

Europe Day commemoration

Palau de la Generalitat, 9 May 2022

A very good morning. Happy 9th of May, Europe Day, to you all. Vice-president of the Catalan Government, ministers, members of the Catalan Parliament, member of the European Parliament, representatives of Barcelona City Council. And also, to all the consular corps with us today and, in particular, in the Ukrainian consul. Representatives of the European institutions, representative of the Commission and also head of the Office of the European Parliament, Consul General of France, the member country representing the rotating presidency this semester. Welcome to the Palau de la Generalitat. Welcome to your home.

We are very happy to be celebrating Europe Day today, the 9th of May, at the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya. It is an event that is fully aligned with the pro-European commitment of Catalonia's governing institution.

For our commitment, for the commitment of Catalan institutions, of Catalan society, to the project of building a stronger, fairer, more united, more cohesive and more supportive Europe.

A Europe that must move forward, strengthening the shared values of democracy, peace and human rights. Defending the prosperity and well-being of European citizens. Embracing plurality, diversity and tolerance as the foundation of the richness of our societies. And a staunch defender of freedom. Of individual and collective freedoms as an essential condition for progress everywhere.

It is therefore an honour to open the doors of the Palau de la Generalitat in organising this event jointly with the European institutions to commemorate Europe Day. And to take this opportunity to reaffirm once again Catalonia's pro-European vocation, the pro-European vocation of the Generalitat de Catalunya, and also of this Government.

A pro-European vocation that is none other than the set of core values through which all the peoples, all the nations of Europe, seek to overcome the conflict that has characterised the history of our continent and to build a shared future of peace and prosperity.

This idea of Europe is what motivated the Schuman Declaration 72 years ago. And this is also what we were able to reaffirm to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen last Friday during her visit to Catalonia, during her visit to Barcelona.

A pro-European commitment that is still very much alive and well. A willingness to participate in the construction of a shared future for Europe which we hope

offers Catalonia a space to address the challenges of our society, respecting individual and collective freedoms and rights.

Progress that brings everyone closer to modernisation, to the extension of rights to all citizens. And we know that today the strategic challenges facing Catalonia as a society are also the strategic challenges facing Europe.

But this hope that we in Catalonia place in the process of European integration is accompanied by a firm commitment. A commitment to European integration, a commitment that is also our contribution, the grain of sand, the stone with which to build this shared house that is Europe that we bring from Catalonia.

The experience of a diverse and plural society that is proud of its identity and wants to share it with everyone. Connected through a common language, in our case Catalan, which I would like to remind you is spoken in four different states, three of which are members of the European Union.

Also the contributions of an open economy, a Catalan economy that throughout history has grown and has brought prosperity and well-being to its citizens when it has opened up to the world, when it has been innovative and has always done so hand in hand with economic and trade relations with the rest of Europe.

And also of a Catalonia that today has its own contributions to make around precisely these challenges regarding strategic autonomy in Europe. In the field of energy, with a firm commitment to the deployment of renewable energies, but also through the interconnections that will guarantee Europe's energy supply at a key moment.

Decisions on this supply in order to remain strong against the threat posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine also in terms of energy.

The stronger we are in this area, the freer Europe will be to take decisions in defence of peace, human rights and also the independence and freedom of peoples, in this case the Ukrainian people. Catalonia's contribution is to provide everything within our reach to guarantee this supply.

But also, in aspects such as technological autonomy. We have research institutions and a technological environment in Catalonia that is offered through programmes derived precisely from the large stimulus package in response to the crisis caused by COVID-19 or in response to the opportunity of the NextGenerationEU plan. Catalonia offers technological capital, experience with a supercomputer largely financed with European funds from both the Generalitat and the State, as well as the development of the semiconductor industry.

And therefore, at this key moment for Europe, Catalonia has much to contribute today. The hope we have placed in Europe as a sea of rights and freedoms is accompanied by our absolute commitment to Europe's immediate challenges. This year, Europe Day is celebrated in a European Year dedicated to youth. And today young people must be the protagonists.

Dedicating the European year to young people is an initiative that is right, but also absolutely necessary. The younger generations in our country and throughout Europe have had to live and grow up in recent years amidst an economic crisis like that of 2008, one of the most impactful, the crisis caused by COVID-19, and now a war at Europe's doorstep.

And we have demanded too much, perhaps too much, from young people in our country and in Europe as a whole. The attitude and commitment of our young people, our students, during the most complicated moments of the pandemic, that attitude and individual commitment was also one of the elements that allowed us to overcome those very difficult times.

And you made your contribution by sacrificing in part what is one of the most precious assets of youth, which is meeting with friends, social interaction, you reduced it, you limited it, we asked you to make this effort, you did it and I think Catalonia should be very grateful.

But this cannot be just left at words. We must be able to offer a future of opportunities for young people from all over Europe, young people from all over Catalonia.

We need your energy, your transformative capacity to build a future that is not only good for you but also good for Europe as a whole.

Young people are often only talked about in terms of the future. Young people are the present. And the problems and challenges of young people are not a matter for the future. They are a matter for the present. So, we need to undertake a commitment to all of them to address these challenges now. Not to leave them for later. Therefore, if we want to move forward, the Generalitat's vision, voice and action must play a leading role in our societies. And this applies to Catalan politics, but also, of course, to European politics.

If we want a better future, the present, not the future, the present must belong to young people.

The digital future. The green, feminist and inclusive future promoted by the European Commission, which we in the Government of Catalonia absolutely share, needs young people. If we want a fairer, more equal, healthier, more sustainable, greener and more democratic future, if we want a fully free future, we need to work hard towards this right now.

And in this commitment, all young people have a very important role to play. Asking questions and challenging what previous generations have often not dared to question, shaking up what has become normalised, overturning arbitrarily pre-established conventions and teaching us that a better future is not only possible, not only desirable, but absolutely necessary.

This future is now about restoring the peace that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has interrupted. Restoring peace in the European Union, but also in the European continent as a whole. This peace is part of the basis of the process of European integration. Russia's attack on Ukraine is an attack on a free country, it is an

attack on citizens of a democratic country who want to live in peace and prosperity.

Without peace, we cannot imagine a future of progress and well-being that all citizens, that the whole of humanity, deserves. And that is why we must reinforce ourselves. That is why we must strengthen Europe's strategic capabilities so we can provide the right responses to secure peace. And to make decisions as Europeans without external constraints.

Therefore, today we reaffirm with this commemoration of Europe Day, which from this year onwards we will celebrate every year at the Palau de la Generalitat, as an act in which Catalonia pays tribute and commits itself to the process of European integration.

The future of our country, the future of the Catalan nation, makes sense if it is an open future. Open to our immediate environment, and the reality that we are pursuing is the European reality.

I therefore welcome, and the whole of the Catalan Government welcomes, the initiatives of the European institutions to bring the European project closer to the young people of our country. And we thank the secondary schools and the educational centres of our country for their involvement in their leading role as ambassador schools for European values and institutions.

Thank you all very much for joining us. Many thanks also to the artists who have accompanied these students and have created the mural that we can see on the façade of the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya. Many thanks to the representatives of the participating institutions, especially the representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament, many thanks to all of you. Happy Europe Day.