



## **End of the Year Message from the President of the Government of Catalonia**

*Barcelona, 30 December 2016*

Dear compatriots,

Allow me to address a few words to you as president of the Generalitat on the occasion of this special time of year. These are days of family gatherings, celebration and festivity, however we must not forget those who are suffering, either because of illness or because of hardship and poverty, which unfortunately are still present among us. This is also a time to go over the year we are leaving behind as well as the hopes we place for 2017, which undoubtedly will be a year of great importance for our country.

We live in a globalized world filled with opportunities, where economic growth, knowledge and scientific progress make it better every day. But it is also a world full of uncertainty, and significant deficits in terms of peace, security and human rights. Rising populisms, the persecution of fundamental liberties in democracy, such as freedom of speech, the persistence of armed conflicts and the humanitarian crises that come from them, continue to be pending issues that humanity must deal with. Courage and bravery are needed to face these challenges without falling into easy demagogic prescriptions.

This same courage and bravery is needed to take on our own challenges at home, and I can tell you that there will be no lack of it from myself, as president, or from the Government I lead. When I arrived at the Presidency of the Generalitat, almost one year ago, I recalled that the objective of this legislature was to take the country from post-autonomy to pre-independence. And we are loyally fulfilling our mandate, a mandate that comes from the elections of September 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, which is what is expected of us. It is expected that a government fulfils its commitments and pursues the best way of achieving them.

We do this with a firm willingness to govern effectively, through commitment and social sensitivity, whilst seeking the welfare of all Catalans, without exception. Because it is the people, whatever their beliefs are and wherever they come from, who are at the centre of our government action.

2016 has been the best year in terms of economic growth and job creation since the beginning of the financial crisis. The projections for the coming year are also positive, and will allow us to return to previous levels and course the path of economic and social progress.

Catalonia, therefore, has an undisputable potential in the opportunities emerging from the current technological revolution. This is why we are placing such great efforts in



strengthening innovation in all spheres of life: healthcare, education, business. Our country's industry, SMEs, entrepreneurs, the self-employed... Everyone must be able to adapt and benefit from this ever-changing world.

In this sense, we want a country that is at the forefront of these changes. Unflinchingly advancing, for instance, in the fight against climate change and establishing a new paradigm: 'more growth, fewer emissions'. It is not just about today's health but, above all, about the legacy we leave for tomorrow's generations.

This new framework is a great opportunity for our country, but we must also ensure that it becomes a reason for equity and social inclusion. Traditionally, economic growth has been the best social policy. Today, although essential, it is not necessarily sufficient. Catalan and European institutions must face the current challenges unequivocally through policies that guarantee the welfare of all citizens, so that no one is left behind.

For this reason, we want and have the right to decide.

Next year will be crucial for the future of this country because we Catalans will freely decide our own future through a legal and binding referendum. Legal because it will be called in accordance with the mandate of our laws, and binding because the result that you, the citizens of Catalonia, decide will be what the Government and Parliament must apply without delay or excuses.

The government I preside over has, since its first day, made dialogue its main instrument to work with both the opposition in Parliament and the State government. We have been able to reach widespread consensus in Catalonia with regard to the referendum, as was seen in last week's summit held in the Catalan Parliament, but we have yet to receive an answer from the Spanish government to agree on this outstretched hand. An offer I made during the question of confidence debate and which I reiterated at a conference in Madrid. We will always have an outstretched hand, but we will remain committed and loyal to our principles.

Catalonia has earned its recognition as a nation in Europe –a Europe that we want more united, more secure and more democratic. These are times for decisions and this year we will work with this objective in mind, while maintaining the social cohesion, which has always characterized Catalonia, and work to improve the living conditions of the Catalan people.

We are ready and we will prove it.

As President of Catalonia, I wholeheartedly wish you a happy New Year!