

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF FOMENT

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General Assembly of Foment del Treball

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Good afternoon everyone. Thank you very much for your attendance.

Many thanks also to our guests of honor for your presence at this General Assembly of Foment del Treball:

- Antonio Garamendi, president of CEOE
- Gerardo Cuerva, president of Cepyme
- Lorenzo Amor, president of ATA Autónomos
- Salvador Navarro, president of CEV, the Business Confederation of the Valencian Community
- Carmen Planas, president of the Confederation of Business Associations of the Balearic Islands (CAEB)
- Miguel Marzo, president of CEOE Aragón
- Pedro Barato, president of Asaja, the Young Farmers' Agricultural Association
- and Gerardo Pérez, president of Faconauto.

Thanks also to all the members of the recently elected Board of Directors for your support and trust. I am convinced that in this new four-year term, we will be able to successfully address all the challenges we have set to overcome the severe economic crisis we are going through.

We have been, and I say this loudly and proudly:

- the candidacy of hope
- the candidacy of strength
- the candidacy of SMEs - present through the territories confederated in our organization in Catalonia and throughout the Foment ecosystem as well as sectoral organizations
- the candidacy of the self-employed
- the candidacy of startups
- the candidacy of innovation and the new economy
- the candidacy of sports and culture
- the candidacy of traditional sectors of the Catalan industry
- the candidacy of commerce and tourism
- the candidacy of agriculture

- the candidacy of young entrepreneurs.

Now, with this new mandate, everything we have done is reinforced, positioning Foment as the grand house for entrepreneurs in Catalonia (SMEs, micro-enterprises, the self-employed, startups, medium and large companies). All together, we represent nothing less than 75% of the Catalan GDP and more than 260,000 companies.

In addition to this great enthusiasm with which we have presented ourselves, we have also wanted to be serious and rigorous in shaping an electoral program with a general objective that I now want to highlight:

This objective is captured in 10 proposals from our program, and now I will briefly detail some relevant points.

1. **Return of Companies.** We will continue working in this direction. We know it is not easy, but neither is it impossible. For this reason, we will also support the dialogue table recently re-launched by the governments of the State and the Generalitat of Catalonia to achieve the necessary political and economic stability to successfully face the current crisis situation. Companies need responses and security.
2. **Competitive Taxation.** We reiterate once more the need to eliminate the wealth tax and to seriously tackle tax fraud, which conceals our country's underground economy. (This could mean the emergence of 33 billion euros in revenue and one and a half million jobs).
3. **Reindustrialization of Catalonia.** Our goal is to achieve 25% industrial weight within the Catalan GDP by 2030. You can find more details in our electoral program available on the Foment website.

At the same time, we support and will collaborate with the Generalitat Government in searching for a major chip manufacturing company to set up in Catalonia. This way, we could become the major southern European hub for chip manufacturing.

4. **Infrastructure.** We will continue working with various public administrations to ensure that the level of investment and execution of the budgeted amounts is fully met. We want to address the mistreatment of Catalonia by public administrations over the last fifteen years.

We will not tire of proposing imaginative formulas to make this possible. In this sense, to give just one example: we have promoted a bill to the parliamentary groups of the Congress of Deputies for the creation of an Independent Agency that oversees the execution of the State's infrastructure investments in Catalonia

with the participation of the State Administration, the Generalitat of Catalonia, local administrations in Catalonia, and the country's civil society.

We also propose that the budgeted amounts not executed should not be lost and should automatically become available to the Generalitat Government to be executed in subsequent fiscal years.

5. **Expansion of Josep Tarradellas Barcelona-El Prat Airport.** We will continue to work proactively with the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Government of Spain to gain maximum complicity so that the expansion becomes a reality in the coming years and Barcelona becomes a true international airport hub.

At the same time, I announce a major international event in Barcelona planned and organized by IESE and Foment on November 21, which will claim this goal.

6. **Claiming, Strengthening, and Defending the Role of the Entrepreneur and the Family Business** as engines of wealth generation and job creation. Additionally, we are crucial elements for reinforcing and guaranteeing social cohesion and for fighting against social inequalities.
7. **Through the Territories Confederated to Foment**, SMEs will be the true protagonists of this new mandate by absorbing Fepime and with the creation of the Council of SMEs.
8. **We Reinforce the Commitment to Equality.** Once again, women, with the vice presidencies of Foment and the presidencies of the sectoral commissions, will maintain a strong presence and contribute to the feminization of our organization.
9. **As a Novelty, We Incorporate Two Relevant Vice Presidencies:** one for young entrepreneurs and one for the new economy. The young entrepreneurs' vice presidency will be held by the president of AIJEC, Ruben Sans, and the new economy vice presidency by the also president of Tech Barcelona, Miguel Vicente.
10. **I Also Announce That Traditional Sectors** like metal and tourism will have their own vice presidency in Foment once the new Board of Directors - which will meet after this Assembly - approves the proposed amendment to the Statutes that I will present for it to be definitively approved in a General Assembly that will take place in the coming months. Metal will be occupied by Jaume Roura and Tourism by Santiago García Nieto.

The rest of the vice presidencies that I will propose to the new Board of Directors are (in alphabetical order):

- Mar Alarcón
- Elisabet Cañigüeral
- Virgínia Guinda
- Lluís Moreno, president of the Cambra de Contractistes d'Obres de Catalunya
- Cinta Pascual, president of ACRA
- Joan Roget, president of Fedequim
- Baldiri Ros, president of l'Institut Agrícola Català de Sant Isidre

And the statutory vice presidents such as the president of Fepime and the presidents of the main territorial organizations.

ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION

Naturally, I would not want to conclude my intervention in this General Assembly of Foment del Treball without referring to the current situation of our country.

Facing the severe crisis we are suffering, the third in fifteen years - the 2008 crisis, the covid crisis of 2019, and the Ukraine war - and the deepest since World War II, I want to express from Foment my great concern and disappointment:

- for the economic conclusions of the recent State of the Nation debate
- and also for some stances of the coalition government between PSOE and Unidas Podemos and its president Pedro Sánchez.

This situation leads me to these reflections:

1. **We regret the absence of sufficient measures aimed at strengthening the productive economy** (large, small, medium, micro enterprises, and self-employed, startups) and the adoption of other counterproductive ones. We emphasize that businesses in general, the Spanish business fabric, must be the engine of economic recovery.

At this moment, the business fabric is enduring an increase in energy prices and its raw materials that are not fully passed on to consumer prices, reducing their business margins.

Without support for the productive economy, it will be difficult to solve the crisis we are suffering.

2. **We also regret that in the 21st century, we speak of hidden powers, cigar lords, and media conspiracies.** These are statements we haven't

heard for over thirty years and that go in the direction of seeking confrontation instead of calling for consensus to overcome the serious economic and social situation we face.

3. **We regret that without prior dialogue, there is a plan to increase the tax burden** on certain economic sectors alleging extraordinary profits. Actions of this magnitude undermine legal certainty and also undermine private property. Furthermore, these decisions ignore that millions of Spaniards have invested a significant part of their savings and retirement expectations in these companies. With these measures, in just one day, the Government of Spain has caused these sectors to lose billions of euros. We will only emerge from this crisis by strengthening businesses, entrepreneurship, and family businesses, not by increasing the tax burden and raising taxes.
4. **We regret such interventionist measures that refer to the distribution of business profits,** which may remind us - something that concerns me a lot - of populist messages and actions from some South American governments. This is probably a consequence of the influence and weight of one of the two partners, Unidas Podemos, in the State Government.
5. **We regret that unfortunately, there has been too much frivolity about inflation.** However, no significant measure aimed at lowering it, such as deflating the IRPF tariff, has been formalized.
6. **We regret that while the State Government demands sacrifices** from the self-employed, businesses, and citizens in general, there is no measure nor is the same sacrifice or effort demanded from public administrations to move towards better efficiency in public spending and increased savings.

(In this regard, CEOE and Foment have already put on the table two examples of measures to increase fiscal revenue by 93 billion euros: CEOE proposes savings of 60 billion euros, and Foment proposes bringing to light 33 billion euros from tax fraud hidden within the underground economy.)

CONCLUSIONS

- Politics should focus on weaving major political, economic, and social complicities to face the severe economic situation and the structural reforms required by our country. For example, aligning the energy transition with the real possibilities of our industrial sector. And it should not do so as it does, creating scenarios of great ideological and social confrontation as we have recently seen.

- From Foment and CEOE, we have shown multiple signs of willingness to dialogue.

We consider it very harmful to create two sides: the powerful against the working middle class. It is not good to criminalize and demonize the entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs are not the villains of the story as it is made to seem. We are the main guarantors of social cohesion: we invest in generating wealth and new jobs and help reduce social inequalities.

- For this reason, from Foment, I humbly call on the President of the Government of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, to open his doors to dialogue to achieve a pact of solidarity and responsibility that many define as a pact of incomes among all social and economic agents, and also all public administrations. That is, among workers, entrepreneurs, civil servants, and pensioners.

And I also ask the President of the Government of Spain to adopt a change of attitude, to abandon populist positions, and to assume the banner of constructive dialogue with all sectors.

In conclusion, we propose a great agreement to overcome this deep economic and social crisis and thus avoid its chronicity.

Only together will we overcome the crisis. With unilateral measures and populism, we will not achieve it.

I end with an optimistic message despite all this. We will move forward, I am convinced. The foundations of our country's economy, the entire productive fabric, and the talent of the people who are part of our society will facilitate this. I am convinced: we will move forward with effort and perseverance.

Thank you very much for your attention.