



**The International
Charlemagne Prize
of Aachen**
For the Unity of Europe

**The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen 2023 will be awarded to
H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine,
and to the People of Ukraine.**

Citation

The Ukrainian people are the victims of an unspeakably brutal Russian war of aggression that contravenes international law. The people, under the leadership of their president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, are fighting to defend not only the sovereignty of their country and the lives of its citizens, but also Europe and European values.

This war is directed against freedom and democracy, human rights and multilateralism. It is directed against the European Social Order, Security Order and Peace Order, with the objective of destabilising the European community of peoples and promoting a political reorganisation of Europe.

After the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, Zelenskyy declared to his citizens and to the world: “We’re all here. Our soldiers are here. Our fellow citizens are here. We’re all here to defend our independence. And we will continue to do so.”

To this day, his words continue to ring true, and have rallied the support of liberal world nations for his country. Ukraine’s war of defence is supported by the UN General Assembly, the G7 and G20, the European Union, NATO, numerous politically neutral states, the German Federal Government and all people who want to live a free, democratic and peaceful society.

In this defensive war, Volodymyr Zelenskyy is not only the president of his people and commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian army, he has also assumed the role of motivator, communicator, driving force and anchor between Ukraine and its vast array of supporters.

Zelenskyy is a diplomat, a motivator and – if, in his opinion, the situation so warrants – also a highly articulate critic.

He delivers speeches to the UN General Assembly and foreign parliaments, holds talks with political decision-makers, speaks to the people of his country and to his soldiers, addresses the global community and, day in day out, canvasses support for Ukraine's fight for freedom. Zelenskyy is never one to miss out on an opportunity to emphasise the fact that his country is defending Western values, unassailable principles of coexistence, peace and freedom, and therefore precisely what the European Union stands for politically.

Zelenskyy displays courage, leadership and tactical sensitivity, and exemplifies a new, clear and unambiguous political style.

He provides support and also a role model for his people. Resisting despair and loss of hope, he focuses on ensuring everyday necessities, on securing vitally needed defence equipment and on maintaining confidence in the prospect of a free, independent and sovereign Ukraine that is part of the European family of nations.

Zelenskyy gives Ukraine – and the European Union – strength to believe in this ideal. It is in this respect that he also sets an example for all Europeans to refocus and reflect on European ideals and values.

Zelenskyy studied law, but gained popularity primarily as an actor, television presenter, screenwriter and film producer. He is married to Olena Zelenska. The couple have two children.

In 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected President of Ukraine.

In his recently published book, “A Message from Ukraine”, he reiterates his vision of his country as a democratic and free nation, as a society of values according to the European model, and as part of Europe. He describes how Ukraine was “reborn” on 24 February, that the process of nation-building, though not yet completed, was actually accelerated by the Russian war of aggression – and that, most importantly, Ukraine has since moved closer to Europe.

Zelenskyy is deeply committed to the objectives of the European Union. This is why Ursula von der Leyen characterised him – and rightly so – with the following words: “You’re one of us and we want you in.”

Ukraine is a unitary republic with a rich culture and more than 40 million inhabitants who – during a war that has been going on for almost ten months now – have had to make enormous sacrifices and have been subjected to immeasurable suffering. The Ukrainian people deserve the greatest recognition for the way they are defending freedom, democracy and self-determination.

By awarding the Charlemagne Prize 2023 to both the president and the people, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen underscores the fact that Ukraine is part of Europe and that its population and its government representatives – headed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy – support and defend European values, and therefore deserve this encouragement to enter swiftly into accession negotiations with the European Union.

The Charlemagne Prize Society feels honoured that President Zelenskyy – personally and on behalf of the People of Ukraine – has accepted the accolade for the year 2023.