



Generalitat de Catalunya
Government of Catalonia
Delegation to the European Union

Online celebration on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia

Speech by Representative of the Government of
Catalonia to the European Union, Meritxell Serret

Brussels, 9th September 2020

Dear representatives from the European institutions,

Dear representatives from European regions,

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends,

Bona tarda i benvinguts a la Delegació del Govern davant la UE a l'acte de celebració de la Diada de Catalunya.

Bon soir et soyez bienvenus à la Délégation du gouvernement de la Catalogne auprès l'Union Européenne dans la réception de la fête nationale de la Catalogne.

Goedenavond en welkom bij de delegatie van de overheid bij de EU voor de viering van de Catalaanse feestdag.

Good evening and welcome to the Delegation of the Catalan Government to the European Union on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia.

Thank you very much for joining us today. Normally, on the Catalan Day, the Espai Catalunya Europa is crowded with friends celebrating this special festivity for our country. Today, however, we have had to adapt to the new situation imposed by the coronavirus. That is why we are doing this event mainly online. Above all, I hope you and your families are well.

The pandemic has had a great impact around Europe, also in Catalonia. Since its outbreak, the Catalan Government has launched measures to respond to the health, social and economic emergency. Like other European regions, we are nowadays implementing policies in many domains, to deal with the impact of the crisis on people's daily lives, to propel the recovery and to strengthen the health and social care system to make it more resilient.

We are fully convinced that we are facing a global crisis that must be addressed under a strong coordination of all levels of administrations, and that must be taken into account that regional and local governments are at the forefront. The European Union plays a key role and we believe that now, more than ever, it is the moment to reinforce European integration, to reach federal solutions that allow all European territories to come out of the crisis on an equal footing.

The Catalan Government and society are working hard since the outbreak of the pandemic to contribute to the European response to the crisis. In this sense, we shared our practices and experiences on COVID-19 to institutions, regions, networks and think tanks in order to build common strategies and gain effectiveness at the local and European level. We have no doubt that cross-border and interregional cooperation is essential to maintain the core of the European project: freedom of mobility and the objective of erasing borders and considering all citizens throughout the Union as Europeans with the same rights and welfare. So that, we want to keep defending, promoting and practicing the principles of collaboration, subsidiarity and shared responsibility to overcome this crisis.

In this sense, throughout this year, at this Delegation, we have continued to promote the participation and cooperation of the Catalan Government among the European institutions, organisms and networks that advocate for cross-border cooperation, enhance the common market and erase borders within Europe. Among different initiatives, the Catalan Government has launched the Intercultural Network Regions together with the Council of Europe and the Assembly of European Regions. We have worked with the European Commission to explore synergies between the European maritime policy and the implementation of the Maritime Strategy of Catalonia, always prioritising sustainability and biodiversity. We have also shared best practices with other regions such as the National Plan for the Agenda 2030 or initiatives to boost the Digital Agenda. The Catalan society and its government are pro-European and

we want to be an active part of the construction of a more prosper, sustainable and resilient EU with an enhanced social justice.

Nevertheless, in Catalonia the political conflict continues. There are 9 political and social leaders in prison with sentences of between 13 and 9 years, currently doubly isolated because of the COVID-19; 6 we are in exile; and dozens of politicians, academics, activists and public servants are facing legal proceedings, in what we define as the general cause against the Catalan independentism. Not talking about this conflict, not discussing it, will not make it go away nor will help to resolve it.

From the independence movement, dialogue has always been demanded and promoted, and it seems that, after many months, the dialogue table between the Catalan and Spanish governments could resume this September. But it cannot be ignored that it may coincide with a ruling from the Spanish Supreme Court that dismisses the President of Catalonia Quim Torra. In fact, another threat for a political solution.

In this context, academics and members of the Catalan civil society have begun to promote a proposal for an Amnesty Law, with the main aim to allow a solution that takes the political conflict out of the courts, and returns it to the political arena, that never should have left.

Beside, we want, more than ever, to keep on working for the Europe that we need. An Europe concerned about its people and their rights and welfare, no matter where they come from, and an Europe aware of its diversity, which, at the same time, recognizes as its richness and strength.

The Catalan society and government, will keep on sharing proposals and concerns, so we can collectively contribute to overcome the challenges posed by the global pandemic, the climate crisis, the digital agenda or the interculturality, and to achieve a successful recovery for all.

Thank you once again to all our friends that have joined us today and with whom we have been collaborating, and I hope we can continue working together in the year to come.