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26/11/2020

Assonime Report: "The institutional set-up for
using the Next Generation-EU resources"

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In this Report Assonime proposes an institutional set-up for the preparation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the efficient management of Next Generation-EU resources. The resources made available by Europe must be used to achieve that profound transformation of the Italian economy that can allow Italy to resume a virtuous path of growth and reabsorb the enormous social and territorial imbalances accumulated over decades of inertia, imbalances that are now aggravated by the pandemic. This is an ambitious project, one that cannot succeed without broad consensus in Parliament and throughout the country. Too often in the past attempts at reform failed due to the inability to formulate coherent programmes and to maintain the decided direction beyond the duration of political cycles.

The Report recalls the EU guidelines that set the objectives and requirements of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans, underlining the close relationship that will need to be established between the spending projects and the economic and institutional reforms on the basis of which those projects must be realised. The objective is not to fully indicate the content of the Plan and the path of these reforms – "what we must do" - but rather how we must organise ourselves in order to be able to do it and do it within the tight deadlines imposed by the European Union. We discuss, therefore, the bodies and mechanisms that should be entrusted with the decisions on the allocation of the resources, as well as how to ensure the implementation of the Plan and its effective monitoring and impact on the economy and society, in compliance with the commitments that through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan we will make to the European institutions.

The basic choice that we have made in the elaboration of our proposals is to promote a more effective functioning of our government structure and of the public administrations, strengthening some decision-making centres, improving coordination mechanisms, exploiting the ample resources that already exist, and selectively adding new resources only where this appears necessary to improve the administrations' capacity to act. We have therefore ruled out the creation of new 'parallel' structures dedicated to the implementation of the Plan.

Our governance proposal - briefly illustrated by the Figure on p. 18 - is divided into three levels: political, coordination and operational. The policy level is primarily found in the Council of Ministers, within which we propose to give formal powers for the implementation of the NRRP to the Interministerial Committee on European

Affairs. The Government will have to find in Parliament and in the State-Regions-Local Autonomies Conference, for matters within their competence, consensus on the major choices of reform and allocation of resources.

An institutional figure with the necessary political role and technical support is required for the preliminary work that will lead to the identification of the components of the Plan and to ensuring the connection with the administrations involved and the impetus for the decision-making and implementation process. One could think of a new Minister for the Recovery Plan, supported by a strong technical secretariat at the Prime Minister's Office (RRF Coordination Centre).

The Coordination Centre would be responsible for liaising with the operational structures of the central, regional and local administrations, also with the support of the Agency for Territorial Cohesion. In order to strengthen the coordination, we propose to appoint a highly qualified RRF Manager within each administration with a robust incentive to implement the Plan.

The Report distinguishes three types of interventions: large infrastructure projects and tangible and intangible investment projects of national importance; investment projects with regional and local significance (such as, for example, hydrogeological interventions for the territory), to be coordinated within the framework of the national programmes, setting qualitative requirements and criteria; interventions to support private investments which, where possible, must operate on the basis of automatic allocation mechanisms, eliminating any political-bureaucratic intermediation. We also propose a schedule for the interventions - starting with the maintenance of the infrastructure network and building stock - in order to maximise the economic impact from the initial stages.

To respect the time frames required for the use of Next Generation-EU resources, it is necessary to ensure the speed of the decision-making processes. To this end, the Report proposes a series of simplification measures in the belief that the right way should not be that of derogations, but that of improving ordinary procedures. Resistance must be overcome, even within the bureaucratic apparatuses: we must be well aware that if we do not unlock the decision-making mechanisms, the Italian NRRP will fail and the hoped-for resources will not arrive.

Legislative intervention is essential both for the development of the governance architecture that will manage the funds and for the simplification interventions. It is necessary to clearly define the managerial tasks and responsibilities, reducing the risk of conflicts between levels of government and between bureaucratic apparatuses and reducing the uncertainties that would influence the effectiveness of the action.

Above all, we need a strong common will to act quickly and make good use of the extraordinary resources that will come to us from Europe to revive Italy.

The Report was prepared by a working group coordinated by Assonime Director General Stefano Micossi and composed of Franco Bassanini, Ginevra Bruzzone, Marcello Clarich, Claudio De Vincenti, Bernardo Giorgio Mattarella, Andrea Montanino, Marcella Panucci, Paola Parascandolo and Luisa Torchia. It has already been sent to all the Italian institutional bodies - Presidency of the Republic, Government, Parliament, State-Regions-Autonomy Conference - and was presented to the public today at a press conference.

The document is available only in Italian.

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