EU MFF National Mobilisation Toolkit

EUFunds4Social Coalition

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Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is drafted by the EUFunds4Social Coalition coordinating committee. The Coalition brings together European social services, NGOs, public health and service providers, lifelong learning and social economy actors, workers, and social partners. It represents millions of organisations, enterprises, and people, including those most excluded in society. Since March 2025, its actions aim to ensure social investment is strengthened, not weakened, in the next EU budget. The priority is ensuring that higher social spending is secured, and resources earmarked in particular for supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged people through the next EU budget.

It is designed for organisations already engaged, or looking to engage, with the next EU budget, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034, negotiations at national level. It is primarily directed to the organisations that co-signed our statements and open letters and their members, but ultimately to any organisation which would like to **influence the EU negotiations to strengthen social investment in the next MFF**, and to be involved in the **drafting of the National and Regional Partnership Plans in their countries**, as these will determine how EU funding is allocated at national level for the next seven years.

The toolkit provides the background, key messages, and guidance for engaging directly with national decision-makers, including ministries, members of the Permanent Representations of their countries towards the EU, and Members of the European Parliament as they define their positions ahead of the Council negotiations.

The context

In 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for the next budget, the so-called Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). At almost €2 trillion for the period 2028-2034, this figure would appear to be a significant increase from the current 2021-2027 budget of €1.211 trillion. However, much of this rise can be linked to inflation and debt repayment. This perceived rise is, moreover, only a proposal, with the governments of the EU Member States predicted to put forward a much lower figure.

The Commission's proposal initiated complex negotiations between EU institutions that will determine the EU's spending priorities for the next decade. While the Commission frames its proposal as a response to Europe's current strategic priorities of competitiveness, prosperity and security, it also introduces important structural changes to increase its flexibility and efficiency.

In the new proposal, Cohesion Policy funds like the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) would merge with 12 other funds covering migration, climate, agriculture, and fisheries into new National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs).

This mirrors the Recovery and Resilience Facility model, shifting planning and implementation to single national plans. Close to national plans, a new "EU Facility" will support Union-led initiatives and help Member States rapidly address crises. Direct funding for social innovation and civil society, social economy and social partners cooperation and capacity building (previously under the **EaSI Strand** of ESF+) are now under the Facility, but with no clear budget allocation.

Member States would gain more flexibility to set their own funding priorities. But social spending, before under ESF+ and partially ERDF, is now reduced to a 14% target within the NRPPs, a smaller pot now stretched across more activities, including infrastructure, without minimum allocations for social inclusion, child poverty, material deprivation, and youth employment. Guarantees that EU funding stays tied to the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), currently safeguarded through the enabling conditions, are watered down.

This approach is reflected in the proposed framework to monitor all spending, the **Budget expenditure tracking and performance framework** that will provide a single system with standardised indicators. This standardised output-based mechanism could be less compatible with the nature of social policy investment.

You can find all you need to know about the proposal in this **briefing paper**, and the joint statement "**100 billion for social spending? The devil's in the details"**.

The timeline

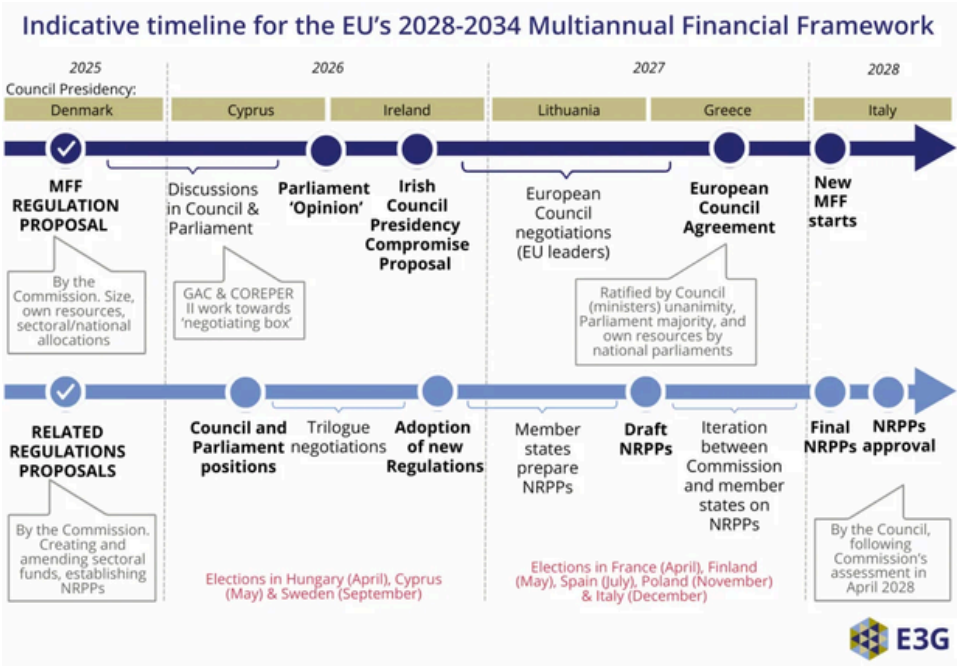
As the European Commission presented its proposal, the European Parliament and the European Council are now preparing their positions in view of the interinstitutional negotiations ("trilogues"), which must be completed by the end of 2027, to allow the next long-term budget to enter into force on 1 January 2028.

At the European Level:

The **Parliament** adopted its general position on the MFF in its **interim report** in April and is expected to adopt its positions on the different files between November and December 2027.

In June, the **Council** adopted its initial position on the overall budget (**negotiating box**) and on the NRPP, ESF, and Competitiveness Fund. Discussions will continue in working parties and in **European Council** meetings of 26-27 November, and 17-18 December. A new negotiating box is expected in October.

The trilogues are expected to start in early 2027. This means that negotiation is already accelerating and that **every advocacy effort can play a role in shaping outcomes at both European and national level**. Engagement should not be limited to Brussels. Reaching out to national ministries, and in particular to Finance Ministers involved in Council discussions is crucial, as Member States ultimately determine the political balance of the final agreement.



https://www.e3g.org/publications/steep-politics-will-shape-the-next-eu-budget-and-its-climate-implications/

At the national level:

Member States are expected to start preparing their National and Regional Partnership Plans before the legislative negotiations are concluded. They can already submit plans by June 2027, and the formal submission is expected by January 2028. This means that the negotiations and drafting will happen in parallel, and consultations at the national level are likely to start in the coming months. While trying to influence the negotiations, **we recommend seeking involvement in drafting the national plans**.

Our focus: the key regulations that will shape social investment

The main regulations we are looking into are the NRPPs, the European Social Fund, and the Performance Regulation Framework.

National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) - 2025/0240 (COD)

Accounting for 44.9% of the total EU budget, the **NRPPs are the key regulation for us.** The regulation provides an overarching framework for all shared management funds, with objectives, rules on drafting the plans, horizontal conditions, partnership, co-financing, budget, including the 14% target for social spending, and more.

The regulation has a long list of Annexes that provide a lot of information on the practical drafting of the national plans. The most relevant for us is its Annex VI, which establishes the official methodology used by EU Member States to measure and track their financial contributions toward social objectives, which references the European Semester and the Pillar of Social Rights. It asks to concentrate resources (with no amount or percentages) towards social inclusion and socio-economic integration of disadvantaged groups, to address material deprivation, to implement the Child Guarantee, and to implement the Youth Guarantee. Annex XV describes the actions supported through the Facility (including former EaSI), again with no budget allocation.

What is happening?
In the **Parliament,** the file is managed by the BUDG, AGRI, and REGI Committees that received over 6.500 amendments. The final adoption of the report is expected in December.

The **Council** adopted in June its initial position, the Partial General Approach. It approves the Commission's structure and pushes for more flexibility. On a positive note, employment, training, gender equality, children and people with disabilities now feature more clearly in the objectives, and equality bodies join the partnership principle. But the core guarantees are still missing. The European Social Fund is embedded in the structure, and the 14% social spending target remains in brackets, not yet agreed. Rule of law and Fundamental Rights safeguards are still under negotiation.

What do we want from the NRPP negotiations?

- **Best option: carve out ESF and ERDF.** If this is not possible, at least tie social objectives directly to ESF and ERDF, and name Roma communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, children and the most deprived. In this scenario, we want Annex VI to provide specific figures for actions towards social inclusion, material deprivation, youth guarantee, child guarantee, and to add homelessness, and capacity building for civil society.
- **Raise the social spending target from 14% to 25%**, with clear earmarking for social inclusion, material deprivation, homelessness, Child Guarantee, Youth Guarantee, and capacity building of civil society.
- **Include respect for UNCRPD and the European Pillar of Social Rights in horizontal principles** with real monitoring and complaint mechanisms.
- **Protect EU Facility funding for social inclusion and EaSI. R**everse the cut from €71.9bn to €62.3bn and guarantee continuity for the strand that funds social innovation and grassroots actors.
- **Lower co-financing barriers for smaller organisations**, with dedicated rates for social priorities so grassroots and local actors can actually access funding.

Drafting of the NRPPs by Member States

To know more on how to influence the drafting of your country's National and Regional Partnership Plan, you can find a mobilisation toolkit prepared by RESCOOP that explains how to engage with your relevant institutions to be involved. The toolkit is mainly targeting environmental NGOs in terms of the requests, but is valid for what concerns who and how to target, and how to prepare for this.
The key message here is about asking for a transparent process and asking to be involved in it, as the regulation and the code of conduct on partnership require.

European Social Fund - 2025/0239(COD)

The **Commission proposal** for the European Social Fund regulation is very limited, including only 9 articles and broadly referring to the NRPP regulation. It has no clear objectives, no thematic concentrations, but just some provisions on addressing material deprivation, social innovation, demographic transition, and on partnership. Its whole procedure is **here**.

What is happening?
In the **Parliament** **the file** is under the EMPL Committee, which published its **draft report**. Civil society, including the coalition, has been involved by the co-rapporteurs Marti Maij and David Casa. The draft report alignes with initial positions from the EMPL Committee, calling for a carving-out of the ESF from the NRPPs, a budget allocation of 124b, and thematic concentrations of 30% for social inclusion, 5% for the Child Guarantee, 5% for addressing homelessness, 15% for youth guarantee, 5% for addressing material deprivation, and appropriate amount for capacity building of civil society and social partners.

The **Partial General Approach** of the **Council** was adopted in June. It backs the Commission proposal in terms of structure, but it adds provisions in the recitals and in different articles. It keeps the ESF as part of the NRPP architecture with no thematic concentrations, while adding stronger definitions and safeguards (dignity for the most deprived, GDPR protections, UNCRPD-anchored disability rights) but softens key commitments. Named target groups expand (Roma communities, homeless people via the Lisbon Declaration, working poor). The financial allocation, the ESF's link to NRPP objectives, and social partner capacity-building requirements all remain in brackets, still to be negotiated.

What do we want from the ESF negotiations? We are supporting the Parliament position, in terms of carving out, allocation of 124b and thematic concentrations.

Budget Expenditure Tracking and Performance Framework - 2025/0545(COD)

The Budget expenditure tracking and performance framework is also relevant as it indicates which areas will be counted as social spending to reach the 14% target within the proposal. Its Annex I lists 543 intervention fields, grouped under 18 policy areas. Every intervention field is linked to one or more indicators and assigned a coefficient of 0%, 40% or 100%, representing its estimated contribution to four horizontal objectives: climate mitigation, climate adaptation and resilience, environmental protection, and social objectives.

What is happening?
In the **Parliament**, the **file** is under the BUDG and CONT committees. Apparently there is criticism of the current proposal and lack of alignment between political groups. They are receiving amendments until 29 September, and expect a vote in the Plenary in December.

The **Council** adopted its **preliminary position** in June, broadly supporting the Commission proposal. It also proposes eight new intervention fields covering education access for third-country nationals, upskilling, girls' and women's access to STEM, children's rights, disability rights, social inclusion, care-giving support and social innovation each counted at 100% toward the social coefficient.

What we want from the performance regulation framework?

- Stronger reference to Pillar of Social Rights and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **Partnership Principle** to be extended to **all** the EU Funds
- To protect investment in people, so for annex Annex I to remove from SOC coefficient the infrastructure spending, tourism, agriculture-related actions, reforms, and other actions previously not covered by the ESF+.

Our overall messages

The EUFunds4Social Coalition started action to ensure a stand-alone and stronger ESF, earmarked for supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged people, partnership with civil society and local actors, and measures to respect policy commitments since March 2025. We reiterated our demands with 4 Joint Statements, and an open letter to the European Council, while engaging with the Parliament and submitting our amendments to the above-mentioned key regulations.

Overall, our demands are based on 4 key points:

1. More money for social

- Keep the ESF and the ERDF as separate funds with their own rules and dedicated budgets.
- Increase the percentage of social spending from 14% to at least 25% of the NRPPs, to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR).
- Within social spending, protect funding for people-centred support over infrastructure.
- Re-establish minimum spending for social inclusion, child poverty, homelessness, youth employment, material deprivation, and capacity building for civil society.

2. Stronger guarantees for rights and inclusion

- Maintain enabling conditions linking funding to policy commitments, including the Pillar of Social Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of conditionalities.

3. Meaningful partnership

- Involve regional and local authorities, social partners, civil society and people with lived experience in the designing, running and monitoring of all EU funding.
- Within the NRPPs, make partnership real. Give regional and local authorities, civil society and social partners a formal role, backed by tools like multi-stakeholder platforms.

4. Accessible funding for social actors, including smaller beneficiaries

- Protect direct EU funding for social innovation, capacity building and transnational cooperation of civil society organisations and social partners, now under the EaSI strand of ESF+.
- Keep EU funding accessible to smaller organisations: higher co-funding, simpler procedures, fewer administrative barriers, capacity-building, and stable funding.

Who to target?

To influence the negotiations, you can engage with these actors trying to bring them our voice and perspective.

- **National ministries:** This is the primary target for national advocacy. The main ministries to target are the ministries of Finance/Budget, the ministries of Foreign Affairs, the ministries of European Affairs, and the ministries for Social Affairs and Labour.

- **Permanent representatives to the EU:** Another possibility is to address the permanent representatives are responsible for representing your country in Brussels. They play a huge role in preparing the work for Council's negotiations. You will find a list of all representations **here**. To advocate on social related matters, the "Social Attaché" (i.e. the diplomat or policy specialist responsible for employment, social affairs, labor, and related policy areas) is a good person to target.

- **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs):** The members of the Parliament are each coming from specific constituencies across the EU. Therefore, they represent the interests of the citizens that elected them. Therefore, they are usually open to work with national organisations from their home country. You can find the list and contact details of all MEPs **here**. The MEPs that have the most important role on the social aspect of the MFF are the ones sitting in Committee on Budgets (BUDG), the Committee on Regional Development (REGI), the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), or the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). It may be particularly interesting to engage with MEPs who belong to the same political group as your government.

- **Journalists:** Media attention can also help pressure governments. The MFF may seem technical, but it will shape our lives for the next decade. For now, national coverage remains minimal, which is a missed opportunity. Try to raise awareness of the importance of making the MFF negotiations part of the public debate in your country.

- **Other civil society organisations (CSOs):** In several Member States (e.g. Spain, Germany,) civil society organisations have started creating coalitions for advocating and campaigning an MFF that truly meets the needs of the citizens, including the most vulnerable groups. If it's not yet the case in your country, it's always a good idea to join forces with other organisations with similar priorities to be stronger (e.g. other NGOs, trade unions, universities, etc.)

What to ask?

You can translate these key messages into your national languages and send them via email to the people you want to target from the list above. You can also attach the last joined papers produced by the coalition:

- **March 2026:** Building on what works, endorsed by 356 organisations, including 68 European networks.
- **June 2026.** Protecting ESF and ERDF: building on what works for people and regions, signed by over 250 European and national organisations.

Approach them via email, and invite them to a meeting where you can clearly present these key messages. Where possible, draw on your own experience of working with EU funding programmes such as ESF+ and ERDF, particularly the tangible impact they have had on people's lives at the local level. Personal stories and concrete examples are powerful tools: they make your message more relatable and memorable.

Further resources:

- EUFunds4Social
- EASPD Briefing on the MFF
- Social Platform Analysis of the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework Proposal
- REScoop EU MFF Mobilisation Toolkit
- Civil Society Europe – Making the EU Budget Work for citizens

You need help in finding contacts, shaping messages or would like to share information learned through your national advocacy? Engage with the coalition! You can contact your EU network or directly our coordinator, Irene Bertana at irene.bertana@easpd.eu

Annex: letter template

Dear [Minister/Title] [Surname],

I am writing on behalf of [organisation], a member of the EUFunds4Social coalition, which brings together European, national and regional organisations calling for a stronger social dimension in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

At a time of growing social challenges, the next EU budget must strengthen its investment in people and communities. As highlighted in our last open letter, The Commission's proposal risks weakening the EU's capacity to invest in people. Without stronger safeguards, social investment could be reduced, competing with other budget lines, and have weekend involvement of civil society and regional and local authorities.

We are thus calling for:

- stronger and ringfenced investment in social priorities;
- robust safeguards to ensure EU funding advances rights, inclusion and equality;
- meaningful partnership with civil society, social partners and regional and local authorities throughout the implementation of EU funds; and
- accessible funding that enables also small organisations to deliver lasting impact.

Also, we would like to know if you started or plan to start the drafting of the drafting of the National Regional Partnership Plan for [country]. We would like to express our interest in being involved in this process, according to the partnership principle.

As the general negotiations and national planning progress, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these priorities and possibility for involvement.

We would be grateful if your office could indicate a suitable date for a meeting in the coming weeks. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

EU MFF National Mobilisation Toolkit

EUFunds4SocialCoalition

The **EUFunds4Social Coalition** brings together European social services, NGOs, public health and service providers, lifelong learning and social economy actors, workers, and social partners. It represents millions of organisations, enterprises, and people, including those most excluded in society. Since March 2025, its actions aim to ensure social investment is strengthened, not weakened, in the next EU budget. The priority is ensuring that higher social spending is secured, and resources earmarked in particular for supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged people through the next EU budget.

This toolkit is drafted by the Coalition coordinating committee composed by the largest networks and some of their members. It is coordinated by the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), and composed by Caritas Europa, the European network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), the European Public Service Union (EPSU), Eurodiaconia, the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP), the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), Social Economy Europe (SEE), Social Services Europe (SSE), and the Social Platform.

Find out more about the coalition here: **https://easpd.eu/resources/eufunds4social/**
Or contact: **irene.bertana@easpd.eu**

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