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Prime Minister Rajoy,

It is with deep concern that we, 12,882 citizens of the EU, examine the situation in Spain. Our connection to your beautiful country is manifold - we maintain various business, family, friendship and political relations. We share concerns about the discord that has reigned in and around Catalonia for some time now.

The arrest of Mr Puigdemont in Germany has shown us that, against our will, we are being drawn into the conflict over the autonomous community of Catalonia. Despite how the Schleswig-Holstein Higher Regional Court decides, its decision will be interpreted all over the world as a statement on the conflict in your country. We therefore feel called upon to present to you our view.

We have the impression that the legal resolution of the conflict over Catalan independence will not suffice to bring lasting peace to the situation in this region. We consider it a fundamental right in modern European democracies that citizens have a say in the forms of state and government. We are very surprised that this is not possible for the citizens of Catalonia, despite the fact that, in recent years, a large number of citizens have repeatedly spoken out in favour of holding a referendum on independence. In such a situation, we believe that it is up to politicians to create the political and legal framework conditions to make such a vote possible under fair conditions.

We can understand that such a political development is very painful for people who are committed to the good of the whole of Spain and who are required by law to preserve the unity of Spain.

We would like to ask you: what is the value of a unity that the citizens of Catalonia see as being imposed, those who want independence as well as those who would vote to remain part of Spain? Is it not much more sensible and beneficial for the people of Catalonia to be able to confirm their belonging to Spain in a free and fair vote? This would bring more sustainable and lasting peace to the region than the recent police and legal actions.

We are convinced that there are not only arguments for but also good arguments against independence. However, these counterarguments have not yet been heard as the issue has always been about banning a referendum. Through our many contacts, we have the impression that the citizens of Catalonia are well aware of this and deeply desire nothing more than to finally be able to vote on this

question, which divides families, associations and companies in the region, and to thus restore peace in the region. We consider it an attainable and honourable goal to engage in democratic debate and to allow a process of discussion on the future of the Catalan region.

We imagine that such a vote would be preceded by a period of intensive public debate of at least one year. During this time, citizens can form their own opinions, supported by the media, civil society, business associations, trade unions, parties and governments. Comprehensive information on the advantages and disadvantages of such a decision is a prerequisite for a factual and informed decision by the citizens. Such a long period of time would also counteract emotionalisation.

We believe that the disputes over the Catalan question, which are limited purely to legal matters, no longer fit into a 21st century Europe that is growing closer. In this sense, we can imagine a negotiation process initiated by the Spanish Government in which the outstanding issues will be discussed. We feel that there would be much support for this in Europe if this were necessary.

On behalf of 12,882 Europeans,

Yours sincerely

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Andreas Müller – Democracy International e.V.

Roman Huber – Mehr Demokratie e.V

Arjen Nijeboer – Meer Democratie

Erwin Leitner – mehr demokratie!

Alfred Groff - Initiativ fir Demokratie-Erweiterung

Bert Penninckx – Democratie.Nu vzw