo del Quirinale – and that is not only the case in January. But not so long ago, the Viale Italia outside in the garden attracted thousands of visitors. To my great delight, Italy was the partner country for our open day last summer – a summer that was so hot and dry that we often wondered if Berlin was not in fact also on the Mediterranean.

My dear President Mattarella, I am very glad indeed to have the honour of welcoming you here today and to be able to continue the dialogue we began in Rome in a spirit of great mutual trust. Benvenuto, benvenuti tutti al castello Bellevue!

Italy is a dream destination for many Germans, and that will not change. We Germans have admired your art, culture, wonderful scenery and cities for centuries, and many of us visit Italy every year. As you know, President Mattarella, I am also one of those Germans who is passionate about Italy. And I don't think I can be cured.

Conversely, Mr President, very large numbers of Italians come to Germany, not only on holiday, but also to attend university, live or work here. Berlin alone is home to over 20,000 Italian citizens! One simply cannot imagine Berlin or other large German cities without the Italian community.

My dear Mr President, our two countries have much in common. Italy and Germany were founding members of the European Union. Italy is rightfully proud of the fact that the Treaties of Rome were signed in its – in your – capital. You in Italy and we in Germany have always felt particularly committed to the principles and convictions on which the European Union is based. Today we see how these principles are being called into question. In Italy, the idea of a united Europe is

falling out of favour with many people and here in Germany, too, such views are being increasingly loudly voiced.

However, it is my heartfelt conviction that we can only safeguard the great peace project of Europe if we are united. And only if we are united will we Europeans be able to make ourselves heard in the future and play a part in overcoming the great challenges of our time – climate change, digital transformation and migration.

Very important European elections will take place in May. This will be a crucial moment as regards deciding what path Europe will take. I will encourage people, and we will work together to encourage people, especially young people, to preserve this European path of cooperation and peace.

My dear Sergio Mattarella, I am very grateful to be able to count on support from you, a firm believer in Europe. I know that I can count on your support because you, like me, warn about a resurgence of nationalism. And you give people courage – courage to take the path of dialogue and social justice, to stand up for Europe as our common future and to continue lending weight to Italy's voice in Europe. Many people in Italy greatly value you as a voice of reason and show this very clearly, as we saw at La Scala in Milan a few weeks ago.

Allow me to assure you that you thus also give us courage. Europe needs a strong, stable and reliable Italy and you, Mr President, provide a guarantee that it will remain so.

I am happy that friendships like ours are possible at this time of upheaval and uncertainty. Such friendships are more valuable than ever before. Allow me to propose a toast to your health and to the friendship between our two countries and peoples.