Statement of the leaders of EPP, S&D, Renew Europe, Greens/EFA groups in the European Parliament on the revised version of the Negotiating Box for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework presented by the Irish Presidency.

We would like to convey our utmost dismay over the revised version of the Negotiating Box presented by the Irish Presidency ahead of the European Council meeting of 15-16 October 2026 and the general discussions in the Council on the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) so far.

We would like to be clear from the outset: we reject the proposal put forward by the Irish Presidency, which cannot constitute a basis for Parliament's consent on the next MFF.
In April 2026, the European Parliament adopted its mandate for the next MFF in its Interim Report. This is not an opening bid. It is the democratic position of the only directly elected EU institution, and we stand by it.

We deplore the major cut in the MFF level proposed by the Irish Presidency; this cut, compared with the current MFF and taking into account inflation and economic growth, would mean that the real value of the EU budget would be strongly reduced by EUR 161 billion (-10 %). This cut jeopardises the Union's ability to respond in a lasting way to the challenges ahead and to assert Europe's role in an increasingly turbulent world.

The Commission's proposal for the 2028-2034 MFF set at 1.15 % of EU GNI, represents the same share of our economy as the current MFF, even though Europe's responsibilities are growing. By setting the starting point for negotiations below the Commission's proposal, the Irish Presidency would shrink the EU budget relative to our economy precisely when Europe is being asked to do more. In this respect, the revised version of the Negotiating Box presented by the Irish Presidency, erodes the Commission's attempt to fund new European priorities.

How can Europe close its competitiveness gap while cutting the European Competitiveness Fund by 13% and Horizon Europe by nearly 10%? How can we strengthen our security while cutting strategic infrastructure and military mobility funding by 14%? How can we support citizens and businesses facing high living and energy costs, including climate change, while cutting investments that contribute to Europe's long-term prosperity and resilience?

How can we protect citizens from forest fires and climate-related disasters if the budget of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism is reduced by 35%? And how can Europe remain a credible global actor while cutting Global Europe by nearly 16%? These cuts would weaken the Single Market, undermine Europe's competitiveness and security, reduce what the EU can do to counter the affordability crisis, and diminish its global influence. We believe that the European Council should start their forthcoming debates on the next MFF by answering these questions, rather than using as a basis for discussions the updated Negotiating Box put forward by the Irish Presidency.

A smaller MFF will not make Europe's challenges disappear. It will only shift a greater share of the financial burden to the national level, where many of the same challenges will ultimately still have to be addressed. Yet no Member State can match, on its own, what coordinated European action through the EU budget can achieve. We must not meet new challenges by eroding the policies that deliver essential European added value. The case for working together and pooling resources at EU level has never been stronger. Yet, the Irish Presidency's claim of a 30% increase in the EU budget is misleading, as it ignores inflation and economic growth. National budgets have increased by 68% over the same period. While national economies have grown over the course of last years, their relative contributions to our common budget have fallen. This is why we reject the attempt by Member States to present the MFF as a simple exercise of false 'budgetary discipline'.

If Member States want to finance our common priorities while limiting pressure on national budgets, the answer is to agree on new sources of European revenue. The Parliament has put additional concrete options for new own resources on the table, namely a levy on online gambling and betting services, a contribution linked to crypto-assets, and a digital levy aimed at major digital platforms. This latter new own resource alone could generate up to EUR 25 billion per year, additionally to the EUR 57.4 billion envisaged in the Commission's July 2025 own resources package. We urge the European Council to consider the European Parliament's new own resources proposals along with the Commission's basket. In the absence of an agreement on new own resources we will not be ready to support Parliaments consent to MFF.

The choice before us is not between a cheap Europe and an expensive one. It is between a Europe that lurches from crisis to crisis, and a Europe with the means to shape its own future. Parliament's position on the next MFF was backed by an absolute majority of this House - the same absolute majority that will be needed to give our consent. Against this background, the revised version of the Negotiating box currently being proposed cannot constitute a basis for an

agreement in the Council, and they will not serve as basis for the consent of the Parliament.

We urge you not to choose the path of sacrificing our joint European priorities, and with them the future of the Union. We, as Leaders of the main political groups in the European Parliament, will not endorse such an approach. We will not support a budget that weakens the Union's ability to deliver.