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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: Regulation establishing European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), including specific programme for defence research and innovation
- *Partial general approach*
= Statement by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have requested that the following statement be entered in the Council minutes.

Joint statement of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

Regulation establishing European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), including specific programme for defence research and innovation

To be attached to the General Affairs Council meeting minutes

We support the objectives of the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) with the ambition to strengthen the resilience, security and competitiveness across the whole Union. At the same time, we consider that the Fund should be adequately prepared to respond to the evolving security and economic realities in the Union.

Geopolitical context, in particular Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine and persistent hybrid attacks across the Union, have demonstrated that energy and communications networks are essential components of Europe's competitiveness and security architecture. Recent incidents particularly in Member States on the Union's eastern border have also exposed vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and supply chains, underlining the need for stronger European support for preparedness, recovery capabilities and strategic reserves. More broadly, the deteriorating security environment also affects economic resilience and competitiveness by increasing investment risks, raising financing costs and weakening growth prospects in the regions most exposed to security and military threats, as highlighted in the Commission Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (COM (2026) 82) and duly noted in the European Council conclusions of 19 March 2026.

Against this background, we consider it important that the ECF framework:

1. should provide for a clearer and more operational recognition of critical infrastructure;
2. should adequately reflect in the operative part of the Regulation suboptimal investment situations driven by persistent geopolitical risks, in particular in EU's eastern border regions facing structurally higher risk premia and weaker investment conditions;
3. should appropriately recognise regions exposed to long-term geopolitical pressure, including EU's eastern border regions, alongside other structurally disadvantaged territories.

In light of the above, we can support Partial General Approach for the ECF at this stage, with the clear expectation that above mentioned key elements will be duly reflected in the final compromise text.
