

We need, more than ever, an ambitious MFF for a successful rEUnaissance

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Luca Jahier, EESC President
Statement by

Today, the EESC has adopted, with an overwhelming majority (140 votes for, 3 votes against and 7 abstentions) its opinion on the Multiannual Financial Framework, proposed by the Commission on 2 May.

The EESC is the first institution, which has taken a formal position on the Commission's proposal. I wish to congratulate the rapporteur, my colleague Javier Doz Orrit, as his task was surely a complex one.

With less than 8 months to go before the European elections, this file is a crucial one as it measures the scale of our ambition for the future of our European Union.

In times of rising populism, it is of the utmost importance to give to the EU the means it needs to deliver on the priorities set out by the Member States.

Despite the current situation, not least the unforeseen departure of a large Member State and the necessity to integrate some key new priorities such as security and defence, protection of the EU's external borders and migration policy, the Commission did an overall good job in crafting a budget for the next 2021-2027 period.

We agree with the "new" priorities – the budget increases foreseen for research, education, innovation, and for the InvestEU's tool are all positive signals.

Likewise, we welcome the Commission's push for strengthening the own resources.

At the same time, as EESC, we clearly do not agree with the significant cuts proposed by the Commission on the "older" priorities. The social policy and the Social Fund, the structural Funds and the Common Agricultural Policy have proved to be effective when Europe had to face its longest and toughest economic, financial and social crisis. The commitments taken in Gothenburg on 17 November of last year call for a comprehensive implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

That is why we are now calling on to the Member States and to the European Parliament – which agrees with us – to increase the current proposed ceiling of 1,14%. We strongly believe that this ceiling should be increased to 1,3% of GNI. This is imperative.

I can already see some Member States declaring, once again, that the EU budget has to be reduced. These Member States may even be the ones, which, in a few years, could be tempted to say that the EU is not delivering the way it used to.

To these Member States – too prompt in accusing the EU of not being able to deliver on transnational issues (migration today, climate change tomorrow), I say that they cannot have it both ways.

We can simply not call for cuts in the EU budget and ask to the EU to take on new tasks, while at the same time demanding the same efficiency. This does not work.

For sure, Europe must constantly adapt to the new challenges that are emerging today with surprising intensity and rapidity (migratory flows, digitisation etc.) and, if needed, should be prepared to change but I firmly believe, without being complacent, that Europe has served us well: it gave us peace, democracy, economic growth and solidarity.

At the EESC, we have adopted this opinion on the MFF bearing in mind the next political events, starting from the incoming European elections.

This is why we are calling for a real and ambitious budget for Europe, a Europe which must remain competitive, inclusive and sustainable and that can still achieve its rEUnaissance.

For more information:

Daniela Vincenti, Spokesperson of President Luca Jahier
+32 497 412095
daniela [dot] vincenti@eesc [dot] europa [dot] eu

Daniela Marangoni, Press Officer
+ 32 474 252814
daniela [dot] marangoni@eesc [dot] europa [dot] eu

