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THE FRAGILE BOAT OF THE NEW EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE DEPARTS WITHOUT A COMPASS

Ursula von der Leyen sets off with her crew on a five-year journey. But her boat leaves harbour much more fragile than the one she first set sail with in November 2019.

It is much more fragile because the consensus of the MEPs on whom 50 per cent of his accountability depends has evaporated with a fragmentation that has affected all the political groups in her majority, which - with some significant national shifts - was the same one that gave confidence to her executive five years ago: Populars, Social democrats, Liberals and a part of the Conservatives who in 2019 belonged to the Polish PiS and now the Melonians of Fratelli d'Italia.

In 2019, the vast majority of the Greens abstained despite the priority of the European Green Deal: a project that was not a wretched ideological invention of Dutch Vice-President Frans Timmermans but the European answer to the sustainable development goals and the compass for realising the UN 2030 Agenda.

The commitment to the ecological transition had, moreover, prompted the Five Star MEPs to support Ursula von der Leyen in July 2019, with Giuseppe Conte's shrewd vote in favour at the European Council, and to confirm that support in the European Parliament also thanks to the break with Salvini's Lega and the appointment of Paolo Gentiloni with a portfolio of weight that he used with determination and professionalism in the European interest that naturally coincided with the Italian interest.

In November 2019, Ursula von der Leyen's boat was thus supported by 463 parliamentarians out of 705 members of the Assembly. But after five years the bizarre European logics brought the consensus down to 370 votes out of 720 Assembly members with blatant disagreements between the Populars, Social Democrats, Conservatives and Greens divided in half for reasons more national than European.

On both sides of the spectrum, it is worth highlighting the European coherence of the Liberals all in favour, with six abstentions, and the hostile compactness of Orban's patriots and the German AFD sovereignists, to which was added the vote against by all the lefts.

Mathematically, one can debate whether the 27 votes for the Greens or the 33 votes for the Conservatives were decisive. But it is clear that the simple majority of 25 votes and the absolute (not necessary) majority of 9 votes was due to the unprecedented

convergence between the Greens and Conservatives, which compensated for the 38 ECR dissenting MEPs, 27 EPP, 25 S&D, 18 Greens, the 36 abstentions and the 32 absentees.

We also know that, contrary to what happened from 2004 to 2019 when a serious exercise of the candidate-commissioners' hearings forced the presidents-designate (Barroso, Juncker and Von der Leyen) and the governments to change eight of them, the latter this time brought the weight of their power, which is worth more than 50%, to bear to prevent political incidents from provoking an institutional crisis that would be difficult to manage two months before Donald Trump's inauguration in the White House and with two wars at our borders.

Ursula von der Leyen's second boat is, however, dramatically fragile, above all because the compass that will guide her over the next five years on a European journey that will be shaken, on the one hand, by governmental uncertainties and their divisions with an increase in coalitions influenced by nationalist impulses, and, on the other, by the extreme variability of occasional alliances in the European Parliament is unclear. These alliances run the risk of leading the Assembly to be subservient to the Council and the European Council, nullifying the institutional dynamic in which, year after year, the governments' small steps were countered by the European ambitions of the European Parliament and the equidistance of the European Commissions.

The compass is unclear with regard to the twin ecological and digital transitions, the implementation of the Social Action Plan adopted in Porto in 2021, the European dimension of industrial policy - which must be consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and not based on a war economy -, a renewed and strengthened cohesion policy in a logic of European fight against inequalities, a common migration policy that accompanies respect for European values with the economic needs of demographically declining societies, a cooperation plan with the Global South - in the knowledge that it will be useful for realising our strategic autonomy -, a foreign and security policy that is the framework within which to place the defence dimension in the service of peace.

For the path marked by the compass to be clear, the European Commission must present an ambitious project for a five-year financial framework from 2028 to 2032 that guarantees the support and enhancement of European public goods, based on real own resources and a new European public debt, acting in close cooperation with the European Parliament and national parliaments, imagining innovative forms of participatory and deliberative democracy and the opening of a constituent process to overcome the Lisbon Treaty before enlargement to the candidate countries.

In order not to leave the European Commission alone in an institutional vacuum, the MEPs in the progressive-inspired groups should take up the idea of a programmatic political resolution to be presented to the Assembly in January 2025 plenary session, knowing that the 'two-ovens policy' supported by Manfred Weber of variable alliances that nullify the cordon sanitaire may work occasionally but is incapable of creating the conditions for a centre-right coalition involving patriots, sovereignists and conservatives.

Brussels, 1 December 2024

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