



Press statement by President von der Leyen ahead of her meeting with Portuguese Prime Minister Costa

Lisbon, 28 September 2020

"Check against delivery"

This is my first official visit here as President of the European Commission. It was important for me to come here. Particularly in these challenging times. The world is still in the middle of the fight against the virus and we all have to remain very cautious. I want the Portuguese people to know that we are together in this. Europe is, was and will be firmly by your side.

I also want to thank Prime Minister António Costa for his hospitality. It is always a pleasure to exchange ideas and views with you. We have often spoken together over the past few months while working on the Recovery Plan for Europe. I value his advice. For me, Portugal is not only an example of how to find a way out of the crisis – with good ideas, hard work and discipline. Portugal is also a role model, how to set the course for the future.

Long before the rest of Europe embraced the Green Deal and the Digital Decade, Portugal significantly changed its energy mix towards a cleaner and more sustainable production. Portugal and in particular Lisbon are a landmark in the digital world. This is no coincidence. That is why I like coming here so much. NextGenerationEU is made for Portugal. The massive investment coming from the EU can give Portugal a further boost on this right course.

And above all, NextGenerationEU can help to ensure that the important businesses and jobs that Portugal needs for its further development are able to weather this crisis. I know this social component is paramount to Prime Minister Costa. It is also very important to me. The social market economy is part of our European identity. The European Union will only be as strong and resilient as each of our Member States is strong and resilient. Europe is actively working on its way out of the health crisis and the subsequent economic crisis.

For the first time – and for exceptional times – Europe has put in place its own common tools to complement national fiscal stabilisers. Portugal has been a key partner in achieving this. This is a remarkable moment of unity for our Union. It resulted in a European Recovery Plan of unprecedented magnitude. Now it is up to us to invest in Europe's future. And I am sure that this excellent cooperation will continue during the Portuguese Presidency in 2021.

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