

## **Introductory notes**

### **Visit President POROSHENKO**

Your Excellences, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr President, on behalf of the Europa Institute: Welcome to Leiden. And thank you for giving this year's Europa lecture.

As you may know, previous speakers include Herman van Rompuy, former president of the EUCO, and Radoslaw Sikorski, then Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs. So you are in good company!

The Europa lecture is a special event. Students, academics, and the community at large gather to hear the views of prominent European figures about critical developments in our continent.

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Mr President, you are indeed a prominent European figure. You were elected in the aftermath of the Maidan uprising, which grabbed the world's attention for many months.

You then took office to engage the fundamental political reforms the people of Maidan fought for, so many at the price of their life. In this context, you concluded an instrumental association agreement with the EU, while battling to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and peace.

But your engagement in state affairs began well before Maidan. Following a successful career in business, you entered politics and became a member of the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament.

You also held various governmental posts, including that of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine under President Yushenko, following the Orange Revolution.

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Ukraine is one of the central issues in today's Europe. Its evolution is critical for the peace and stability of our continent. As recalled

recently by Ukraine specialist at Chatham House, James Sherr: What happens there concerns us all in Europe, if not beyond. And he was only echoing what Timothy Snyder and Norman Davies had already perceived.

The tragic downing of MH17 was a cruel reminder of that, just like the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, before the end of the cold war. What affects Ukraine is not contained to its borders.

Our existences on this continent are intertwined, and we should make the best of it. This will no doubt be pondered by people in this country, as they go to vote next year.

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Its significance in European affairs is indeed one of the reasons why Ukraine has been of special interest for us at the Europa Institute.

We have researched the subject for many years. We have also been active in providing expertise notably in the context of the negotiations of the association agreement, including in cooperation with Minister Pavlo Klimkin, before he joined your government.

We are concerned, curious and hopeful about your country.

And so, we are honoured, Mr President, that you are in Leiden today; and we look forward to listening to you.

The floor is yours.

Christophe Hillion  
Leiden, 27 November 2015