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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Legislative programming - Letter from the Presidency to the Commission

Delegations will find attached a letter on legislative programming from the Presidency to the European Commission as follow-up to the exchange of views held at the Council (General Affairs) meeting of 16 September 2025.

General Affairs Council 16 September 2025
Follow-up letter on Legislative programming – *Letter of intent*

Date: 30. September
2025
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Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear Commissioner Šefčovič,

On behalf of the Council, I thank you for your *Letter of intent* of 10 September 2025, which sets out the main legislative priorities and key initiatives envisaged by the Commission for 2026 and launches the annual legislative programming cycle.

As clearly stated in the *Letter of intent*, in light of a changing world order the Union must step up to the challenges and respond with unity and purpose. We need to ensure that we can meet current and future challenges and achieve results for the Union and its citizens. We cannot be hesitant and must move forward together. The common work of the EU's Institutions and of the Member States is at the core of the Union's ability to deliver, and the Presidency remains fully committed to making progress on current and upcoming legislative proposals and initiatives.

At its meeting of 16 September 2025, the Council held an exchange of views on the *Letter of intent*. Ministers were generally in agreement with the broad issues that were identified as requesting the Union's primary attention for the year to come. Naturally, positions expressed on more specific policy areas varied among Member States. Please find below the general views emerging from the discussion as summarised by the Presidency.

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General considerations

In the context of rapid geopolitical shifts and uncertainty, Ministers underlined the urgency to ensure Europe's security and defence readiness. In line with the June 2025 conclusions of the European Council, the Commission Work Programme 2026 must have a clear focus on making Europe more sovereign and responsible for its own defence and better equipped to act autonomously and in a coordinated way.

Moreover, the Commission's emphasis on competitiveness was very much welcomed by delegations. In particular, the completion of the Single Market, the simplification measures, and the need to foster investments on strategic sectors such as digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence, and clean energies were highlighted. Continuing to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy and independence were stressed as key goals for Commission's initiatives for the next year. Delegations also echoed the Commission's ambitions to reinforce resilience and democracy and some intervened on specific challenges such as access to affordable housing or the rise in prices.

European security and defence

Overall, Ministers restated the need for the EU to strengthen its own defence readiness and defence capabilities. In this regard, several delegations appreciated the Commission's emphasis on defence, in line with the announced *Roadmap for European Defence Readiness* and the *European Defence Semester*. The need to advance on the implementation of the *ReArm Europe Plan* and the *Security Action for Europe (SAFE)* programme, and to ensure the swift adoption of the *European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP)*, was highlighted by a few delegations. Several Member States supported the Commission's commitment to protecting the EU's Eastern borders and welcomed the *Eastern Flank Watch initiative*. Some Member States also expressed support for fostering drone production in line with the Commission's recently announced *Drone Alliance initiative*.

Ministers largely confirmed that supporting Ukraine remains an essential priority for the Union and underlined the importance of maintaining pressure on Russia. Many called for a swift adoption of the 19th sanctions package, some also

called for making use of Russian immobilised assets to support Ukraine, with certain noting the sensitivity of this issue.

Competitiveness, simplification and strengthening EU's sectors

Member States emphasised that advancing on the competitiveness agenda is crucial and underlined that it should remain a top priority for the EU; in this respect, completing the Single Market is one of the most significant challenges ahead. Removing barriers to fully unlock the potential of the Single Market is crucial. In this context, the Commission's announcement of a *Single Market Roadmap to 2028* was broadly welcomed. A few Ministers also underlined that progressing on the implementation of the Draghi report should be a priority.

During the discussions, several delegations highlighted specific measures and sectors, including establishing the *28th Regime* and the *European Innovation Act*, alongside efforts to strengthen the automotive industry, accelerate digitalisation and foster AI-driven innovation throughout Europe's economic sectors.

Additionally, several delegations supported the new simplification initiatives announced by the Commission. Both the ongoing and newly presented *Omnibus packages* were seen as steps in the right direction, with some delegations expressing concerns about the slow pace of their adoption.

Europe's role in the world, strategic autonomy, and enlargement

Member States generally concurred with the Commission on safeguarding security and economic prosperity as key to advancing Europe's strategic autonomy agenda. This requires investing in critical infrastructure, reducing dependencies in key sectors, and improving resilience across the Union.

In the context of current geopolitical shifts, Ministers highlighted the importance of diversifying trade and promoting global partnerships.

Several delegations pointed to the need to reinforce our energy independence by securing reliable energy supply, further investing in clean energy sources and working towards a real Energy Union: accelerating the transition to clean

energies is not only contributing to our environmental commitments but also constitutes a strategic necessity for Europe's resilience.

Enlargement is considered crucial for Europe's prosperity, stability, and security. Several Member States called for keeping up the pace on EU enlargement, including on Ukraine and opening of clusters, also recognising its geopolitical significance. Some Member States specifically welcomed the *Pact for the Mediterranean*, hoping to enhance cooperation and stability in the region. Concerns were raised about the humanitarian situation in the Middle East.

Societal challenges: affordable housing, cost of living, migration, and climate change

Several Ministers pointed to the growing difficulties to have access to affordable housing, which is a distress for European citizens. During the exchange of views some mentioned the *Affordable Housing Plan* and the announced *EU Housing Summit*, underlining the potential benefits of a common European approach, with others raising questions about the EU's competences in this area.

The continued high cost of living remains a concern for several Member States in connection with housing and energy prices. Some Ministers emphasised that this issue should remain high on the agenda, as it directly affects citizens and has broader implications for EU competitiveness.

Several Ministers raised the issue of migration as a common concern and called for effective border management, including measures against illegal trafficking. A few delegations also reflected on Europe's demographic challenges, which in their view warrant greater attention.

In the exchange of views, some delegations referred to the social transition, the fight against poverty, the promotion of digital fairness in our societies and the need for a strong budget on cohesion.

The impact of climate change and the Union's commitment to the climate goals looking ahead also in the context of upcoming international meetings, were mentioned by some Member States, pointing to the consequences both on competitiveness and our societies and the environment.

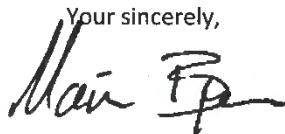
Governance: democratic resilience and outlook on the MFF 2028-2034

Several Member States restated that it is of the greatest importance that we uphold our Union's fundamental values and the Rule of law. The Commission's commitment to strengthening the EU's democratic resilience and to fighting disinformation was appreciated, and a number of Member States looked forward to the announced *European Democracy Shield initiative*.

A number of Member States expressed their priorities for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Some mentioned a more flexible and modern budget, while others underscored that the new budget should support cohesion policy. Some delegations also reaffirmed the importance of ensuring implementation of the Rule of law conditionality mechanism for EU funds. Furthermore, some Member States underlined agricultural policy as a priority, highlighting that the future budget should serve as an effective tool to support and protect farmers.

The views summarised above reflect the reactions within the Council to the *Letter of intent* from the Commission and show a broad convergence on priorities between the two Institutions. I trust that the Council's perspectives will be duly considered in the preparation of the Commission Work Programme for 2026.

I look forward to a continued dialogue with the Commission and the European Parliament in the next steps of the legislative programming cycle, in accordance with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making.

Your sincerely,


Marie Bjerre
President of the Council of the EU
Minister for European Affairs
Denmark