May 25, 2026

**Joint Declaration on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034 by the Friends of Cohesion (BG, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK)**

The 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is the strategic instrument for achieving our common objectives and the ambitious vision on the future of the EU. **A more competitive, prosperous, stronger and safer Europe requires sufficient financing to match our political ambition, adapted to the new geopolitical reality.**

The next MFF must continue to ensure **sufficient resources for policies stemming from Treaty obligations, such as Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**, which play a fundamental role in promoting convergence, economic growth and food security. At the same time, the next MFF should **support boosting the EU strategic autonomy and continue strengthening EU's competitiveness**, climate and digital transition, security and defence, productivity and innovation, as well as ensuring a strong basis for a fully integrated Single Market. It must also **respond to new challenges** such as security risks, disruptions in global trade, the energy transition and security, migration, reflecting the geopolitical situation. Therefore, the MFF volume as proposed by the Commission is the basis to discuss how to effectively address the financial needs of the Union.

**In the Commission's proposal, Cohesion Policy, CAP and the CFP are the only policies facing reductions in real terms**, despite the overall increase in the size of the new MFF. These policies significantly contribute to the key EU objectives and their Treaty-based objectives remain fully relevant**. Cohesion Policy and CAP are the most visible EU policies for the EU citizens**.

In this context, **we call for an increase in the Member States allocations** under **Heading 1 for the Treaty-based policies**.

Programming of those allocations, particularly at the beginning of the programming period and at the mid-term review, should remain entirely the responsibility of the Member States. The proposed steering mechanism must not impact the programming prerogatives of the Member States. While shared management instruments can build on the proposed reference framework, recommendations should not be automatically translated into obligations, as it would run contrary to the shared management principle and the place-based approach.

To ensure the effective use of EU funds in shared management, **realistic and favourable implementing conditions are essential** to support long-term investments and a high quality of expenditures**.** This requires **maintaining N+3 rule** for decommitments, balanced commitment and payment profiles, as well as adequate **pre-financing and co-financing EU rates for CAP** and **CFP** measures**, Cohesion Policy including Cohesion Fund** investments and **Home Affairs** funds. At the same time, Cohesion Policy should not be turned into a systematic crisis tool, replacing other EU instruments to this purpose: the proposed 10% reserve for crises should be reduced; the reprogramming of ongoing measures in the Plan should remain a voluntary option for the Member State, while ensuring at the same time access to the reserve for crises and the EU Facility. Furthermore, Cohesion Policy should be endowed with appropriate and secured funding for all categories of regions.

We support the focus of the **Heading 2** on **competitiveness**. As regards the **European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), we recognize the centrality of the principle of excellence and the need to fully explore it across the EU.** Therefore, it is necessary to ensure effective and inclusive access to **strengthen the overall competitiveness throughout the EU**. To increase participation and foster capacity-building across the EU, specific measures should be introduced for improving the access of less experienced entities to competitive calls, with **special focus on SMEs**, the backbone of the EU economy. In addition, **more favourable implementing conditions,** such as 85% EU cofinancing rate for Member States with GNI per capita below EU27 average, should also be ensured for **Connecting Europe Facility**, considering its contribution to leveraging the Single Market and fostering EU resilience.

Friends of Cohesion are open to discussing proposals for **new own resources** that would effectively ease the pressure on the Member States' budgets. These discussions must be linked to the overall MFF negotiations. Any new own resources **must be genuine, fair, simple and not regressive**.

The **abolition of rebates linked to the GNI based own resource[1] is a must** – there is no political or economic rationale for re-introducing them on the revenue side of the EU budget. The added value of the single market and of the EU as a whole, as well as the spill-over effects of the EU budget, must not be overlooked.

A **more gradual repayment scheme of Next Generation EU and new joint borrowing for loan support** (such as Catalyst Europe) should be considered as options to finance investments and European public goods essential for long-term strategic autonomy, ensuring that the MFF can effectively address the Union's evolving challenges and priorities.

**Friends of Cohesion stand ready to contribute constructively to reaching a balanced compromise that benefits the entire European Union**. Our shared objective is to achieve a budget that is **both modern and responsive to the varying needs of Member States and regions**.

[1] The gross reductions in annual GNI-based contribution apply until the end of 2027, according to the current Own Resources Decision.