

## FEMCAT: FENT CATALUNYA

(May 2004)

In Catalonia it had always been believed that national development would only be achieved in a democratic setting and with integration in Europe. Twenty-five years on from the approval of the Spanish Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, and 18 years after Spain joined the EU, it can now be seen that a new boost to the economic and social aspirations of the Catalan people is needed in order to make progress. This new boost must involve the political sphere, but also and especially the economic and social milieu. Politics and political parties are essential in a democracy, but the commitment of civil society is also indispensable, a civil society that must recover the initiative it is due.

The continuing debate in Catalonia concerns the large deficits in tax, infrastructure and growth which have been holding the country back for years, and there is no question that these are some of the shortfalls hindering the economic and social development of Catalonia. That is why our country needs a more expansive framework of powers and a greater regulatory capacity than it has at present. The current political organisation of the State and the statutory legal framework have not permitted these questions to be resolved, but it is also clear that Catalan civil society has failed to effectively bring influence and pressure to bear to solve the problems. A new boost is therefore needed to regenerate Catalonia in order to maintain our competitiveness as a nation, delivering the levels of progress and wellbeing of modern countries, something which, furthermore, is what it should be accorded as a society that has been enterprising throughout its history.

That is why we have created FemCAT, an association independent of any political party which aims to implement and support initiatives that aid in the progress of Catalan society, open to everybody from the business and professional world keen to engage in the project's objectives. FemCAT brings together a number of businesspeople, executives and professionals who want to see a greater level of development for Catalonia, both with regard to businesses and the social fabric that makes them possible. FemCAT endeavours to devote time, resources and knowledge to enable our country to take an important step forwards in the next 10 years (2004-2014).

Our society today must be more ambitious if it wants to achieve a greater share of political power which would enable the economic and social progress of Catalonia. We want Catalonia to join a European and world context, without getting trapped in a situation of chronic pessimism and the systematic denunciation of grievances as the only way to act. We believe that criticism and self-criticism must be matched with constructive proposals and initiatives that can be useful for the different political institutions and, above all, that can stimulate society as a whole.

FemCAT focuses its activity on the following areas:

Improving our capacity for enterprise and innovation. Catalan society has historically proven to be imaginative, creative and enterprising. It is important to shore up these characteristic features over the coming years with initiatives that boost added-value businesses, industry and technology, the service economy, our education network and, above all, our knowledge of foreign languages. This is a challenge that can be achieved by changing our mentality and providing support and social recognition to entrepreneurs.

Ensuring the improved competitiveness of our country. To that end we must boost productivity in order for public administrations to effectively manage the resources available to them, have the infrastructure needed to develop the country and be able to decide on and manage them appropriately.

Safeguarding the social cohesion of Catalonia. It is important to have powers and to foster initiatives that make it possible to regulate and integrate migration flows, the labour market and the organisation of social services and the education system. Social cohesion is fundamental to continuing to be, as we have always been, a welcoming, progressive country that is socially advanced.

**Showcasing Catalonia to the world.** We must be capable of crafting a project through our companies and culture, our scientists, sportspeople and social and sporting organisations, our universities (we have two of the best business schools in Europe) and, in short, our people, to project Catalonia abroad. At the same time, it is necessary to step up the process of making our companies global and improve our ability to attract new investment. All of this must represent a greater creation of wealth.

FemCAT aims to stimulate the discussion of these ideas within the heart of society. It is a positive and active initiative for the future which seeks the adhesion and mobilisation of civil society to make Catalonia one of the most advanced countries in the world.