

4 June 2020

H.E. Ursula Von der Leyen
President of the Commission
European Union

Dear President, dear Ursula,

Finally, after many weeks, and thanks to the enormous effort of our health and law enforcement professionals, and our citizens as a whole, it is time to start thinking about the reactivation of our economies and to recover normality, even if, still for a while, it will remain somewhat different from what we knew. In this context, we all look forward to swiftly recovering a fundamental element of the European project: freedom of movement in the large EU / Schengen area.

In this regard, we welcome the publication of the communication from the Commission on May 13 on lifting internal border controls. Its coherent implementation is now key. We believe that, in order for this recovery to be effective and harmonious, the lifting of restrictions at our internal borders must be carried out in a coordinated, non-discriminatory manner and based on common, clear and transparent epidemiological criteria. In this sense, we propose that the ECDC play a leading role, defining as soon as possible these criteria together with Member States.

We believe that the final goal should be the full restoration of freedom of movement among all member states. The free movement of citizens in the EU and Schengen should be interrupted only if this is justified by objective, clear criteria established by a European body such as ECDC in coordination with Member States. For these purposes it will be of vital importance that we all commit to share the necessary information with the European authorities.

We also believe that it would be crucial to consider how best to organize a gradual and coordinated process regarding the opening of the external borders based on a series of criteria. Covid incidence thresholds in third countries, for instance, should be agreed among us, before regaining full mobility with them.

Along the same lines, and in accordance with the Commission's own proposals, we believe that it is essential that transport be governed by health safety protocols that are harmonized and agreed by all. This is particularly relevant in the case of border health security measures, which should be common to the entire EU and the Schengen Area.

We therefore believe that there is an urgent need for the European Union to take action in the fields indicated above. Many of our Member States are approaching the date when they are going to reopen their borders to tourist mobility. How this process is carried out will largely determine our citizens' perception of the centrality of the European Union in tackling this crisis and the resilience of the fundamental principles of the EU and Schengen.

Yours sincerely,

Pedro Sánchez
President of the Government of Spain

Giuseppe Conte
President of the Council of Ministers of Italy