



Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the conclusions of the European Council meeting of 24-25 June 2021

Strasbourg, 7 July 2021

Herr Präsident Sassoli, lieber David,

Herr Präsident Michel, lieber Charles,

meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren Abgeordnete,

auf der letzten Tagung des Europäischen Rates haben wir viele wichtige Fragen erörtert – in der Tat, wie wir eben gehört haben, von der wirtschaftlichen Erholung bis hin zu unseren Beziehungen zu Russland. Aber kein Punkt auf der Tagesordnung war so wichtig wie unsere Diskussion zu einem Thema, das den Kern unserer Identität berührt: unsere Werte.

Die Staats- und Regierungschefs haben eine sehr persönliche und emotionsgeladene Diskussion über das neue ungarische Gesetz geführt. Dieses Gesetz sagt unter anderem, dass jetzt Filme, Informationen und Veröffentlichungen mit Darstellungen von Lesben und Schwulen Kindern und Jugendlichen unter 18 Jahren in Ungarn nicht mehr gezeigt werden dürfen. Und es wird behauptet, dass diese Informationen negative Auswirkungen auf die körperliche und moralische Entwicklung Minderjähriger hätten.

Dieses Gesetz stellt Homosexualität und Geschlechtsumwandlungen auf eine Stufe mit Pornographie. Dieses Gesetz nutzt den Schutz der Kinder – dem wir uns alle verschrieben haben – als Vorwand, um Menschen wegen ihrer sexuellen Orientierung schwer zu diskriminieren.

Dieses Gesetz ist schändlich. Es widerspricht zutiefst den Grundwerten der Europäischen Union – dem Schutz der Minderheiten, der Menschenwürde, der Gleichheit und der Wahrung der Menschenrechte. Diese Werte, die so unverrückbar in Artikel 2 unseres Vertrags verankert sind. Die Staats- und Regierungschefs auf dem Europäischen Rat haben sehr entschlossen ihre Unterstützung der Kommission zum Ausdruck gebracht. Und ich werde alle Instrumente, die der Kommission zur Verfügung stehen, nutzen, um diese Grundsätze zu verteidigen.

C'est là-dessus que je voudrais me concentrer aujourd'hui. Je voudrais saisir cette occasion de vous donner un plus large aperçu de la manière dont nous voulons défendre nos valeurs, l'état de droit et les intérêts financiers de notre Union.

Tout d'abord, en ce qui concerne la loi hongroise elle-même : comme vous le savez, les Commissaires Reynders et Breton ont écrit aux autorités hongroises pour exprimer nos préoccupations juridiques au sujet de cette loi. Si la Hongrie ne corrige pas le tir, la Commission fera usage des pouvoirs qui lui sont conférés en sa qualité de gardienne des Traités. Soyons clairs : nous faisons usage de ces pouvoirs quel que soit l'État membre qui enfreint le droit européen.

Depuis le début de mon mandat, nous avons engagé quelque 40 procédures d'infraction liées à la protection de l'état de droit et d'autres valeurs de l'Union européenne consacrées par l'Article 2 du Traité. Et, si nécessaire, d'autres procédures suivront.

We just cannot stand aside while whole regions declare themselves as so-called LGBTIQ-free zones. Europe will never allow parts of our society to be stigmatised: be it because of whom they love, because of their age, their ethnicity, their political opinions, or their religious beliefs. Because we should never forget: When we stand up for parts of our society, we stand up for the freedom of the whole of our society.

The second point is the protection of the European budget. This is not an abstract question. This is about European taxpayers' money. We will watch over it closely. This is why we have agreed on a new conditionality mechanism. This mechanism is at the very heart of NextGenerationEU and the European budget. Measures must be taken, if it is established that breaches of the rule of law in

Member States affect or seriously risk affecting the sound financial management of the Union budget or the financial interests of the European Union. I know how important this point is for you in the European Parliament and for us, the Commission. And I look forward to the decision of the Court of Justice. This will bring clarity for everyone in Europe.

Meanwhile, our officials are examining all the facts, which could be relevant for later proceedings. And we drew up guidelines on how to apply the conditionality mechanism in practice. We are currently discussing these with you in Parliament. We will start the first files in autumn. So what I said when we adopted the budget holds true: not a single case will be lost.

The conditionality mechanism will also help to protect NextGenerationEU. Because if our Union is investing more money than ever before to advance our collective recovery, we must take special care that this money is used properly and effectively. This is not only a vital ingredient of our democracies. It also creates trust for investors and business at this crucial moment.

This is why, in the national recovery plans of Member States, we include a strong system of controls, of milestones to monitor where the money goes. We will look at good governance, anti-corruption measures and the fight against fraud. In addition, we will use the financial agreements signed with each Member State to make clear what we expect: for example, smooth cooperation with OLAF, the European Anti-Fraud Office. Because, in the end, it is the European people who are paying this all.

Honourable Members,

These are the tools at our disposal, including the Article 7 procedure. But we all know that even the best tools cannot replace an honest debate about values. This is about the Europe we want to live in. It goes to the core of the values, on which our Union was founded and which resonate throughout the world: democracy, equality before the law, respect for court judgements, free media. These values bind us together: North and South, East and West.

We might not agree on every aspect of a certain law. But we have to agree on respecting the judgments of the independent courts that settle our disputes, and we have to agree on the primacy of European law. We might not agree on which project to grant European funds. But we have to agree that this money should be spent properly. We might disagree with a lot we see in our media. But we have to agree that journalists investigating potential abuses of power are not a threat but an asset to our democracies and our societies. And our thoughts and solidarity go with the journalist Peter de Vries in these moments.

We also have our different views when it comes to the future of our European Union. But we must accept the right for everybody to openly express their opinion – without humiliating or diminishing others. We might even disagree about the best way of life. But we must agree on the right for each and every one to make this decision for oneself.

Honourable Members,

There are many places in the world where you can earn a good living and do great business. However, when it comes to living in peace and freedom, there is no better place than Europe. Europe is diverse. Europeans are diverse. Yet, we stand together. It is our values that unite us.

Long live Europe!

Thank you.

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