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Decentralise Covid Recovery and Resilience plans, say MEPs

Press release from EFA MEPs Jordi Solé and Piernicola Pedicini

EFA MEPs are calling for regions and sub-state governments to play a much stronger role in the preparation and roll-out of the EU's multi-billion Euro funding to drive economic recovery in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic.

They argue that decentralisation, both in terms of decision making and funding allocation, will be key in making a success of the plans.

The European Parliament this week debated the ongoing assessment of national recovery and resilience plans (RRPs). These plans have been submitted to the European Commission by the Member States for consideration, and are meant to detail how individual Member States will use their RRF (Recovery and Resilience Facility) allocations.

Speaking in the debate, President of the EFA Group in the European Parliament, **Jordi Solé MEP** said:

"In drawing up the Recovery Plans, and despite the requirement to hold a consultation with stakeholders, Member States have involved regional and local governments only to a very small extent. And some of them, to no extent at all.

"During the implementation of the recovery plans, this has to change. Sub-state governments like the Catalan government and also many others, do have the will, the capacity and the experience to successfully manage EU funds. Their participation in managing and monitoring the recovery funds is essential to guarantee their efficiency but also to avoid problems with absorption capacity.

"There is another thing that has to be avoided. The temptation of some Member States to use the Next Generation funds, and the need to spend a lot of money in a short time, as an excuse to recentralise programs and investments and bypass other governments and their own powers.

"I call on the Commission and the Council to ensure that regional governments are meaningfully involved in the governance of the recovery and resilience funds. This will be key to the success of the transformation that these funds rightfully intend to bring about."

Piernicola Pedicini MEP said:

"All of us know that Europe will only be saved if Italy is saved. The distribution criteria for the next generation resources to Member States were clear: population, per-capita poverty rates and unemployment rates.

"But if we apply the same criteria within Italy, then 70 per cent of the resources should go to the south, because that's where we have concentrations of poverty and unemployment. And yet the Italian government has allocated less than 40 per cent to the south, and has established award criteria where less than 20 per cent will be absorbed by the south.

"And so we're seeing a repeat again of what has always happened in the history of Italy, a rich north which sucks out the resources from the poor south. We saw it after the major wars, after the financial crashes, and it's happening again unfortunately.

"Europe will be saved if Italy is saved, but Italy will be saved if the south is saved, and the south will only be saved if Europe will defend it properly."

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