

To:
Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

In Brussels, the 3rd of July 2025

Subject: our governance model for the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Cohesion Policy

Dear President,

On behalf of the S&D Group in the REGI committee in the European Parliament and of the PES Group in the COTER committee in the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), we write to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to an ambitious post-2027 budget. This budget must, at the very least, match the current one in real terms, including Next Generation EU. We insist that new priorities require new funds. There is an opportune moment to create these resources through financial tools, such as new own-resources, new joint borrowing and through repurposing unspent money from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

Beyond the critical issue of budget size, we are deeply concerned about the future governance of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This concern was echoed in our discussions during the joint meeting in the European Parliament on 3 July 2025. Our apprehensions stem from the note circulated ahead of the orientation debate on the MFF on 14 May 2025 and from ambiguous public statements made by you and various Commissioners concerning the future governance of the MFF since the publication of the communication "on the road to the next multiannual financial framework" on 11 February 2025.

Thirteen days before the release of a first set of proposals for the next MFF, we reiterate our call to keep the successful multilevel governance management of EU Structural Funds. This is not merely a technical debate; it is about the very essence of our European Union project, the resilience of our democracies and the well-being of European citizens.

We acknowledge the analysis of the European Commission: "the Union needs a simpler, more focused and more flexible financial framework – one that enables us to act when needed, invests in long-term priorities and protects our values". We also agree that there are "new priorities, the start of NextGenerationEU repayments, and given a difficult fiscal position in Member States, [that] we must make the most of every euro and need new sources of revenues".

In this context, we must be unequivocally clear about the future governance of the budget. This clarity is just as crucial as the level of resources of the future long-term budget of the European Union!

In the current situation, we understand that the European Commission could propose **measures in terms of flexibility and simplification**: a single set of rules and better complementarities and synergies between different funds. They could indeed lead to simplification at all levels, particularly for the final beneficiaries, who are of utmost importance.

However, **we firmly believe that this simplification and flexibility must not lead to further recentralisation or renationalisation of European policies**, especially those implemented through shared management. It is also crucial that these changes are **paired with predictability** for managing authorities and beneficiaries to preserve the added value of cohesion policy, which is intrinsically linked to its long-term perspective. Despite the improved semantics of public interventions around the **National and Regional Partnership Plans**, the role of regions in managing future cohesion policy and rural development funds remains unclear. In particular, we are concerned that future regulations may eliminate the capacity of sub-national authorities to officially manage regional programs under shared management. This will jeopardize the place-based approach in the cohesion policy and the future CAP that is essential to their success.

For the future cohesion policy, we invite the Commission to explore possible ways that could include a new common provision regulation (CPR) that covers all funds under shared management. However, we believe that any fund-specific rules should be, where necessary, integrated as dedicated sections within this CPR, rather than merged into a single undifferentiated framework. It is nevertheless essential, **to ensure that all funds maintain the principles of shared management and that regional programmes are allocated at the beginning of the programming period following a kind of renovated Berlin formula. This is essential for the long-term dimension of cohesion policy and to preserve the objectives of convergence set in the Treaties.**

Moreover, in the next National and Regional Partnership Plans, we insist that there should be two distinct parts: one referring to the national level **and one referring to a series of regional or sub-national programmes' chapters**. The managing authorities responsible for the regional sections in the National and Regional Partnership Plans should participate in and lead the regional programmes' negotiations directly with the services of the European Commission, bringing their sub-national and territorial expertise.

Only in this way we can take stock of the lessons learnt from the current programming period with the Next Generation EU package, the rather inefficient implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the succession of crises within the EU. Only in this way we can adapt European priorities to the EU territorial diversity to make European policies fit for Europeans' needs wherever they live.

Respectfully,

Marcos Ros Sempere, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Coordinator in the REGI committee (Spain)

Pascal Smet, PES Coordinator in the COTER commission in the CoR, Member of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium)

Kata Tüttő, President of the European Committee of the Regions, member of the COTER commission, Member of the Municipality Council of Budapest (Hungary)

Vasco Cordeiro, President of the COTER commission in the CoR, Member of the Regional Parliament of Azores (Portugal)

Luca Menesini, President of the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), member of the COTER commission, Provincial Councillor (Italy)

Antje Grotheer, Vice-president of the PES Group in the CoR, Member of the COTER commission, President of the Bremen State Parliament (Germany)

Sakis Arnaoutoglou, Substitute member of the REGI committee (Greece)

Isabelle Boudineau, Member of the COTER commission, Councillor delegated for European Affairs of the Region of Region Nouvelle-Aquitaine (France)

Paul Farrugia, Member of the COTER commission, President of the Port Region (Malta)

Pekka Komu, Member of the COTER commission, Board Chair of the Lahti City Council (Finland)

Thibault Lechat-Vega, Member of the COTER commission, Vice-president of the Region Guyana (France)

Guillermo Peláez Álvarez, Member of the COTER commission, Minister of Finances, Justice and European Affairs, Principality of Asturias (Spain)

Karsten Uno Petersen, Member of the COTER commission, Regional Council Member, South Denmark (Denmark)

José Manuel Ribeiro, Member of the COTER commission, Mayor of Valongo (Portugal)

Nathalie Sarrabezolles, Member of the COTER commission, Departmental Councillor of Finistère (France)

Rudi Vervoort, Member of the COTER commission, President of the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium)