

Dear inhabitants of the commune of Flaxweiler,

This evening we have gathered here in Niederdonven to celebrate the National Day in our commune. In fact, it is about celebrating our country itself, reflecting on our history and thinking about current and future developments at the communal, national and international level.

Unfortunately, the National Day 2021 is different again.

For the past 16 months, the Covid-19 virus has disrupted our lives and, above all, our social relations. We would like to celebrate this National Day again in the usual way, but we are not allowed to. The health of all of us comes first. I introduced my speech in 2020 with similar words. At the time, we all hoped that in a year's time the pandemic would be over. However, things have developed differently.

The ceremony on this eve is celebrated in a very small circle, just as it is at national level. Everyone present this evening has been tested according to the Covid-Check regime and we can therefore dispense with the masks.

We have just laid a wreath here at the memorial to the victims of the Second World War. This particular place, among many others in the country, is a symbol of our freedom, for which many people fought and sacrificed themselves, even to death. As we stand here today, we must be grateful for the freedoms we enjoy that seem so normal. Post-war generations can hardly imagine anything else. We are grateful and show our deep respect to all those who have fallen.

We also thank those who are still working hard to ensure that the sacrifices of the last war are not forgotten.

Symbolically for all of them, I would like to thank our Cultural Commission in cooperation with the Frënn vun der Donver Geschicht as well as Nico Ruppert and Armand Goergen for their commitment to the realization of the memorial project for the British victims of the aircraft crash. After ministerial approval, our municipal staff carried out the work on site and the inauguration will take place on 26 August on the occasion of the 80th anniversary, if the Covid virus does not prevent it.

Measures, some of which have severely restricted our habits and freedoms in recent months, had to be adopted in order to combat the virus. Many things have been discussed in a controversial way, fundamental rights have been emphasized, solidarity, willingness to help, the abandonment of habits, unusually long working hours in hospitals and homes for the elderly for example have taken on a new dimension for many people. Today is a special day for myself, it is a chance to say

THANK YOU to all the people who have done so much to help others, and especially to those who have had to make decisions in the fight against the virus. We hope that the situation will continue to improve, especially through vaccination. Vaccination is the way to normality, get vaccinated.

As COMMUNE, we have always managed to provide all our usual services to our citizens. In addition to the distribution of protective masks, the implementation of a rapid test certification at the commune has recently been added to our services for you, dear citizens.

Covid-19 has caused significant delays in many projects and especially in our process of adopting the new GDP (general development plan). We are currently hoping that it will be approved by the end of the year.

Covid-19 has also created additional financial burdens for the coming years. The major problems at national level that were already well known before the pandemic must be solved as soon as possible. As a commune, we supported the first conventions of the climate and housing pacts and implemented numerous measures. The laws for the second generation of these pacts and the new nature pact have already been passed or are on the agenda of the House of Representatives. We will of course participate in this, as we are all part of the solution. The financial costs for the commune will certainly increase and we are proud and reassured to be able to take advantage of our reserves, even if they are not huge.

Club and sports life has been largely suspended for the past 16 months. Thanks to the rapid tests, club sport has become possible again. I appeal to our clubs and associations not to give up, not to lose courage and to resume their activities as soon as they are possible again. Skype and other means of video conferencing can never completely replace our usual common social life. Active participation in the life of a club is a cheaper alternative to seeing a psychiatrist, even if it cannot solve all mental health problems.

Internationally, the election of the new US President Joe Biden gives hope that world peace can be consolidated again, it was definitely time for the era of the predecessor to come to an end. Unfortunately, many states are in the hands of rulers or governments that ignore human rights and democracy. We hope that the citizens of Belarus, Syria, Israel and Palestine, as well as Iran and all other countries where war and oppression still prevail, will achieve greater freedom and the right of co-determination.

Dear citizens, this year again, the National Day will not be celebrated with big festivities, but we hope that many small celebrations will take place in families or among friends and colleagues. I promise you that as commune we will do everything in our power to celebrate properly again in 2022. We must not lose the joy of celebration, hang in there, stick together and continue to show cohesion and helpfulness to the most vulnerable residents, as you have done over the last few months.

THANK YOU very much to all the staff of the commune for getting through the difficult times so far, THANK YOU to the Gostingen-Beyren and Niederdonven bands for playing the last post and providing the musical backdrop to this ceremony, thank you to the firefighters from CGDIS and to Jonathan Boucher from Beyren for filming the ceremony, the films will be posted online tomorrow afternoon. Thanks to all who came.

Stay safe!

To our Grand Duke and his family, we send our best wishes.

Vive de Grand-Duc !

Vive déi groussherzoglech Famill !

Vive eis Heemecht !

Vive d'Gemeng Fluessweiler !

I wish you all a very happy National Day 2021!