

# TRANSCRIPTION

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT, PEDRO  
SÁNCHEZ, AT THE EUROPEAN PULSE FORUM 2026**

Barcelona, 10 April 2026

## ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT, PEDRO SÁNCHEZ

Good afternoon,

Before I begin, I would first like to thank the President, my dear friend Salvador Illa, and of course, the President of Aragon who is with us in this session, the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy of the European Commission, the representative of the Government, the mayor of Barcelona, Jaume Collboni, the Chairman of La Caixa Foundation, the CEO of POLITICO, the Senior Executive Editor of POLITICO, too, of course, and the President of beBartlet. I can see friends from different areas, companies, heads of institutions, as well as *consellers* from the *Generalitat*.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a true pleasure to conclude this fantastic forum on the future of Europe organized by POLITICO and beBartlet. Or, perhaps, I should say, to conclude this edition, because I hope that this will be the first of many, as the representatives here today have been saying.

It is also fantastic news that a media outlet as serious and influential as POLITICO—and I at least read its daily Playbook newsletter, as we all should—is finally expanding its presence into our country, Spain, because it is also important, in my opinion, to consider the perspective of Southern Europe when addressing European issues.

POLITICO offers first-rate coverage and analysis of global politics, and also, of course, of European politics and with these high standards it is helping to build a better Europe.

I would like to begin my address now with a brief anecdote by the Argentinean writer Martín Caparrós, from his book *Hunger: The Oldest Problem*. In it, Caparrós recounts a conversation he had in a remote village with an impoverished man. He asked the man a very simple question: if he could make a wish, if he could ask for anything at all, what would he wish for?

The man replied immediately. He asked for a cow. One cow.

So Caparrós insisted: anything at all, whatever you want.

The man hesitated momentarily and answered. Two cows. Two cows, that's all.

The man was sitting on a raffia mat under a straw roof. His horizons were so limited, he did not even know what to wish for. He was not lacking in intelligence, he simply could not imagine a different kind of future.



Why am I repeating this anecdote? Because I believe that something similar is happening to today's Europe. Today's Europe seems too similar to that man because it aspires to little more than possessing "two cows".

There is no reason for things to be this way; the worst of it is that not only are we dreaming small, but that we have no objective reason for doing so.

The European Union—without becoming complacent, or forgetting the work we have yet to do, and, of course we will study and read the conclusions of this important forum—the European Union stands on the most robust foundations of prosperity, stability and integration that it has ever known.

We have the resources, we have the institutions, we have the talent and we have the principles and values.

What we must do is dare to dream of all that we could achieve—*can* achieve—together.

This is exactly what I want to say to you today: that we must dare, that we must revive the ambition of Europeanism. Not to manage what we already have. That can be done. There will be times of crisis, and times free from crisis, and we will manage the situation regardless. That is not the question, or at least it is not the only question: we must strive for what we need. And that is, in short, the position that Spain champions every time we travel to Brussels to contribute to building the European project.

Europe must strive to recover and strengthen our place in the world, with ambition and courage, daring to dream and to realize our dreams, as difficult as it may seem, just as the founders of what is now the European Union did.

The first question we must ask ourselves is: why does Spain defend this idea of what Europe could be? Of what we want it to be? Well, above all, because we are fully aware of what is at stake.

For those of you who are perhaps not as familiar with Spanish history as we, the people of Spain, are, our country arrived late to the table, as far as Europe is concerned. Together with Portugal, we were one of the last democracies in Western Europe to join this great project that is Europe.

Back then, in 1986, we were still fighting to consolidate our freedom. Our economy was seeking its place in an increasingly competitive world and our society was continuing to pay the price of decades of isolation.

Four decades have passed and today the situation is radically different. We are a consolidated democracy. We are growing more than any other large economy in the

euro area, with record employment figures. We are improving wages. We have reduced inequality, which is the main Achilles' heel of any society, including Spanish society. Poverty, too, is at an all-time low.

Meanwhile, it is clear that foreign investors are drawn to Spain, to Catalonia. This is very clear, as we have been seeing in recent years.

And we have achieved all this, moreover, making the ecological transition not an obstacle, but rather a driver of our country's competitiveness and economic development.

I also believe—as I was discussing earlier with some of the sponsors of this important forum—that if we have learned anything at all from the successive energy crises that have so severely affected not only Europe's working middle class but also the governments that represent it, it is, given events in Ukraine and Iran, that the security and prosperity of our societies depend on our electrifying our economies and committing to renewable energy.

I would like to share just one figure illustrating what we have achieved together, during what have been difficult years for Europe, and for Spain: in 2018, in 2018, in other words, virtually yesterday, 46% of installed capacity in Spain was renewable, 46%. Seven years later, that figure stands at 69%.

And thanks to this, what has happened? The price of electricity in our country in 2025 was 35%, 35%, lower than in Germany and 50% lower than in Italy.

In just one year, 2024, our families, Spanish businesses, Catalan businesses, saved a total of 23 billion euros. 23 billion euros.

I am not citing these figures to lecture anybody, but rather to indicate a way forward that may be useful to many more partners that are currently feeling the full impact of these energy crises, which of course come from outside the EU and have not been caused by Europeans.

What I want to say is that there are aspects of the Spanish model that really work, that is it possible to grow and create stable employment, to distribute wealth, and to protect the environment without abandoning one of these goals to the benefit of any other.

I believe that the success story of Spain, of Catalonia, would never have been possible without our belonging to Europe, without being under its umbrella.

This is why we understand what is at stake when we see what is happening in Ukraine, when we see what is happening in the Middle East, when we see too, the



trade wars being waged unilaterally against Europe. We know what is at stake, which is the strength of the European project.

Spaniards know this and that is why, as was mentioned earlier, we are among the most staunchly pro-European countries. This has been confirmed by one of the different surveys published, by a survey published today in fact. 76% of Europeans believe in a common European way of life and believe, moreover, that it is worth defending. 76%. But in the case of the people of Spain, this figure amounts to 81%.

And that commitment is especially strong here in Catalonia, with a President such as Salvador Illa. And of course, too, the President of Aragon, the Mayor of Barcelona, Jaume Collboni... all of whom embody a pro-European ambition that is shared by the people of Catalonia, by Catalan society. Catalonia and Spain defend Europe, because we can no longer conceive of another way of being in the world.

And that is precisely why that model of the Spain of today and of the Catalonia of today is the model of the Europe that we also want for the rest of our fellow citizens beyond the Pyrenees.

It is easy, in such times as these, to give in to the temptation of believing that in an increasingly fraught world, the solution is to retreat into ourselves. Of believing that, in the face of the wars and the attacks, the brazen violations of international law, what we should do is resign ourselves to the situation, keep quiet, look the other way; that, in the face of the use of trade or technology as weapons against, let us say, supposed partners, we must put up barriers; that faced with the rise in reactionary forces, we must accept and adopt the framework of debate and even the ways of doing politics of these reactionary forces.

It is easy to believe this. I would even go so far as to say that it is the easiest option. But it is a huge mistake, because what today we know as the European Union emerged precisely from the battle against such forces.

It was precisely the desire for lasting peace that made us unite and move forward. It was the need to rebuild that European project, or Europe, after the Second World War, that led us to open up to the world, and it was the threat of reactionaries that inspired us to build societies that were much more cohesive, much more just and much more democratic.

Europe was not born from withdrawal. It was born from the political courage to bring its values of peace, democracy, solidarity and social justice into a changing world, with the conviction that by creating what Schuman termed “de facto solidarity”, we would build a better future.

Javier Solana, a former High Representative of the European Union, spoke specifically of that Europe as a force for good. I believe that this is something we must continue to keep in mind given what we are seeing in many corners of the globe and particularly so close to Europe.

We hear reactionary forces repeat time and time again that Europe is falling behind, that it is out of touch with today's world. I think many who do not share that ideology also believe this to be true, that Europe is out of touch, that it is falling behind. But, if we stop to take a closer look, without falling prey to complacency, and bearing in mind that we have a great deal of work yet to do, if the greatest measure of the success of a model is the well-being of people, then I believe quite frankly that Europe is not the problem, but the yardstick. And one only has to travel outside Europe to see exactly what I am talking about.

A few figures that support the statement I am making here: of the 20 countries with the highest life expectancy in the world—of the 20 countries with the highest life expectancy in the world—15 are in Europe. 15 out of 20.

Of the 31 established democracies on the planet, 20 are European. 20 out of 31.

Our continent has the highest percentage of residents who rate their health as good or very good, the lowest infant mortality rates, the least inequality, and the strongest environmental protections. And yes, it is also the continent where it is safest to walk down the street. One only need travel outside Europe to really see what I am talking about.

It is, I think, for all these reasons that Europeans are consciously the most satisfied with our lives. Here it seems fitting to say "it feels good to be European".

But Europe is not just the well-being of its citizens. For the rest of the world it is dependability, predictability and stability, in such uncertain times. Times of war in places neither distant nor unconnected, such as Gaza, such as the West Bank, such as Iran and such as Lebanon—places where Europe represents hope for peace.

That is why I believe, with global solidarity in decline, it is important that Europe and its leaders remain committed to cooperation—as its citizens, European citizens, hope and want. Now is not the time to look away or look inwards, but the time to share, to engage and to seek solutions to the multiple global challenges humanity is facing.

That is how things should be, in my view, in such a period of challenges and obstacles; for example, in the area of trade, Europe must remain open and continue to be a reliable partner. At this time of deterioration in global solidarity, what Europe must do is not only arm itself anew to tackle its security and defence problems, but



also arm itself with stronger moral principles, to enable it to contribute to stable development and peace around the world.

That, in my view, is the reality we face. Europe is the exemplar the world looks to, and I think it is also the actor that the world needs now more than ever.

For decades, we have sustained this model by relying on two external pillars. The first is the security architecture, guaranteed through our participation in NATO, and the second is the open economic system, based on global value chains and stable trade relations. Both of these pillars are now clearly being called into question.

So what Europe must do is adapt. And I believe that should be our dream: that the Europe of today can meet today's needs, but also, most importantly, the needs of tomorrow. Always, of course, without losing our identity, but instead reinforcing our model and building a better future. A more integrated Europe, with greater sovereignty, that makes its own decisions, doing away with its current dependence on third parties—which leaves it without its own voice on the international stage.

Because in today's world, our autonomy—our open autonomy—is not optional, but vital for our survival, politically, economically and as a society.

The Europe I am speaking of cannot be built with dreams and declarations alone; its construction requires vision, but also critical political decisions.

That is why I would like to set out three priority goals, with which I am sure you are familiar, and on which the Government of Spain is working, to achieve them during this mandate, this parliamentary term in Europe.

The first is obvious. We must move towards a genuine common foreign, security and defence policy.

I believe in the importance of defence policy, and of security policy—which I will speak about shortly—but above all of foreign policy, of a common foreign policy. Because diplomacy is just as important as security and defence.

I am sure you will have heard what Spain's position is. We are ready to move towards a common European army. Not in ten years, not in two years, but right now, tomorrow.

Those who think such a decision is optional are mistaken. In the world we are living in, the middle powers—such as those that make up the European Union—only have one way of standing up for ourselves in terms of security and defence, and that is by building common defence and taking joint responsibility for our vulnerabilities. If we do not, we will be letting others use those vulnerabilities and weaknesses against us.

For a Union with a common foreign, security and defence policy to become a reality, we must take action under the second pillar I will speak about: growth. We must grow, and grow much more than Europe has been for the past ten, fifteen years.

This issue is highly nuanced, and can be viewed from multiple angles. Today, I would like to focus on some of the questions that I am sure former Prime Minister Letta put to you in his discussion, in his dialogue with you, namely how to boost the internal market and increase financial sovereignty as keys to increasing competitiveness.

I think it is also important to fund European public goods and continue to develop common funding instruments. I do not want to talk for too long, but I can assure you that the Government of Spain is committed to ensuring that these decisions are made and made during this parliamentary term in Europe, before the end of 2029, when the term of the current President of the European Commission and college of Commissioners ends.

One final truth that perhaps has not been addressed as a priority, and that is a pillar for the present and future of Europe, is that Europe cannot be strong and competitive if it is not cohesive.

That is the third pillar. And it is one that requires us to be pro-active. We must continue to build and strengthen the Pillar of Social Rights. A stronger Pillar of Social Rights will be key to the continued existence of our European project, because without a social pillar there is no Europe.

What does that entail? Well, it entails, for example, what Spain is proposing: that in the new round of negotiations of the multiannual financial framework—now that percentages are in fashion for certain expenditure—why not increase the available amount to 2% of gross national income in the Union budget. I think that is an objective we should set ourselves.

As regards the Pillar of Social Rights, access to housing is of course perhaps, together with employment, our citizens' main concern.

A few figures to support this; and I should mention also that in this city, Barcelona, Mayor Collboni has been taking the lead on this issue alongside mayors of other European cities in recent months and years.

Over the past 15 years, house prices have risen by 60%. 60%! And rental prices have risen by 28%. In cities such as Lisbon, Budapest and Madrid, many families spend over 70% of their income on housing.



This is completely unacceptable. And if this problem is a European one, and one felt by all the citizens of Europe or most of them, we must put different action plans into place at the European level.

The European Affordable Housing Plan is a step in the right direction, but in my view we must take much more targeted action and be more ambitious, with clear measures that have a meaningful impact for citizens.

So those are our priorities, the path to forging the Europe we dream of, with a common foreign, security and defence policy, a common financial market and framework, and a Pillar of Social Rights, which is critical in uncertain times such as these. I do not want to go into much more detail on this issue, but in closing I would like to share some ideas on two inviolable principles.

The first principle, as I said before, is that the European Union is a project that is open to the world, and must remain so: open to trade, to talent and to ideas. Closing Europe will only impoverish it now and for time to come.

That is why the Government of Spain is committed to and supports the agreements with Mercosur, the strengthening of ties with India, with Africa, and why not, with the United States and with China. I will be travelling to that country after I finish speaking today.

We are also committed to regular, safe, orderly migration, which will enable us to make good use of opportunities and better address the challenges we face.

The second principle is that Europe must steadfastly defend international law and a rules-based international system.

We must not merely bemoan the state of affairs and sound our frustration with it. One only need look at Gaza to see what such violations of international law lead to.

That is why we, at the European level, must speak clearly. Many countries from the Global South are looking to us and are willing us not to apply double standards, not to judge each situation differently, depending on the degree to which it affects Europe.

We must not allow what has happened to Gaza to be repeated in Lebanon. Faced with brazen violations of international humanitarian law, Europe must demonstrate consistency, especially if we also want the rest of the world to see and back our support for Ukraine in its fight for freedom from the invader—from Putin's Russia.

That is why yesterday the Government of Spain and I proposed that, for the sake of integrity and empathy, what the European Union should do is suspend the association agreement with Israel, because it is clearly trampling on and violating

many of its articles, and especially those relating to international law and humanitarian law.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, friends, that is the Europe that Spain champions. A Europe that is autonomous, that makes its own decisions, that protects its citizens, but that remains a guiding light, an example in this changing world. A Europe that does not stand still, because we do not need unanimity to move forward, all we need is political will. And Spain is of course ready and prepared to take those steps forward, alongside many other European countries.

I would like to conclude with these words. That man in the book by Martín Caparrós, the one I mentioned at the start of this speech, had lost the ability to dream, lost it entirely. Europe has no reason to lose its ability to dream. If we really think about it, we have no reason at all to lose that ability. We know we can do it. We have built our capacity over decades, through hard work and great courage.

The people of Spain and of Catalonia came late to the great collective project that was to be and is now Europe. We came bearing wounds that Europe helped us heal. And in doing so, we were given the opportunity to transform ourselves and realize our dreams.

That is why we have two duties as people of Catalonia and Spain: defending what we already have, and daring to dream, daring to build what we have the potential to become.

I have no doubt that a bright future awaits Europe, Spain and Catalonia.

That is all, many thanks.

*(Transcript edited by the State Secretariat for Communication)  
(Original address in Spanish)*