The next Multiannual Financial Framework: perspectives from national Economic and Social Councils

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On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of almost EUR 2 trillion (around 1.26% of the EU's gross national income on average) for 2028-34, intended to support a more independent, prosperous, secure and resilient Europe. The proposed MFF would increase budget flexibility to allow a faster response to unexpected developments and emerging priorities. It would also simplify and better harmonise funding programmes so citizens and businesses can more easily identify and access opportunities. National and Regional Partnership Plans would be used to better reflect local needs by linking investment with reforms and strengthening cohesion outcomes. The framework aims to boost competitiveness by supporting supply-chain security, scaling innovation, and sustaining leadership in clean and smart technologies. It also proposes a balanced package of new own resources to help ensure sufficient revenue while limiting pressure on national public finances.

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

Call for increased budgetary ambition and adequate funding
Several Councils stress that the proposed MFF is insufficient for current challenges and call for increased financial capacity, including higher ceilings or new own resources.

Support for simplification, but with strong safeguards
While simplification of EU funding instruments is broadly supported, several Councils warn that it must not reduce accessibility and effectiveness, nor create additional administrative burdens.

Protection of Cohesion Policy, ESF+ and CAP as distinct pillars
There is strong convergence on preserving key EU policies, avoiding merging of funds, and maintaining their role in reducing disparities and supporting regions.

Strengthening social cohesion and social investment
Several Councils highlight the importance of social objectives, including employment, labour rights, inclusion, and territorial balance, as central to the MFF.

Enhanced role of social partners, civil society and territorial actors
Broad agreement exists on reinforcing the partnership principle, ensuring involvement of social partners and civil society representatives in programming, implementing and monitoring the MFF.

Resolution of the ESC of Bulgaria on the Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034)

Adopted on 24 October 2025, the Resolution on the EU's 2028–2034 MFF of the Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria supports the Commission's aims to boost flexibility, simplify programmes, and strengthen competitiveness, innovation and cohesion, while warning that delivery also depends on completing the **Single Market** and **Capital Markets Union** and improving Recovery and Resilience Plan implementation.

The resolution also highlights risks for Bulgaria: insufficient recognition of the **Black Sea's security** burden and Ukraine-related costs, higher national co-financing pressures, and potential cuts to traditional cohesion funding which has proven its importance in bridging the gap between European countries and regions. The Council also cautions against centralising the Common Agricultural Policy (**CAP**), the European Social Fund (**ESF+**) and the European Competitiveness Fund management, calls to restore ESF+ independence, protect CAP mechanisms, and address major fisheries reductions. It urges greater involvement of **social partners** and **civil society** in the programming, implementation, and monitoring of MFF support.

Opinion of the ESEC of France on the reform of the MFF (2028-2034): what tangible simplifications can be expected?

In its opinion on 'The complexity of European Union aid and visibility of its action' (15 October 2025), the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of France (ESEC) reviews the Commission's proposed 2028–2034 EU MFF reform. While sharing the simplification objective, ESEC warns that certain options could **weaken** the **coherence** of EU action and long-standing common policies, notably **Cohesion Policy** and the Common Agricultural Policy (**CAP**).

It notes that a single national plan per Member State, pooling several funds into one envelope, could reduce fragmentation, but **governance** remains **unclear** and EU-wide objectives could be diluted. ESEC fears a drift towards 27 separate strategies, and that greater 'fungibility' between funds could sideline social and territorial cohesion and widen disparities.
It also cautions that shifting arbitration from EU to national level may push difficult trade-offs downwards and curb European ambition. The proposed European Competitiveness Fund could support strategic investment but may become overly bureaucratic and undermine specialised expertise. Finally, a move from cost-based to performance-based funding could raise administrative entry costs and still not simplify access for end beneficiaries.

Overall, ESEC supports simplification -provided it does not come at the expense of shared policies, regional roles and territorial cohesion.

Opinion of the CNEL of Italy on the MFF (2028-2034)

In its Opinion on the EU's proposed MFF 2028-2034 adopted on 23 October 2025, the National Council for Economics and Labour of Italy (CNEL) emphasises the aim of a more strategic and flexible budget aligned with competitiveness, security, and social justice.

It argues that strategic investment in innovation and infrastructure must go hand in hand with labour rights, social cohesion, and a strong territorial dimension. While noting the proposed €1,980 billion envelope (1.26% of EU GNI), the CNEL considers it inadequate for the scale of challenges linked to green and digital transitions and for delivering European public goods. It therefore calls for a budget closer to **3% of EU GDP**, supported by European debt issuance and a European Strategic Investment Fund.

The CNEL supports the European Competitiveness Fund, but urges earmarking resources for employment, workplace safety, and lifelong learning. It also defends the autonomy and funding **of ESF+** and **Cohesion policy**, pairing simplification with stronger technical support to avoid exclusion. Finally, the CNEL backs simplified governance while safeguarding the role of local authorities and social partners, introducing social conditionalities, and strengthening transparency, traceability, and monitoring of EU spending.

Resolution on an Opinion of the Council for Public Benefit Work of Poland regarding the Proposal for the MFF (2028-2034)

In its 19 September 2025 resolution on the European Commission's proposal for the 2028-2034 MFF, the Council for Public Benefit Work of Poland (RDPP) welcomes the initiative but warns that the budget is too small to meet the EU's social, climate and cohesion goals. It calls for a higher ceiling (about **1.35-1.4% of GNI**) backed by new EU own resources to ensure stable financing.

The RDPP urges a **partnership** principle **with civil society, social partners** and **regional authorities** across all EU spending, including mandatory regional chapters in National and Regional Partnership Plans and capacity building support for NGOs at NRPP.
It also asks to safeguard **social investment** (from 14 to a minimum 20% of National and Regional Partnership Plans) and to protect Cohesion Policy and the European Social Fund, while maintaining support for a just transition through the Just Transition Fund and a longer-term Social Climate Fund.
On environmental funding, it wants LIFE to remain separate, stronger biodiversity allocations, and a ban on financing fossil-fuel projects except in narrowly defined emergencies.

Finally, it recommends clearer rule-of-law safeguards to enable support for civil society organisations and local authorities when payments are suspended, stronger Monitoring Committees, technical assistance and indicators, protected civil-society funding under AgoraEU, continued Community-Led Local Development, and an EU-level agreement to institutionalise regular NGO dialogue on the budget.

Opinion of the Economic and social Council of Romania on the Proposal for the MFF (2028-2034)

The Romanian Economic and Social Council's opinion on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034 offers a reflection on how the Union's budget should respond to an increasingly complex political, economic and social landscape. It calls for a stronger alignment between the EU strategic ambitions, arguing that credibility and effectiveness depend on adequate funding, greater fiscal capacity and more flexible budgetary instruments. The opinion supports simplification and a more coherent EU funding architecture, while warning against excessive fragmentation, unclear conditionalities or reforms that could **weaken democratic oversight** and the partnership principle.

At the heart of the opinion is a strong defence of **Cohesion Policy** and the **ESF+** as distinct and indispensable pillars of the European social model. The Council **opposes** merging them into **a single fund** with other policy areas, stressing the need to preserve predictability, subsidiarity and targeted support for regions facing structural challenges.

It also calls for **stronger social investment**, fair access to competitiveness funding, ambitious gender equality targets, digitalisation and reinforced involvement of social partners and civil society in the design and monitoring of EU programmes. Finally, the Opinion gives particular attention to Romania's infrastructure, SMEs, just transition needs, climate adaptation and biodiversity.

What is the European Economic and Social Committee saying on the next MFF? Check it out **HERE**