

**Speech to the
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Session III – Implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans – the role of national Parliaments

SPEECH for First Vice-President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola

Thank you Luis, dear Chairman,
Dear Commissioner Gentiloni,
Dear Mr Pogačnik

Colleagues, honourable members,

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented health, economic and social crisis. The EU managed to respond fast to protect lives, our health systems our economies and jobs. To emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic, last year the EU institutions agreed on two major texts: **the largest long-term budget in the EU history** and on the new instrument - the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**.

In the negotiations on the RRF, the European Parliament managed to frame the Regulation around the most acute challenges. **National recovery and resilience plans are eligible for EU financing if they focus on key policy areas of European relevance, namely:**

- the green transition,
- digital transformation,
- economic cohesion and competitiveness,
- social and territorial cohesion,
- better institutional preparedness and reaction to crises, and

- policies for the next generation, including children and youth, education skills, gender equality and equal opportunities.

Each plan has to contribute **at least 37% of its budget to climate and at least 20% to digital** actions. This is Europe putting our money where our mouth is.

While clearly setting these **European priorities** we also wanted to make sure that the instrument is flexible enough as to allow Member States to make their choices for reforms and investments. This is a **very practical application of the principle of subsidiarity**.

The amount of financial support, the significance of reforms and investments included in the national recovery and resilience plans is indeed unprecedented. The choices of reforms and investments are deeply political.

The national Parliaments' role is therefore more vital than ever. I am very pleased that all national Parliaments have ratified the Council's Decision on EU's Own Resources.

As next step the parliaments need to adopt the support and recovery measures or to scrutinise your government's actions. It is also vital to give impulses and to carry out evaluation of the political choices. It is all about the transformation of the European economy and our economic, social and environmental policies for the next generation.

We can transform the COVID crisis into a once-in-a-generation chance to modernise and revitalise our economic models.

If pandemic was the word of the last year, recovery must be our keyword for the next. This recovery fund is a defining moment in Europe's journey. It enshrines the concept that we are all in this together and we the only way out of it would be together.

It is the biggest and the broadest. Biggest in the monetary sense. It is the largest amount we have ever seen. But beyond figures, it is the broadest because it

involves a coming together of Member States that we have not seen before. It is the understanding that the small business in Lisbon and the self-employed person in Rome depend on each other.

My hope is that from crisis Europe will see opportunity. We must come out of this stronger and more resilient as a Union.

This is what will help rebuild a post-COVID19 Europe by mitigating the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.

The European Parliament takes the scrutiny of the Recovery and Resilience Facility very seriously. In line with the RRF Regulation, the **European Parliament is entitled to receive relevant information on the state of play on the implementation of national recovery and resilience plans (RRPs).**

We would be interested to **hear how national Parliaments have organised or are planning to organise a similar parliamentary scrutiny** of your executive branches.

It is also very important to cooperate **between parliaments** and exchange views regularly. We can build on our established platforms such as the COSAC, the European Parliamentary Week organised by the European Parliament and the Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance.

We could **explore new collaboration and information exchange platforms for the post-pandemic times also between our services.** Those could have a clear added-value for our administrations. They could serve to exchange timely technical information on RRF during its implementation phase, and help to prepare our political discussions for the new post-pandemic European Semester approach.

We as parliamentarians should also encourage **a strong ownership of national recovery and resilience plans with a wide spectrum of stakeholders.** This was a key priority of the European Parliament during negotiations. We managed to

ensure that plans contain a summary of the conducted consultation process with relevant national stakeholders.

We consider that a close stakeholder's involvement can contribute to increasing democratic control and provide valuable inputs for the parliamentary scrutiny.

To conclude, we consider that national Parliaments can contribute to the success of the RRF, notably by **enhancing and increasing political ownership**. We could also use this unique opportunity to develop a common understanding of the **role of parliaments in the EU economic governance framework, to make it more efficient, democratic and legitimate**.

This is about future-proofing our economies. It is a once-in-a-generation chance to shift hardship into opportunity. So from here let me urge those countries that have not submitted their plans to do so quickly.

The Recovery Fund means **we are all in this together**. It means **Hope**. It means stability. It means **Europe** for a whole new generation.