
RENZI CONTINUES ROW WITH NEW EU COMMISSION CHIEF

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BRUSSELS - Italy's PM Matteo Renzi has demanded "respect" for his country after new EU commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker criticised his and David Cameron's behaviour during an EU summit.

"For Italy, its past, its future, I demand respect. Or rather, I insist on the sort of respect the country deserves," Renzi tweeted on Tuesday evening (4 November) under the hashtag "Europe".

Only a few hours earlier, Juncker told the European Parliament that he disapproved of the way Renzi and his British counterpart Cameron "amplified problems" at the last EU summit, where they both picked fights with the EU commission over budget matters.

"I have to tell my friend Renzi I am not the chairman of gang of bureaucrats. I am the president of the European Commission, a political institution, and I want leaders to respect these institutions," Juncker said.

Renzi had accused outgoing commission chief Barroso of nitpicking over Italy's national budget and made public a confidential letter Barroso sent to Rome.

Juncker also suggested Rome was lucky to scrape through an initial review by Brussels of its 2015

budget despite running an excessive deficit, saying that "if Barroso only listened to bureaucrats, Italy's budget would have been treated differently."

He also suggested Renzi and Cameron had been disingenuous with their audiences back home about what had been said in the EU council.

"For a long period of time I had been taken notes and comparing what is said in the room and what is said outside the room. From time to time it happens that the notes do not coincide," he said.

"As far as the British Prime Minister is concerned, and after listening to what Mr Cameron has said, I have to say that the way things are presented in the British public opinion are totally different than they should be presented by respecting the rules of the treaty," Juncker added.

Cameron's row with the EU commission is about an outstanding bill to the EU budget, which emerged after Britain changed its way it calculates its gross national income.

Juncker pointed out that it was the member states themselves who adopted the rules on how much they have to pay into the budget. "The commission only applies these rules adopted by the member states."

But he did acknowledge that in London's case the "size of the problem has a totally different dimension than it had in the past" and said that the commission and the Italian presidency were working on a solution.

It is not a British problem, it is a problem for the whole of the European Union and we have to find a general solution, he said, noting that the impact on the Dutch budget is far larger than on the British budget.

Kaynak/Source: