
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Von der Leyen (Commission), “EU offers apology to Italy”. Investment and cohesion to kick-start recovery

€3 trillion are already available for investment, “but we know we will need more”. We need a “Marshall Plan for Europe” and “the European budget will be the mothership” of recovery. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen took the floor at the plenary session of the European Parliament. She said, among other things, that “many were not there on time when Italy needed a helping hand at the very beginning” of the pandemic. “For that, it is right that Europe as a whole offers a heartfelt apology” to Italy. “But saying sorry only counts for something if it changes behaviour. The truth is that it did not take long before everyone realised that we must protect each other to protect ourselves”. She then went on to confirm that the 2021-2027 financial framework will be “the mothership of recovery”: “we will use” its power to “leverage the huge amount of investment we need to rebuild the Single Market” and our economies. The EU “has done more in the last four weeks” for its economy “than it did in the first four years of the last” financial crisis. Many examples and good practices are cited by the EC President as a proof of the solidarity that becomes visible among EU countries. She then cited Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli and their “Ventotene Manifesto”, arguing that Europe should go back to its origins and founding values. And she warned: “While the crisis is symmetric, the recovery will not be” since some countries have been more affected than others. Which is why “cohesion and convergence” are important to kick-start our economies. And finally: The time has come “to put behind us the old divisions, disputes and recriminations”, and use this opportunity to “make our economies, societies and way of life more sustainable”.

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