European Committee of the Regions

Future Directions of EU Cohesion Policy

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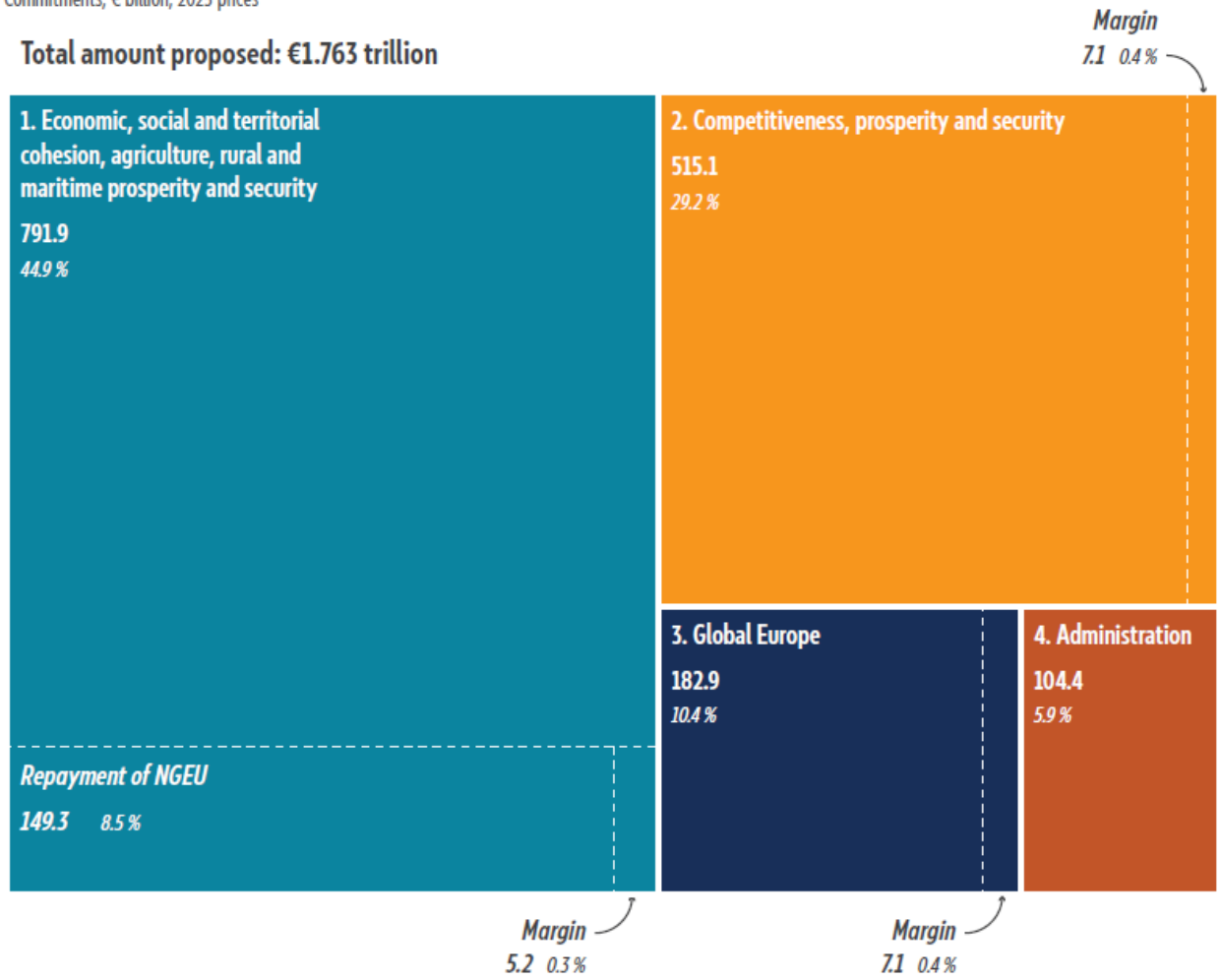
European Committee of the Regions

ARL Congress 2026, Köln 01.10.2026

Commission proposal for the MFF

2028-2034 MFF overview

Commitments, € billion, 2025 prices

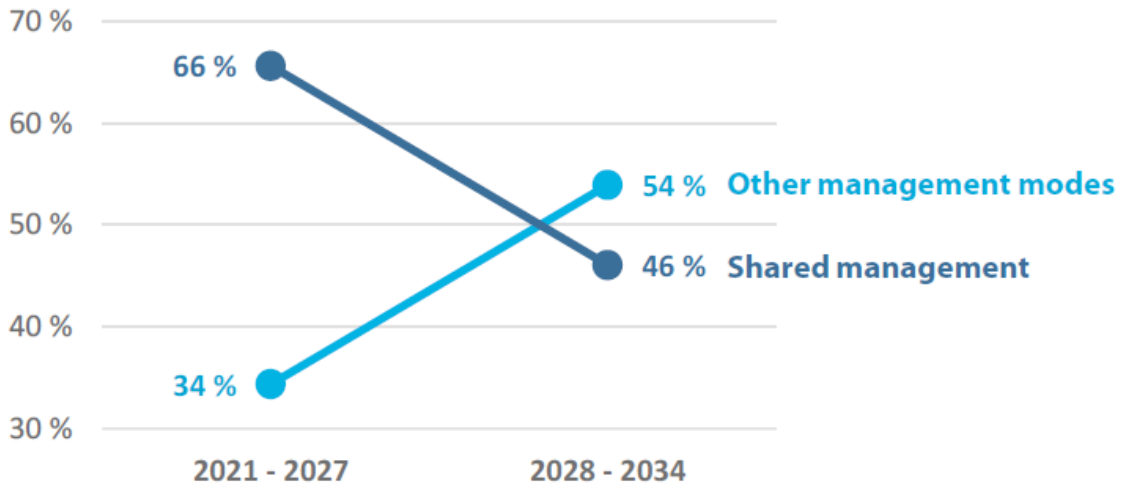


Comparison of the 2021-2027 and the 2028-2034 MFF

Commitments, € billion and EU GNI %, 2025 prices

ECA assessment management mode

Figure 2 | Proportion of shared and other management modes in current and proposed MFF



Note: The total shares of other management modes and shared management excludes administration and repayment of NextGenerationEU borrowing.

Source: ECA based on European Commission data.

"The proportion of the EU budget under shared management is proposed to decline by 20 percentage points (i.e. from 66 % to 46 %). An increase of direct and indirect management may pose administrative challenges for the Commission. It may also affect the geographical distribution of expenditure."

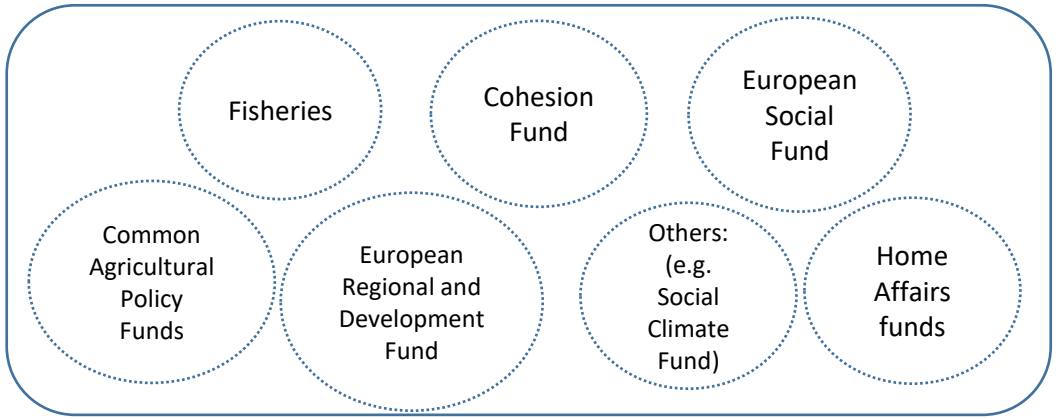
https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/OP-2026-03/OP-2026-03_EN.pdf

The EC proposal: A Single Plan for each Member State

Around **530 programmes** for Member States (2021-2027 MFF)

- Cohesion policy: 398 (national and regional programmes + 27 partnership agreements
- Agriculture and fisheries: 54
- Home funds: 79

27 **programmes** for all Member States



Next MFF: "Single Plan" for each Member State

Single all-policy document for each

- Simpler legal framework
- Streamlined negotiations (more leverage and flexibility)
- Less red tape

Strong policy agenda on joint EU priorities

Reference Framework identifying challenges for the Member Stats (Pillar 1) and the EU (Pillar 2)

- European Semester CSRs
- National Energy and Climate Plans
- European Governance Plans
- Other policy tools (.e.g Schengen, Rule of Law

National and/or Regional chapters	Investments (examples)	Reforms (examples)
e.g. transport	Construction of rail line	Simpler public procurement
e.g. social	Social Housing	Addressing gender gap in employment
e.g.energy	Renewable Energy	Faster permitting
e.g. agriculture	Direct Payments	Promoting organic farming
e.g. security and migration	Reception Facilities for migrants	Strengthening cross-border cooperation

Performance-based delivery model

Payments against fulfilment of policy objectives

Strong Conditionalities

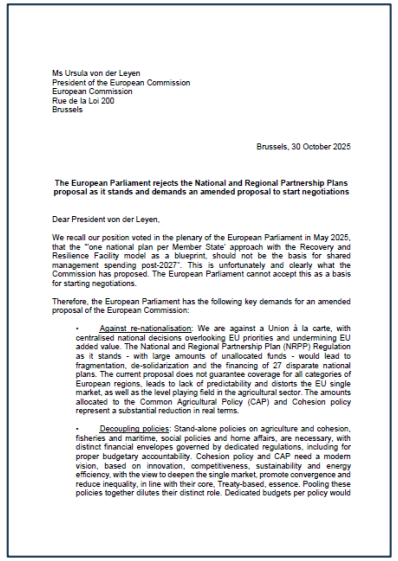
Protection of EU financial interests , Rule of Law and EU values

EC rationale for the proposed changes

- More strategic and focused on ‘new’ priorities
- More flexible and agile
- Better performing
- Simpler

While preserving partnership, multi-level governance, shared management and a place-based approach…

Joint letter from the EP of 30.10.2025



Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
Brussels

Brussels, 30 October 2025

The European Parliament rejects the National and Regional Partnership Plans proposal as it stands and demands an amended proposal to start negotiations

Dear President von der Leyen,

We recall our position voted in the plenary of the European Parliament in May 2025, that the "one national plan per Member State' approach with the Recovery and Resilience Facility model as a blueprint, should not be the basis for shared management spending post-2027". This is unfortunately and clearly what the Commission has proposed. The European Parliament cannot accept this as a basis for starting negotiations.

Therefore, the European Parliament has the following key demands for an amended proposal of the European Commission:

- Against re-nationalisation: We are against a Union à la carte, with centralised national decisions overlooking EU priorities and undermining EU added value. The National and Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP) Regulation as it stands - with large amounts of unallocated funds - would lead to fragmentation, de-solidarization and the financing of 27 disparate national plans. The current proposal does not guarantee coverage for all categories of European regions, leads to lack of predictability and distorts the EU single market, as well as the level playing field in the agricultural sector. The amounts allocated to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Cohesion policy represent a substantial reduction in real terms.

- Decoupling policies: Stand-alone policies on agriculture and cohesion, fisheries and maritime, social policies and home affairs, are necessary, with distinct financial envelopes governed by dedicated regulations, including for proper budgetary accountability. Cohesion policy and CAP need a modern vision, based on innovation, competitiveness, sustainability and energy efficiency, with the view to deepen the single market, promote convergence and reduce inequality, in line with their core, Treaty-based, essence. Pooling these policies together dilutes their distinct role. Dedicated budgets per policy would

- Inherent democratic deficit: There is an inherent democratic deficit in the "cash-for-reforms" model, given the lack of oversight by the European Parliament - as budgetary and discharge authority - and by national or regional elected bodies. Unless linked to the Rule of Law and fundamental rights, reforms must be directly linked to the investments that are made. National-level reforms should not condition sub-national investments, unless they are clearly linked; pairing local investments with macroeconomic reforms would effectively eliminate this link. The generalised implementation model of "financing not linked to costs" should be limited as much as possible as it lacks transparency and prevents proper audit and scrutiny in the implementation of EU funds.

As the current proposal on the NRPP does not take our core requests into consideration, it cannot constitute a basis for negotiations. We therefore look forward to seeing our key requests meaningfully reflected in an amended proposal of the European Commission, which would allow the negotiations with the European Parliament to move forward.

Yours sincerely,

Manfred Weber
EPP Group Chair

Siegfried Muresan
EPP Group Vice-Chair and Co-Rapporteur the Post-2027 MFF in the European Parliament

Iratxe García Pérez
S&D Group President
MFF in the European Parliament

Carla Tavares
Co-Rapporteur of the Post-2027

Valérie Hayer
Renew Europe Group President
MFF in the European Parliament

Fabienne Keller
Shadow Rapporteur of the Post-2027

Terry Reintke and Bas Eickhout
Greens/EFA Group Co-Presidents
MFF in the European Parliament

Rasmus Nordqvist
Shadow Rapporteur of the Post-2027

- **Against renationalisation:** We are against an à la carte Union in which centralised national decisions ignore EU priorities and undermine EU added value. The Regulation on the National and Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP) in its current form - with large amounts of unallocated funds - would lead to fragmentation, desolidarisation and the financing of 27 different national plans.

- **Decoupling of policies:** Autonomous policy areas are needed in the areas of agriculture and cohesion, fisheries and maritime, social policy and home affairs, with different financial envelopes regulated by specific regulations, also with a view to ensuring adequate accountability for the budget. ensure greater predictability and certainty for beneficiaries and be further enhanced by earmarked amounts for specific policy priorities.

- **Role of regions and local authorities:** Cohesion policy cannot be designed and managed exclusively by national central governments. The role of regions and local authorities must therefore be strengthened and much better reflected in the legislation in the proposal.

- The **common agricultural policy** must ensure a level playing field for farmers, rather than a minimum proposal with common rules, as has been the case up to now. The relevant articles of the CAP, which are now included in the NRPP Regulation, should be reintroduced into a specific legal framework (regulated by specific regulations). This legal framework should include the CAP Strategic Plans and clear rules are needed to prepare them.

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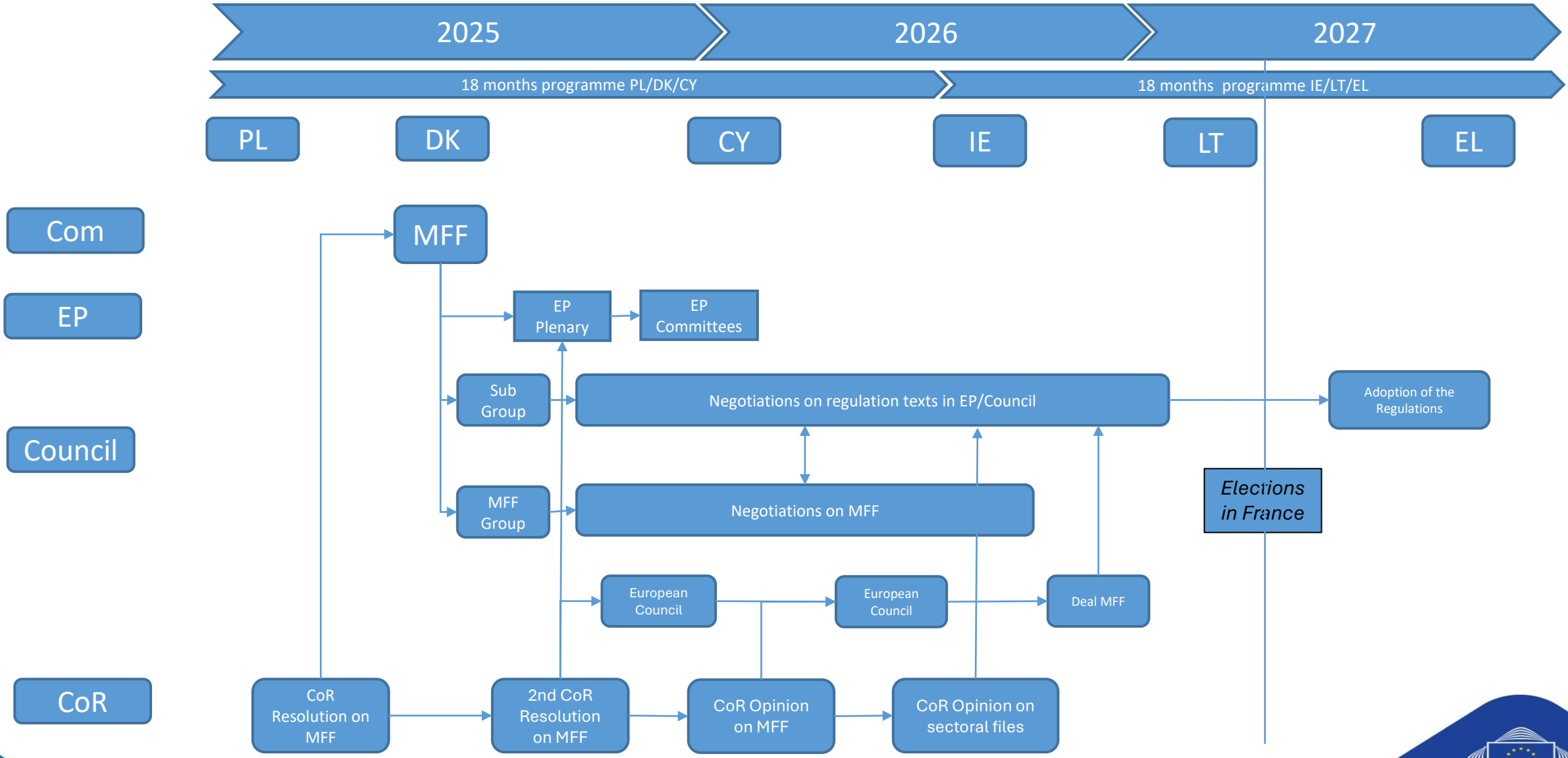
Timeline 2025-2027



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State of play 1 October 2026

- **Overall MFF 2028-2038:** EP interim report on MFF adopted in April 2026 (negotiation mandate), European Councils planned 15-16 Oct, 26-27 Nov, 17-18 December
- **Sectoral files/multiannual programmes 2028-2034:** Council has adopted PGAs on many files, EP intention to complete the work by November 2026

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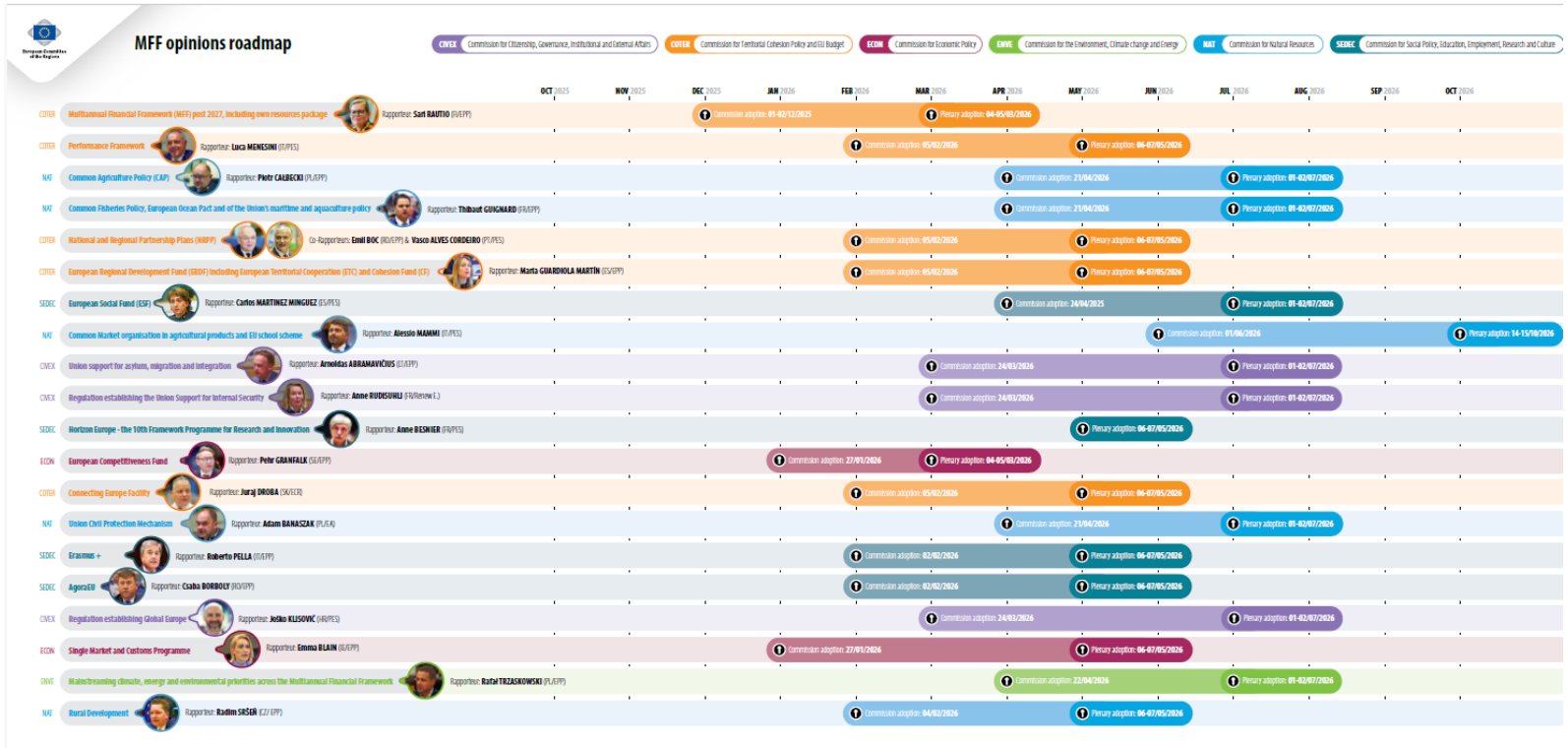
CoR opinions



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In the meantime, preparation for implementation has already begun…

The rationale revisited

- More strategic and focused on ‘new’ / EU priorities?
- More flexible and agile?
- Better performing?
- Simpler?

While preserving partnership, multi-level governance, shared management and a place-based approach…?

More strategic and focused on priorities?

Cohesion policy achievements 2014 – 2020

- 2.5 million SMEs supported
- 20,501 km of transport infrastructure built or upgraded
- 8 million households gained better broadband access
- 24 million children and students benefited from improved education and childcare infrastructure

Brussels, 10.10.2025
SWD(2025) 328 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

***Ex post* evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund for the programming period 2014-2020**

{SWD(2025) 329 final}

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More strategic and focused on priorities?

Planned interventions 21-27

- 725,000 companies supported; 83,000 researchers benefiting from upgraded research facilities
- 3.1m households connect to high-speed digital networks; 22,500 public administrations modernised
- 32 million m² of public buildings renovated, 723,000 households benefiting from energy-efficiency measures, and 9,555 MW of renewable capacity installed
- 6.5m unemployed people supported through skills measures and 1.3m jobs expected to be created

Brussels, 28.4.2023
SWD(2023) 134 final

PART 1/2

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Cohesion 2021-2027: forging an ever stronger Union
Report on the outcome of 2021-2027 cohesion policy programming

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More strategic and focused on priorities?

What will guide the development of NRPPs?

CSRs and the European Semester?

Who will decide and how?

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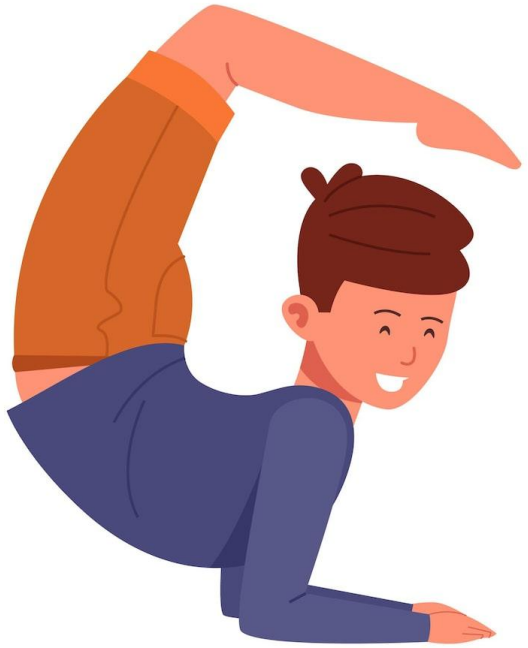
More flexible and agile?



„We want less rigidity in this budget and therefore the large funds, which give us more flexibility and room for manoeuvre.

Greater flexibility also means more room for manoeuvre for the annual budget decision, in which the Parliament and the Council play a crucial role." (President vdL)

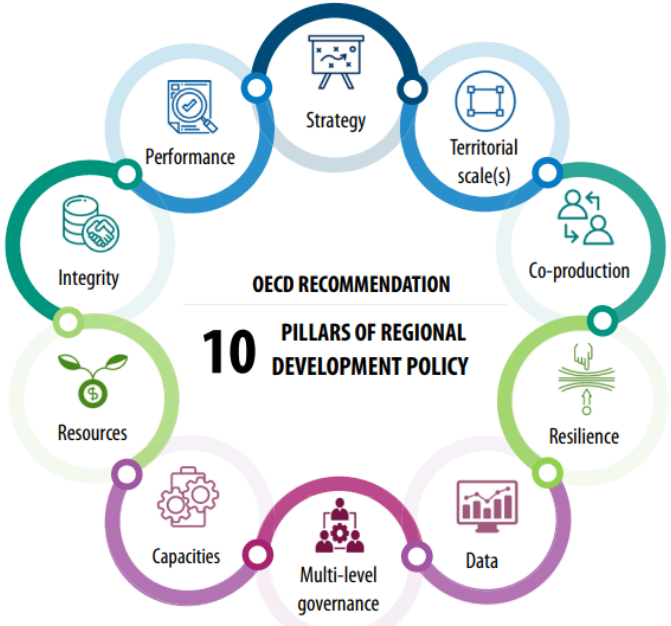
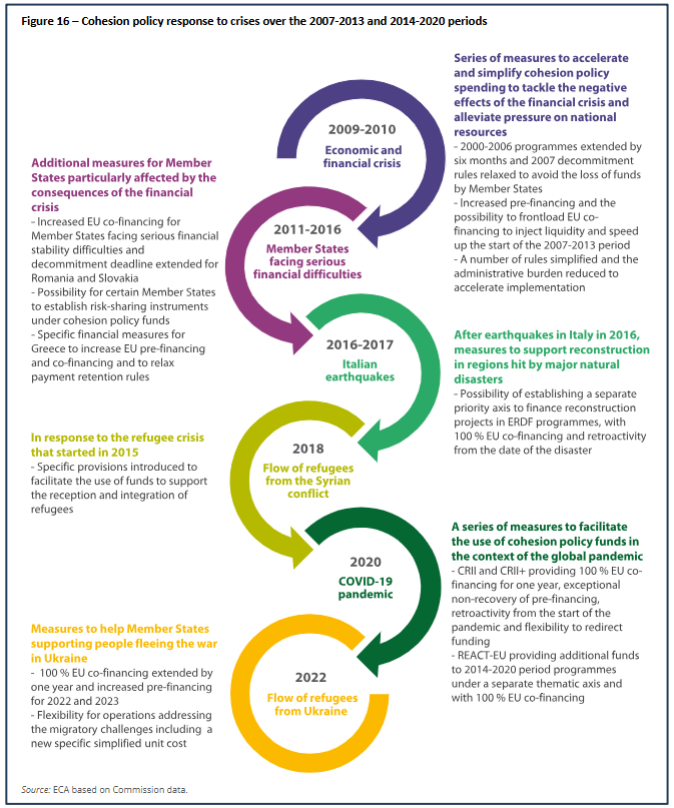


Figure 16 – Cohesion policy response to crises over the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods



Source: ECA based on Commission data.

- Flexibility and agility for whom?
- Predictability?
- Policy focus?
- EU added value?

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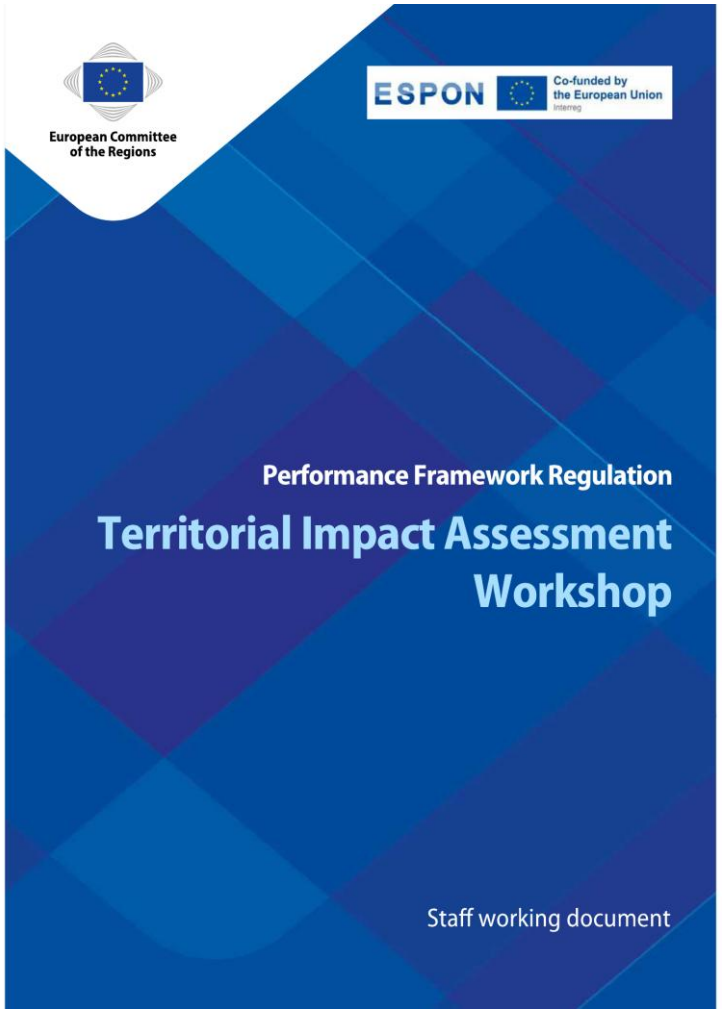
Better Performing?



Simpler?

Simplification sounds wonderful, but the devil is in the details:

- Simplification for whom?
- Simplification or centralisation?
- Fewer rules – or another layer?
- The baby and the bathwater..

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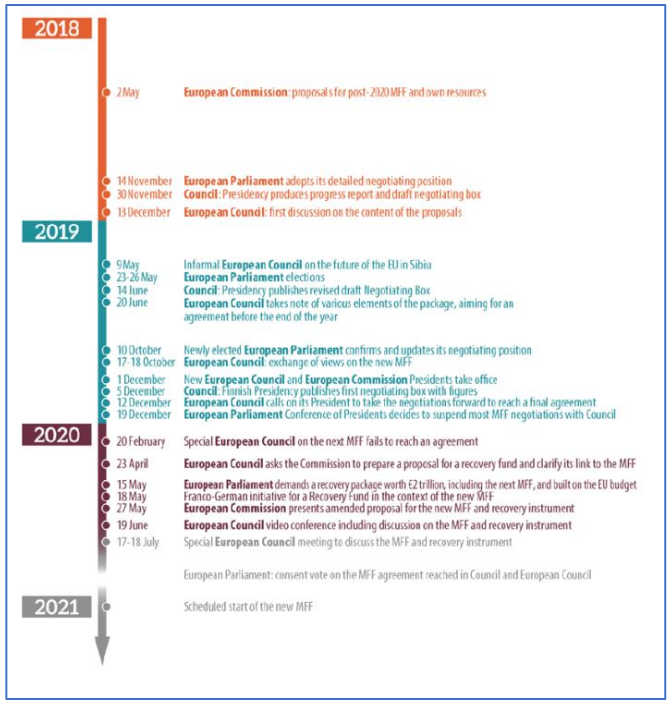
… same procedure every 7 years

TABLE 1 . Length of previous MFF negotiations

	NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THE COUNCIL*	NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**	TOTAL DURATION OF MFF NEGOTIATION
MFF 1988-1992	12 months	4 months	16 months
MFF 1993-1999	10 months	10 months	20 months
MFF 2000-2006	20 months	2 months	22 months
MFF 2007-2013	22 months	5 months	27 months
MFF 2014-2020	20 months	10 months	30 months

Notes: *period between the presentation of the Commission's MFF proposal and the adoption of a political agreement in the Council.

**Period between the Council political agreement and the adoption of the Intergovernmental Institutional Agreement (before the Lisbon Treaty) or the MFF regulation (after the Lisbon Treaty).



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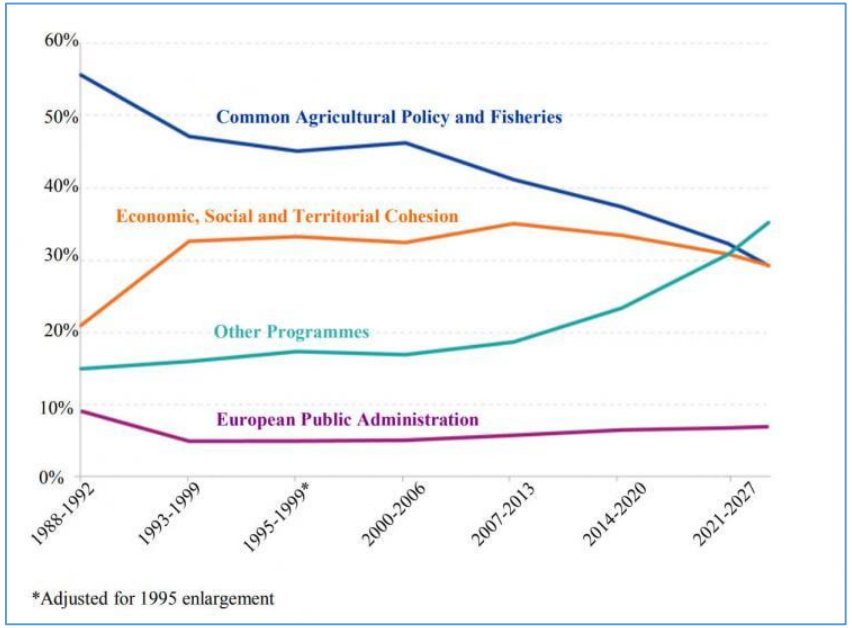
Many thanks for your attention!

Rachel.lancry@cor.europa.eu

European Committee of the Regions and Cohesion Policy

- **1993** **Maastricht Treaty creates the Committee of the Regions**
- **1994** First Plenary Session held in Brussels
- **1995** The number of CoR members increases from 189 to 222 as the EU-12 expands to EU-15
- **1997** Treaty of Amsterdam strengthens the CoR by increasing its field of mandatory consultation and allows referrals from the European Parliament
- **2003** Treaty of Nice states CoR members must hold an electoral mandate or be politically accountable
- **2004** **The number of CoR members increases from 222 to 317 in the EU-25**
- **2007** The number of CoR members increases from 317 to 344 members in the EU-27
- **2009** **Lisbon Treaty enhances the status and political role of the CoR**
- **2013** **The number of CoR members increases from 344 to 353 members in the EU-28**
- **2014** The number of CoR members is reduced to 350
- **2016** The name of the CoR is changed to **European Committee of the Regions**
- **2020** After Brexit the number of members is 329



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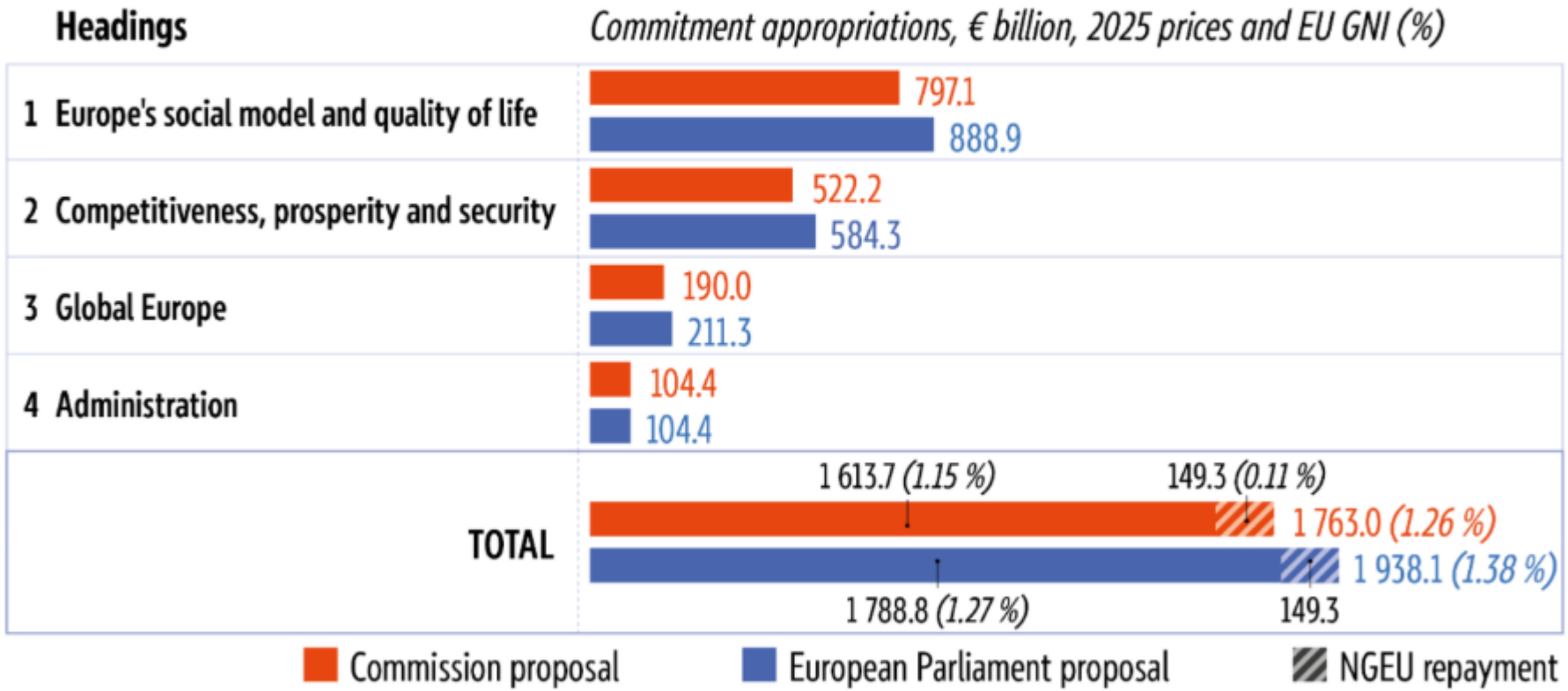
2028–2034 MFF: Commission and Parliament position



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