
EU: Von der Leyen, State of the Union Address. Achievements between COVID-19 and war. On violence against women: “No means no”.

“In the next 300 days we must finish the job that” citizens “entrusted us with”. In her State of the Union address in Strasbourg, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen extensively talked about economic issues, employment and social Europe, climate change, and the energy crisis. She highlighted the great challenges faced in recent years, particularly COVID-19 and war in Ukraine. “When I stood in front” of the European Parliament “in 2019 with my programme for a green, digital and geopolitical Europe, I know that some had doubts. And that was before the world turned upside down with a global pandemic and a brutal war on European soil. But look at where Europe is today. We have seen the birth of a geopolitical Union – supporting Ukraine, standing up to Russia’s aggression, responding to an assertive China and investing in partnerships. We now have a European Green Deal as the centrepiece of our economy and unmatched in ambition. We have set the path for the digital transition and become global pioneers in online rights. We have the historic NextGenerationEU – combining 800 billion euros of investment and reform and creating decent jobs for today and tomorrow”. Von der Leyen added: “We have set the building blocks for a Health Union, helping to vaccinate an entire continent – and large parts of the world. We have started to become more independent in critical sectors, such as energy or raw materials”. She then turned to MEPs, saying: “I would also like to thank you for the ground-breaking and pioneering work we did on gender equality. “As a woman, this means a lot to me. We have concluded files that many thought would be blocked forever, like the Women on Boards Directive and the historic accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention. With the Directive on pay transparency, we have cast into law the basic principle that equal work deserves equal pay. There is not a single argument why – for the same type of work – a woman should be paid less than a man”. Also: “I know this house supports our proposal on combating violence against women. Here too, I would like that we cast into law another basic principle: No, means no. There can be no true equality without freedom from violence”.

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