

Institutional message from the President Aragonès on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia

Roman Forum of Empúries, 10 September 2022

Citizens of Catalonia, tomorrow we commemorate our National Day and I invite you all to take part in the different events that are being organised throughout the country. Each according to their own convictions, within our vision of a diverse country, but each full of enthusiasm and strength.

Every 11 September, the country demonstrates that we are a nation proud of its people, proud to be the way we are. A country of choice, a welcoming land, open to the world, that has always had a pro-European outlook. We are a nation that takes care of each other, generating prosperity, creating opportunities for all and making it easier for all of us to live the lives we have chosen, in freedom.

This is Catalonia. And we are very proud of this. The lives of more than seven and a half million people, the lives of each and every one of us, with our fears and concerns, our hopes and our dreams. Catalonia is this, its people, the desire to be ourselves, the desire of the majority to decide what we want to be. By making the banner of democracy, progress and freedom our own, because this is the way to build a better future, a fully free future, a future that is in our hands.

Because being a country also means taking care of everyone in it. This September 25,000 two-year-olds started nursery at no extra cost to their families. For the first time, I2 is free of charge in the public education system in Catalonia. A revolutionary measure that we want to extend to all children from zero to three years of age, because it creates new opportunities, strengthens us as a society and offers a better future for our children.

Nation-building also, and above all, means this, standing beside the people, standing beside its citizens. It means standing firm in the defence of all those fundamental aspects that shape the country, such as schooling in Catalan, an essential tool for social cohesion, which we have managed to save thanks to a new law that strengthens linguistic and educational consensus in Catalonia. For the first time in the last seven years, no school has the imposition of 25% of its classes being in Spanish. This is undoubtedly excellent news.

Standing beside the people also means promoting all the changes and transformations that the country needs, such as public energy, which is crucial for us to become sovereign in this area; such as the digital and audiovisual hub, of the utmost importance for promoting the Catalan audiovisual industry, in particular in Catalan; such as the promotion of research and knowledge policies, or the deployment of the National Agreement for Industry that we have just signed with all the country's social and economic agents, resulting in new investments, new companies and new jobs.

We must govern with this transformative mentality, with a clear idea of where we need to go, thinking of the people, without neglecting anyone, without undervaluing any region. We must govern in the interests of Catalonia as a whole. That is why, during these highly complicated times, we are redoubling all our efforts to support citizens in the face of rising inflation. We know that this autumn and winter will be very difficult. Rising prices are seriously affecting many companies in all sectors, with a direct impact on all families, jeopardising economic recovery, accentuating inequalities and making it difficult for many citizens to make ends meet.

Faced with this scenario, the Government is acting, we will continue to do so tirelessly, with the same determination as during the Covid crisis. Today, more than ever, this means strengthening and supporting our public health system and its professionals. Catalonia is its people. That is why the priority of the Government of the Generalitat is to stand by its citizens, especially in difficult times like the present.

However, the urgent issues of the moment should not make us forget that the political conflict with Spain remains unresolved. And here it is important to highlight the fact that we are managing to bring the conflict back into the political arena. We are managing to bring the conflict back to where it should never have left. We are achieving this by reaching agreements that will help bring an end to repression, to threat of prosecution. This is essential in order to facilitate a negotiation that finally addresses the substance of the political conflict with Spain: the need to respond to the solid, cross-cutting desire of the majority of citizens of Catalonia, who want to freely decide the future of the country.

Catalonia will be what its citizens decide. What its people want. That is why the citizens of Catalonia must be able to choose between an obsolete state, which does not respond to the needs of the people, as we see, for example, every day with the disastrous and unacceptable Renfe commuter train service, or a Catalan Republic with all the tools to make people's lives easier, with all the resources to improve everybody's life.

That is why Catalonia will vote again, it is inevitable, because it is the most inclusive proposal, because it is the proposal that generates the most consensus, and because voting and offering citizens the ability to decide the future of the country is the only way to resolve the conflict with Spain. Catalonia will vote. It will do so sooner or later, depending on how strong we are, but it will do so. We will do so. It is a fundamental question of democracy. And we will never, absolutely never, give it up. I will never, absolutely never, give up on the idea that the citizens of Catalonia should be able to decide the future of the country freely, peacefully and democratically.

That is why we have always marched on 11 September, to demand the right to decide, to demand the independence of the country as the necessary and essential tool to improve the lives of all the citizens of Catalonia. Tomorrow, like every 11 September, Catalonia will once again demonstrate that we are a nation with a bright future ahead, driven by the pursuit of well-being, progress and

prosperity for our citizens, that we identify with the diversity of the country, and that we are unwaveringly committed to democratically deciding the future of Catalonia. That is why Catalonia will once again vote on its future. And it will do so with all the hope and joy of someone who is voting for a future where everything, absolutely everything, is possible.

Happy National Day to all!

Long live Catalonia and long live freedom!

Pere Aragonès i Garcia

President of the Generalitat de Catalunya