



Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the conclusions of the Special European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020

Brussels, 23 July 2020

Six-cent mille.

Six-cent mille victimes de ce virus tueur.

Six-cent mille vies achevées trop tôt.

Six-cent mille histoires écrites qu'à moitié.

Six-cent mille familles aujourd'hui incomplètes.

Ces six-cent mille qui resteront toujours présents dans nos mémoires et dans nos cœurs.

Et nous savons que ce n'est pas fini.

Malheureusement, pas encore.

Et derrière ce triste cortège, nous voyons le terrible impact sur notre économie.

Nos citoyens, nos travailleurs, nos entreprises, tout le monde souffre et tout le monde se bat.

Cette pandémie nous a frappés au début de l'année.

Et souvenons-nous de ces jours.

Ces courbes de malades qui montaient.

Le nombre de morts qui grimpeait.

Les divisions entre nos pays qui menaçaient.

Nous avons entendu des critiques blessantes.

Des mots qui divisaient le nord et le sud, l'est et l'ouest.

Des débats sur les « coronabonds » qui finissaient par poings serrés et doigts pointés.

La situation était sombre.

Les options peu nombreuses.

Et les rares solutions mises sur la table étaient inter gouvernementales.

C'est-à-dire hors du cadre européen.

Sans méthode communautaire.

Sans Parlement européen.

Et – je le rappelle – nous étions également sans accord sur notre budget européen, deux ans après notre proposition.

Et c'est pour cela que la Commission européenne a fait une proposition européenne.

Pour éviter les réflexes et les erreurs du passé.

Une proposition européenne pour une relance européenne.

Honourable Members,

We all know that Europe is not out of the woods yet.

But Europe can now see dawn turning into light.

This week, not only taboos and perceptions have been cast aside, but one big watershed for our Union has been crossed.

By standing united – 27 Member States backing the Commission – we raise money on the capital market to fight the worst economic crisis ever – together.

In NextGenerationEU, we now have a unique recovery tool – worth EUR 750 billion.

EUR 750 billion to support the hardest hit.

EUR 750 billion to boost our Single Market.

EUR 750 billion to invest in the European Green Deal, digitalisation, resilience and modernize our Single Market.

Of course, 27 countries agreeing something on this scale – and of this unique nature – is a challenge.

It takes courage, political will and of course give and take.

It was never going to be easy but anything worth having - is always worth fighting for.

And I thank you, Charles, for an excellent cooperation and a trustworthy management.

And look at how far Europe's fighting spirit has taken us.

It is not long ago that some asked for loans only to be given out.

But today, we have an agreement that NextGenerationEU will have EUR 390 billion in grants, topped up by EUR 360 billion in loans.

Yes, there are fewer grants than the Commission and the Parliament argued for.

But from where we started – this is an enormous achievement.

And it is big enough to make an enormous difference.

It will invest in reforms linked to our European priorities, in line with our country-specific recommendations.

And because this is a European investment in our European Union, it is essential that the European Parliament plays a key role.

As co-legislator, this House will have its full say on the design of the Facility and how it works.

The Commission will ensure full transparency, including through standing ready for a structured dialogue on priorities and expenditure, and a regular exchange of views on national plans and overall implementation.

This is how, together, we can ensure that NextGenerationEU delivers where it really matters.

It is also how we can ensure that NextGenerationEU accelerates the twin green and digital transition.

30 % of NextGenerationEU and our MFF will be spent on climate related projects.

If we get this right, I believe NextGenerationEU can be one of the largest stimulus for investment and reforms anywhere in the world – investing in roll out 5G, grid infrastructure, in AI and industrial digitisation, in renewables, sustainable transport, energy efficient buildings.

This is how we fight climate change and modernise!

This stimulus will also support much needed structural reforms to make us more resilient.

And we will have a Just Transition Fund to support those people, regions and sectors who have a bigger step to make.

As you know, I would have liked more.

But this week's agreement ensures a 125% increase in the size of the Just Transition Fund, now worth EUR 17.5 billion.

And that will make a real difference on the ground.

Honourable Members,

The big winner of the summit are the New Own Resources.

We have now a unanimous agreement on the need for New Own Resources, we have a clear timetable and we have them linked to repayment.

This is a huge and historic step for our Union – which both the Commission and the Parliament have long been pushing for.

We have no time to waste.

The Commission will come forward with a package of new own resources.

This will include a digital levy.

We will also put forward our Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and an extension of the Emissions Trading System.

The two go hand in hand.

We need to put a price on carbon in all key sectors of the economy at home and we need to avoid carbon leakage from elsewhere to make sure we stay sustainable and competitive.

Honourable Members,

Allow me to come to another issue, which is at the heart of what our Union is all about: our values.

These values – including the respect for the rule of law – are the very foundation of our Union.

They are mandatory and they are priceless.

The European Council has stated a clear commitment to respecting the rule of law and protecting our financial interests.

I not only strongly welcome this.

Also because it is of utmost importance with even more public money on the table than ever before, but against this background the Commission will now follow-up.

We will look into our 2018 rule of law proposal.

We will work together with the co-legislators to ensure that our 2018 proposal is taken forward and where necessary, improved.

Protecting our budget and the respect for the rule of law go hand in hand.

We must also do everything we can to protect EU money by stepping up the fight against fraud.

This means having the right controls in place, including a database on the final beneficiaries of EU funding.

We will work closely with the Parliament to make this happen in the next weeks and months.

Honourable Members,

I started by saying that the European Council's agreement provided the light at the end of the tunnel.

But with light, also comes shadow.

And in this case, the shadow is in the form of a very lean long-term EU budget.

There are regrettable and painful decisions on many programmes, which have crucial European added value.

I am thinking of Horizon, of our essential Health Programme, of InvestEU.

Yes, all of these have been increased – but certainly not as much as we would like.

And I believe the size of our external funds - in particular is concerning.

We should always remember that the value of EU programmes far outweigh their costs.

We managed to avoid even further cuts – as some Member States wanted – but this lean MFF is a

difficult pill to swallow.

And I know this House feels the same way.

But here again, we should also take a step back and look at where we are coming from.

Before we even started, this budget had a hole of around EUR 70 billion because of Brexit; with one big Member State less contributing.

The good news is that we have managed to plug almost all of that gap.

That means that every country has to pay more.

When you put NextGenerationEU on top, we now have a massive and unprecedented financial firepower.

EUR 1.8 trillion.

That is almost 13% of our EU27 GNI.

And MFF and NextGenerationEU together will increase the percentage of modern policies to over 50%.

Just look around the world to see who else can say the same as us.

We should not lose sight of this bigger picture.

Meine Damen und Herren,

Wir haben jetzt die Chance, gemeinsam etwas Historisches für Europa zu erreichen.

Der Druck der Krise hat Türen geöffnet, die lange verschlossen waren.

So traurig der Anlass, er ist auch eine neue Chance für Europa, für unsere Gemeinschaft.

Vor 10 Jahren in der Finanz- und Eurokrise haben wir zwar die Union und den Euro vor dem Auseinanderbrechen bewahrt. Aber der innere Preis war gigantisch.

Unsere Volkswirtschaften haben sich gegenläufig entwickelt.

Junge Menschen mussten ihre Heimat verlassen auf der Suche nach Arbeit und Zukunft.

Diese Risse sind bis heute sichtbar und spürbar.

Dieses Mal machen wir Vieles anders und ich glaube Manches besser.

750 Milliarden Euro, der überwiegende Teil als Zuschuss, sind ein großartiges Signal der Solidarität.

Aber NextGenerationEU bedeutet viel mehr als Geld.

In vergangenen Krisen umgingen die Mitgliedstaaten die Europäischen Institutionen.

Auch aus Misstrauen.

Das bedeutete auch „null Mitsprache“ und „null Gestaltungsmacht“ für das Europäische Parlament.

Dieses Mal ist es anders.

Dieses Mal setzen wir auf eine gemeinschaftliche Lösung.

Auch weil die Kommission sich aktiv dafür eingesetzt hat und mit einem klugen Vorschlag überzeugt hat.

Dank NextGenerationEU sind alle Mitgliedstaaten gleichermaßen in der Lage in der Krise zu helfen.

Ihren Menschen, ihren Unternehmen – ohne, dass den öffentlichen Haushalten die Luft abgeschnürt wird.

Auch weil NextGenerationEU auf der Gemeinschaftsmethode basiert, wird es Wunden heilen und uns zusammenbringen.

Dieses Mal legen wir die Verantwortung für das Schicksal Europas – und die Zukunftschancen unserer Kinder – auf unser aller breite Schultern.

Das ist eine Last, die wir gemeinsam mit Stolz tragen!

Es lebe Europa.

Vive l'Europe.
Long live Europe.

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