

On the political situation in Catalonia

In recent weeks, the political situation in Catalonia has been on the European agenda. It is an issue that can no longer be ignored. We, the European Greens, have always been supportive of the widely shared aspirations of most of Catalan society to decide itself on better and more developed self-government of Catalan institutions and establish more and better mechanisms for a participatory democracy. However, this has become a situation threatening to spin out of control with potentially severe impacts for everyone, including the EU, and with the worrying prospect of undesirable polarisation and confrontation within Catalan society itself.

Catalonia is a complex society that requires a nuanced approach, political solutions and an institutional framework that is acceptable to the majority of its population. In recent years, the Spanish government has simply ignored the conflict's political dimension and has failed to provide a political response to calls to find a new arrangement. This is a political attitude of Mr. Rajoy and his government that we have been rejecting for many years. More recently, the Catalan government has taken a unilateral pathway that cannot be considered as legitimate, raising internal confrontation in Catalan society and depicting a grim scenario of isolation and political and economic uncertainty, primarily for Catalonia, and for Spain, but also for the EU as a whole.

After a failed Unilateral Declaration of Independence on October 27th, the Spanish government took the steps (triggering the famous 155 article of the Constitution) to remove the Catalan government and set fresh Catalan parliamentary elections for next December, 21st. Additionally, the judiciary system imprisoned in custody pending trial some of the political and social leaders of the separatist movement with severe accusations. The unilateralist independence process has imploded but unless the situation de-escalates, we could soon be facing a dramatic situation again. It is widely shared that Catalan society cannot longer afford this political tension and there is a growing desire for social and democratic normalization.

Being aware that the situation is volatile and developments in any direction cannot be taken for granted, we, the European Greens, would like to express the following:

1. It is time to leave aside entrenched positions. The next Catalan government should abandon the threat of another 'Unilateral Declaration of Independence', and the Spanish government should not distort Catalan self-government to avoid the former after new elections take place, removing threats to suspend the current political autonomy. Now is the time for dialogue and to come up with new approaches. It is urgent for all parties involved to de-escalate tension and establish pathways for political dialogue, between governments, within both parliaments (Spanish and Catalan) and within civil society to explore a political solution, a new institutional framework, and the necessary recognition that Spain is a plurinational state.



2. European and international actors should play an active role in promoting dialogue between the parties as well as mediating and overcoming any mistrust when required to do so by both sides.
3. Violence must be rejected. Repression against peaceful civilians can not be justified by political or legal pretexts. As Human Rights Watch concluded: "Police used excessive force in Catalonia" during the events on 1st October. We condemn that violence and call on the Spanish authorities to apologise, open an investigation into the events that occurred, and to assume the disciplinary and political implications of this.
4. We consider the arrests of Catalan separatists who are currently in custody, pending trial, to be arbitrary. We expect that the Spanish judiciary system takes necessary steps to release them from provisional detention as soon as possible.
5. We do not recognise the civil mobilisation that took place on 1st October, in Catalonia, as a referendum. There is no basis for legitimate unilateral steps towards Independence, and in particular the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. We do not accept the results, and the fact that there were no minimum procedural guarantees, and that it was not recognised as such by most of the Catalan people, sustains our opinion.
6. Assuming the values that are the foundation of the European Union, we call for a negotiated resolution of the political conflict which aligns the respect for the rule of law with the main aspirations for change in the current situation and which currently requires the constitutional acceptance of Spain's plurinationality, establishing fraternal links between Catalan society and the rest of Spain while defusing the hate dynamics, and building a more democratic European Union to bury old grievances. The agreement should be validated through an agreed referendum; in Catalonia concerning the Catalanian Statutes and in Spain for the renewed Spanish Constitution.
7. In our opinion, the political solution requires the constitutional acceptance of Spain's plurinationality, a reformed institutional framework that modernises the Spanish state, making it compatible with widely shared demands of the Catalan people, establishing fraternal links between Catalan society and the rest of Spain while defusing the hate dynamics, and building a more democratic European Union to bury old grievances.
8. We support efforts that our partner ICV, and "Catalunya en Comú Podem" as its electoral coalition to promote dialogue and a sustainable political resolution.