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## **David Sassoli: Von der Leyen, “a defender of democracy, a man of deep faith and strong convictions”**

“Today is a sad day for Europe. Our Union loses a passionate European, a sincere democrat and a good man”, European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, said in Italian at a brief press conference in Brussels, paying tribute to the President of the European Parliament, who passed away last night. “David Sassoli was a man of deep faith and strong convictions”, she continued in English. “Everyone loved his smile and his kindness, yet he knew how to fight for what he believed in”. She recalled that Sassoli “was in Berlin, among the young Europeans when the Wall came down”, and “ever since”, he has “stood on the side of democracy” and of a united Europe. In his service, “he constantly defended our Union and its values”. In von der Leyen’s words, Sassoli believed that Europe had to “be more united, closer to its people” and more faithful to its values. “That is his legacy. And that is how I will remember him”. Von der Leyen ended her speech in Italian calling Sassoli “a champion of justice and solidarity, and a dear friend. My thoughts are with his wife, Alessandra, his children, Giulio and Livia, and all his friends”. Flags are at half-mast outside all European institutions in Brussels.

Valentina Bombelli