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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Draft REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 establishing the European Social Fund <i>Plus</i> (ESF+) as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges (first reading) - Adoption of the legislative act = Statements

Statement by Bulgaria

Although the Republic of Bulgaria does not share a direct land border with Ukraine, Belarus, or Russia, its strategic location on the external Eastern border of the European Union, along the Black Sea, places it firmly within the zone affected by the multiple and compounding adverse impacts of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

The Black Sea region is increasingly exposed to significant security risks, economic and ecological disruptions, and heightened strategic vulnerabilities. These spillover effects of the conflict have a direct and tangible impact on Bulgaria's Eastern regions.

In this context, Bulgaria strongly maintains that the Black Sea regions should be recognised as equivalent to regions directly bordering Ukraine, Belarus, or Russia for the purposes of relevant legislative and programming measures.

This position is fully aligned with the European Commission's Communication of 28 May 2025, *"The European Union's Strategic Approach to the Black Sea Region"*, which underscores the need for a comprehensive and coordinated EU response, acknowledging the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea to the Union as a whole.

Statement by Hungary

Hungary recalls the European Council conclusions of 6 March (point 6b), which call on the Commission to propose additional EU-level funding sources for defence, including through additional possibilities and incentives offered to all Member States in the use of their current allocations, in line with the principles of equal treatment, objectivity, and non-discrimination.

Hungary does not oppose the adoption of the Regulation, nevertheless, considers that Article 2 is not in line with these principles, as they restrict Member States' ability to decide how to use their current allocations.

Furthermore, the 2021–2027 conditionalities, including enabling conditions, were adopted as part of the broader MFF agreement. The current proposal amends this framework mid-period, creating legal and political uncertainty, and should not set a precedent for the future.