



Leaders' historic recovery deal must be followed by national responsibility

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After five days of tough negotiations, the EU has reached a deal to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an unprecedented decision for volume, content and key elements of innovation. Europe, today, is stronger than ever.

Nevertheless, the needed extra-mile came at a sour price. For the first time, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) has decreased, also in real terms. The governance of the Resilience and Recovery Facility is all but consistent, with the European Parliament cut off, and the rebates increased, despite the UK's departure.

Respect for the rule of law is not properly reasserted and on the own-resources, the European Council has been too prudent.

Europe, whether the populists like it or not, is alive and kicking, ready to act for the well-being of future generations.

Now all the governments have to seize this historic opportunity and prepare as soon as possible sound and consistent national plans to implement the #NextGenerationEU.

In less than five months, the EU has tabled an unprecedented array of measures that can – if properly applied – pave the way for a European recovery and relaunch, in line with existing priorities. The total volume is now equal to €1.8 trillion, to which one should add the decisions already taken in the last month in the EU's response to COVID 19, thus fully totaling €7 trillion.

This package sees the European foundations not only saved, but strengthened. For the first time, **the EU will be able to take on European debts to cover European grants for the countries and the regions most affected by the pandemic.**

This time, the European Council agreed on the strong and consistent Commission proposal of 27 May in less than two month, but there are still too many critical points.

The governance method chosen to govern the Resiliency and Recovery Facility is – to say the least - convoluted. This new mechanism, which combines, community and intergovernmental method excludes the European Parliament. One wonders if it will be operational. The EESC is seriously concerned by this approach, which begs to go back to the drawing board.

In relation to the rule of law, the EESC has not changed its position: the respect of common European values are not-negotiable and all policy measures must fully respect our common values, as laid down in Article 2 TEU.

On the key issue of EU own resources, the European Council did not deliver a clear-cut deal and remained too prudent, while the new financial resources that the EU have decided to put on the table to efficiently address the devastating effects of Covid-19 require a progressive and consistent increase.

Not everything has been perfect in the last EUCO. Some leaders have proven that they can be much more European than others and history will remember those who had courage and vision, the others risk to be forgotten.

Some of the **most affected Member states** now have an historic opportunity to bounce back but they will need – as rightly stated by point A18 of the conclusions – **to submit consistent and credible national recovery and resilience plans setting out the reform and investment agenda** that they intend to implement for the years 2021-2023.

At a first reading, the main concerns relate to the need to further clarify the predominant community governance of the Recovery facility; the actual proposals of the Commission on the own resources and on the legislative framework on the rule of law conditionality, which cannot be watered down.

Further serious concerns are about cuts which are not acceptable on some key sectors of the long-term budget (MFF) which are of paramount importance for investing in our common future: research, Erasmus, migration and asylum, external action, defense, Fair Transition Fund, Solvency and InvestEU, health, digitalization and rural development, just to mention a few.

We are sure that the European Parliament will fully exercise its role in the incoming negotiations with the Council for finding sustainable and resilient solutions on these crucial points.

The EESC will further comment on the specific measures of this impressive package.

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