



Christmas message from the President of the Generalitat

Citizens of Catalonia,

I would like to wish you a very happy Christmas and a very good start to 2024.

At this time of year, many families get together to celebrate our love for each other, and those of us who have children at home also know that these are magical, special days, full of excitement for the little ones.

But these are also days when we miss those who are no longer with us, those we have lost, or those who are far from home, and we remember the affection we feel for them and moments with them, which we keep in our memory.

From here I would like to send a warm hug to all those who are in hospital this Christmas, recovering from an operation or keeping a relative or friend company. And also to those who are lonely or far away from home or the people they love.

This Christmas, our thoughts are also with the victims of all wars. With the victims of the war in Gaza, where a humanitarian catastrophe is being caused by attacks on the civilian population. It is imperative that the massacre stop and a definitive ceasefire be agreed on. And we also remember the victims in Ukraine and so many other wars that fail to make the headlines.

As we celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve, there are so many of our fellow citizens watching over us. During these days, care workers, health workers and law enforcement and emergency professionals sacrifice family gatherings to take care of us, keep us safe and be prepared for any incidents that might occur. And also all those workers, freelancers and entrepreneurs who, with their work, allow us to celebrate these holidays.

The year 2023 was one in which we achieved great goals and also in which we visualised the challenges still facing us.

This year, many people have found work and we now have the lowest unemployment rate in the last fifteen years.

This year, we have strengthened the welfare state, with more teachers, more healthcare personnel and more police than ever before.

This year, we have invested heavily in industry, research and science, which means new opportunities today and for the Catalonia of tomorrow.

This year, we have incorporated new vaccines and treatments, such for bronchiolitis, marking a success for a health system that has protected the youngest children and prevented thousands of hospital admissions and stays in paediatric ICUs.

This year, we have agreed on a comprehensive handover of the local train service, which is essential to guarantee reliable and quality mobility for the citizens of Catalonia on a daily basis. And also the transfer of administering the minimum subsistence income to properly assist the Catalans who suffer most from inequality.

This year, we have more audiovisuals in Catalan than ever before, a fundamental step for promoting our language everywhere: on the street, in schools, on screens. This is also the case in the Congress of Deputies and we have taken the first steps to making Catalan official in the European Union.

This year, we reached an agreement on the amnesty law, which not so long ago we were told was impossible. And it will allow the end of repression and the recovery of rights. A necessary step towards the next phase of negotiations with Spain: for Catalonia to freely decide its future, by voting on independence.

Looking back, we can feel satisfied with how far we have come as a country. This should give us the confidence, strength and conviction to overcome the challenges we face.

Such as the drought we are suffering, the most intense drought ever recorded, which has already required an extraordinary commitment for farmers, and which will require an effort from the rest of society and continuing investment in water infrastructures to overcome the effects of and gain resilience to climate change, which is now a more palpable reality than ever.

This challenge, and those we face in the field of education, where it is vital to continue focussing even greater efforts and continue working together with the educational community, because our children and young people are the present and the future of the country.

The same is true for dependency, public health, housing and the fight against gender-based violence, all of which require the best from us. Using all the tools available. It is also true for the Generalitat's 2024 budget, which is essential to continue moving forward, and which will require the responsibility and commitment of a majority in the Catalan Parliament. I am determined to build such a majority to make this possible. I ask this of the parliamentary groups and I am convinced we will all be up to the task.

2024 must be the year in which we focus on the path to make this the decade of prosperity and freedom.

2024 must be the year in which we start implementing the handover of the local train service.

2024 must be the year in which we agree on a unique financing system with Spain that puts an end to an unbearable fiscal deficit that prevents us from allocating the resources we already pay for, but which are administered by others, to improve health, strengthen education, help the self-employed, workers and entrepreneurs and people with dependency, and fight against gender-based violence.

2024 must be the year of a new commitment to Catalan from all of us, with a greater presence than ever before, everywhere, to strengthen our language so that those who have come to Catalonia in search of well-being and prosperity can also make it their own.

2024 must be the year in which the amnesty law is passed, fully implemented and allows people persecuted for their commitment to the referendum to recover their freedom and return to Catalonia.

2024 must be the year in which we tackle the second phase of the negotiation process with Spain, in which Catalonia must be able to freely decide its future.

These are great challenges, but we will meet them. Today, we as a nation, each of us from our own place and position, represent the continuity of generations of Catalan men and women, born here or from all over the world, who, in the face of adversity, have given the best of ourselves to make everything possible.

When faced with difficulties, we offer work, shared work, based on our fraternal values.

When faced with challenges, we offer ingenuity, effort, support and agreements everywhere.

In the face of opportunities, we offer talent, our ability to contribute and our collective ambition.

Catalans, 2024 will be whatever we decide we want it to be. Let's make it the year we achieve the future we deserve.

Merry Christmas and a very good start to

2024.

Long live Catalonia and long live freedom.