



Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission
Berlaymont
1049 Brussels

[Letter sent by e-mail]

6 May 2025

Subject: European Commission to uphold climate, nature and public health priorities in the next EU budget

Dear President von der Leyen,

On behalf of Europe's largest environmental civil society organisations that together represent significantly more than 50 million citizens, we reach out to you ahead of your orientation debate in the College on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Our organisations have been working for many years in a non-partisan way to inform citizens and policymakers about the importance of public investments to address climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss and we have been strong partners across Europe in the implementation of the EU budget.

For your debate, we would like you to keep the following principles in mind:

An EU budget that delivers for climate, nature and public health

We believe that Europe needs a transformative and forward-looking EU budget to effectively respond to the worsening climate, biodiversity, pollution and social crises, considering that Europe is the fastest-warming continent worldwide. The next MFF must prioritise funding that addresses environmental imperatives but also contributes to reducing gender, social and economic inequalities across the EU. These measures are essential not only for environmental and social sustainability but also for safeguarding the EU's long-term competitiveness, resilience and prosperity.

We welcome the ambition to reform the EU budget to make it more aligned with Union objectives, more impactful and easier to navigate for authorities and beneficiaries alike. At the same time, simplification cannot come at the expense of valuable and long-standing principles, including partnership, multi-level governance, cohesion, just transition, conditionality, traceability and accountability. Instead, a simpler, more effective and more consistent budget should further mainstream these common principles and objectives. EU principles and values should be put in practice to make EU funds reach the citizens and gain their ownership of the needed transformation of the EU economy.

We believe that a policy-oriented and more impactful MFF needs to continue to put sustainability at its heart. As the EU strives to fulfil its legally binding commitments under the European Climate Law and the Nature Restoration Law, including climate neutrality by 2050, the next long-term budget must ensure coherence with key strategic frameworks, such as the 8th Environment Action Programme, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and the Zero Pollution Action Plan.

We need a holistic perspective for addressing Europe's security. Existential threats like the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, pollution, and related health impacts, rising social inequalities and geographic disparities within the Union endanger our future and our democracies. Extreme weather events already cost the EU billions, resource conflicts and climate instability pose increasing security risks, while fossil fuel imports from Russia are on the rise again, fuelling its war of aggression. Unlike what is currently proposed in the cohesion policy mid-term review, we support the position of the European Parliament that any additional investments in defence must not come at the expense of social and environmental spending.

Civil societies vision for the next MFF

Our path to a climate-neutral, zero pollution and nature-positive economy has already demonstrated significant benefits for citizens, from lower energy prices to new jobs in future-proof sectors, improved public health and increased strategic autonomy. However, significant investment gaps persist for achieving our political objectives. While the private sector and national expenditures will have to cover most of these investments, the EU budget needs to play its part. To that end, we ask you to consider these key priorities in the upcoming MFF proposal:

- The proposal should be built around a EUR 2-trillion strong EU budget, through the replacement of NGEU with an NGEU 2.0 instrument financed through new joint borrowing and corresponding new own resources;
- An earmarking of at least 50% of all spending should be introduced, to contribute positively to at least one of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy;
- Dedicated funding for i) nature conservation and restoration, ii) just transition and iii) renewable energy & clean transport should be maintained and scaled up, in particular if the next long-term budget provides additional flexibility to Member States in the use of their national allocations;
- Environmental and social safeguards, including the Do No Significant Harm principle, should be strengthened, including through an explicit horizontal exclusion of all

financial support via the EU budget to particularly harmful investments, such as new fossil fuel infrastructure;

- The LIFE programme should be continued as a strengthened and standalone programme in the next MFF to support high-quality and innovative projects for the environment, zero pollution, nature conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

We remain at your disposal for any further questions and would be delighted to discuss our proposals with you. Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Martin

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