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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

on the follow-up to the discharge for the 2024 financial year

**Report on the follow-up to the requests made by the European
Parliament in its discharge resolutions and the Council in its discharge
recommendation for the financial year 2024**

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1. Introduction

On 29 April 2026, following the recommendation by the Council, the European Parliament granted discharge to the Commission for its implementation of the EU budget in 2024.

This report summarises the major actions taken by the Commission in response to the main requests made by: (i) the European Parliament in its discharge resolution¹, and (ii) the Council in its recommendation on the discharge². The Commission will provide replies to specific requests later this year.

2. Budget delivering on its objectives

In 2024, the EU budget was vital in helping the EU deliver on policy priorities. As set out in the *Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU budget – 2024 financial year*³, the EU budget contributed to strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion, supporting farmers and improving agricultural productivity. It supported the green and digital transitions and the strengthening of the EU's external borders and defence capabilities, helped address migration pressures, provided unwavering support to Ukraine, and helped the EU respond to the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

The EU budget was key in boosting the EU's competitiveness, bolstering economic security (e.g. by investing in clean technologies, human capital and cross-border infrastructure to strengthen regional development and the single market), and underpinning the EU's strategic partnerships worldwide.

a. Budgetary implementation

Parliament is concerned about the implementation rate for the EU budget under the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). It notes that delays in implementation increase risks of decommitments and pressure towards the end of the programming period.

¹ [European Parliament decision of 29 April 2026 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024, Section III – Commission and executive agencies and the ninth, tenth and eleventh European Development Funds – 2025/2145\(DEC\).](#)

² [Council recommendation on the discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2024 \(5749/26\).](#)

³ [Report from the Commission to the European Parliament the Council and the Court of Auditors Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU budget – 2024 financial year, COM\(2025\) 824 of 17.6.2025.](#)

The Commission stresses that amounts committed but not yet paid from the EU budget, i.e. outstanding commitments or RAL ('reste à liquider'), were EUR 35 billion lower at the end of 2024 than at the end of 2023. Almost half of the RAL at the end of 2024 (excluding RAL from NextGenerationEU - NGEU) is linked to cohesion policy, and thus to the Member States' implementation of funds under shared management. With project selection on the ground rising from approx. 12% at the end of 2023 to approx. 37% (2024) and approx. 65% (2025) of the available envelopes for the 2021-2027 cohesion programmes, financial implementation accelerated significantly, with many Member States submitting payment applications going well beyond their N+3 decommitment target. Thanks to this positive evolution, project selection and payments have been catching up compared to 2014-2020. To ensure a smooth delivery, the Commission supports Member States in strengthening their administrative capacity and addressing bottlenecks in investments.

The Commission will continue to closely follow the implementation of EU programmes and instruments. It publishes information annually on the budget implementation forecast and a progress report on outstanding commitments.

As to the NextGenerationEU RAL, many Member States revised their national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), reallocated resources to mature projects, adjusted milestones and targets and addressed implementation bottlenecks, while maintaining the ambition of the RRPs. Those revisions aimed at reflecting changing circumstances and improving deliverability, focusing on a timely conclusion of payments under the RRF by the end of 2026. On 30 April 2026, the Commission adopted [guidelines for Member States](#) on operational aspects related to the final phase and closure of the RRF to ensure its successful conclusion.

To some extent, Member States may have prioritised the implementation and revision of their RRPs, which may have led to delays in the implementation of the cohesion policy programmes. At the same time, measures supported under the RRF help accelerate the implementation of MFF funds, e.g. the RRF reforms aimed at speeding up the permit-granting procedures are expected to have positive spill-over effects on the implementation of investment measures of other EU funds.

b. Addressing new priorities: defence and Ukraine

The Commission welcomes Parliament's view that 'defence and support for Ukraine must be treated as the budgetary priority in the current geopolitical context and that adequate resources should be allocated to meet this objective'⁴.

The Commission is committed to strengthening the EU's defence capabilities. It has proposed several initiatives to boost defence readiness and investment, including

⁴ See paragraph 17 – 2025/2145(DEC).

(i) up to EUR 150 billion in loans for Member States backed by the EU budget under the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument, (ii) the White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030, (iii) the ReArm Europe plan, and (iv) the defence readiness omnibus simplification.

From Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the end of 2024, the EU's unwavering commitment to Ukraine led to the mobilisation of EUR 130.2 billion for financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support. In February 2024, the Ukraine Facility was created to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation. To address Ukraine's financing needs for 2026-2027, the Ukraine Support Loan, providing up to EUR 90 billion in 2026-2027 and financed by EU borrowing on capital markets, was [adopted in February 2026](#).

c. Climate and biodiversity impact of EU funding

The Commission notes the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) observations on shortcomings in the Commission's methodology for estimating the climate effects of Union spending⁵ and Parliament's statement 'that the current methodologies for tracking climate and biodiversity expenditure do not fully capture all effects of Union activities'⁶.

The Commission aims to measure EU budget contributions and results related to climate action and biodiversity in line with the current performance framework. For the RRF, the common agricultural policy, and cohesion policy, it is obliged to apply the methodology and specific coefficients set out in the respective basic acts establishing these programmes. For the 2028-2034 MFF, the Commission has proposed a streamlined system to monitor EU spending and results related to climate and environmental objectives.

3. Protecting the EU's financial interests

The Commission attaches the utmost importance to monitoring the use of EU funds, in cooperation with national authorities and other implementing partners.

a. Spending in line with EU values, including the rule of law

⁵ See paragraph 13 – 2025/2145(DEC).

⁶ Ibid.

Rule of law

Parliament invites the Commission to make full and consistent use of the available instruments to suspend or protect EU funding where rule of law deficiencies affect sound financial management in the Member States concerned, particularly in Hungary and Slovakia.

Under the Conditionality Regulation, the Commission proactively monitors the situation in all Member States to identify breaches of rule of law principles falling within the scope of this Regulation as early as possible. The Commission fully uses all available sectoral and general legal instruments to address breaches of rule of law principles in Member States, affecting or seriously risking the sound financial management of the EU budget or the protection of the EU's financial interests in a sufficiently direct way.

Hungary has been subject to measures under the Conditionality Regulation to protect the EU budget since 2022, including: (i) the suspension of 55% of budgetary commitments from three cohesion programmes, and (ii) a prohibition on entering into new legal commitments for EU funding under direct and indirect management with 'Public Interest Trusts' and entities maintained by them.

In addition to the Conditionality Regulation, the Commission has at its disposal other key instruments to protect the EU budget, particularly: (i) the horizontal enabling condition on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights under the Common Provisions Regulation, and (ii) the milestones and targets addressing rule of law challenges under RPPs.

In the next MFF, respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights remains a must – the Conditionality Regulation will continue to apply to all funds. The National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) as proposed by the Commission allow for financial support for measures to strengthen the rule of law and fundamental rights while applying horizontal conditions to ensure the EU budget is protected against breaches to the principles of the Rule of Law and the Charter. If a breach remains unresolved after a year, the affected funds may be redeployed to programmes under direct or indirect management, in particular those supporting democracy, civil society, or anti-corruption efforts, under the annual budgetary procedure and subject to approval by the Parliament and Council. Moreover, to receive EU funding, Member States must establish mechanisms to ensure continued payments to beneficiaries even if EU funding is suspended. These safeguards form a core part of their management and control systems.

EU values

The Commission notes Parliament's call for a 'risk-based verification of recipients' compliance with EU values, in order to detect potential breaches'⁷. Under the Financial Regulation, the Commission monitors all stages of its contract management to ensure that organisations and projects incompatible with EU values receive no support. All EU funding beneficiaries must contractually commit to, and ensure respect for, the values on which the EU is founded when using resources of the Union budget. Non-compliance with this obligation may lead to a reduction of funds, suspension, or termination of the grant agreement, and/or administrative measures (e.g. exclusion or financial penalties) in the context of the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES). Lastly, *ex post* mechanisms under the Financial Regulation safeguard the proper use of EU funds where controls or audits reveal a breach of obligations.

EDES applies to persons and entities, including economic operators and organisations, applying or receiving funds in direct and indirect management). The EDES exclusion grounds provide a broad framework to address professional or ethical misconduct, including incitement to hatred, discrimination, and other serious breaches of EU values. Checks of the EDES Database are performed by all authorizing officers at the stage of the evaluation process. To further strengthen oversight, the Commission will explore the possibility of including EU values compliance indicators in the Arachne+ risk tool, pending technical and legal feasibility.

Conflicts of interest

Parliament calls on the Commission to ensure that 'no Union funds are paid, directly or indirectly, to beneficiaries, including those related to members of the European Council, where a conflict of interest has been identified and has not been demonstrably and verifiably resolved'⁸, and underlines that Member States should ensure transparency as a safeguard against conflicts of interest.

The Commission stresses that all Member States must respect the provisions of the EU Treaties and the legislation based on them, including provisions for the appropriate management of conflicts of interest at all levels, particularly Article 61 of the Financial Regulation.

b. Protecting the EU budget from fraudsters

Revenue side

⁷ See paragraph 161(xxii) – 2025/2145(DEC).

⁸ See paragraph 21(v) – 2025/2145(DEC).

In its 2024 Annual Report, the ECA provided a clean opinion on the revenue of the EU budget, reaffirming the stability and accuracy of revenue collection by the Commission.

Parliament ‘commends the efforts of the EPPO [European Public Prosecutor’s Office] and OLAF [the European Anti-Fraud Office] to combat the organised exploitation of weaknesses in Union customs controls’⁹ and points out that ‘the problems with customs duties being incorrectly declared or not declared at all (the ‘customs gap’) lead to a shortfall in collected import duties, which has been a persistent problem for many years for the EU and for its Member States’¹⁰.

The Commission welcomes the agreement between Parliament and the Council on the EU Customs Union reform of 26 March 2026. It responds to the current pressures under which EU Customs operates, such as a huge increase in trade volumes, especially in e-commerce, a fast-growing number of EU standards to be checked at the border, and shifting geopolitical realities and crises. With the creation of the EU Customs Authority and the EU Customs Data Hub, this reform will contribute to better, data-driven customs policy coordination, notably via an improved EU coordinated risk management framework.

⁹ See paragraph 55 – 2025/2145(DEC).

¹⁰ See paragraph 51 – 2025/2145(DEC).

Anti-fraud architecture (AFA)

Parliament expressed concern over insufficient coordination and information-sharing between EU and national anti-fraud bodies. On 16 July 2025, the Commission published a [White Paper for the Anti-fraud Architecture Review](#) outlining the need to strengthen the protection of the EU's financial interests. It underlines the crucial role and continuous engagement of all AFA actors and complements the Commission's proposal for the next MFF. One of the main objectives is to enhance cooperation between the key AFA actors – the EPPO, OLAF, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and the Anti-Money Laundering Authority. The White Paper also explores how to create a more integrated system and optimise the use of resources by leveraging new technologies, sharing data, and looking at the complementarity of functions of the actors.

The AFA Review is conducted in the broader context of the revision of the Europol and Eurojust Regulations and the ongoing evaluations of the legal acts of OLAF and the EPPO and of the Directive on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law (PIF Directive)¹¹. The Commission will present the results in a communication, scheduled for the end of 2026, possibly accompanied by legislative proposals.

Improving recoveries is another main objective of the review. The Commission continues to pursue, via annual monitoring exercises conducted by OLAF, a reinforced follow-up on the implementation of OLAF financial recommendations (until their final outcome) and of EPPO notifications with financial impact. The Commission is looking at further developing the annual report on the protection of the EU's financial interests and the fight against fraud (PIF Report) to include additional information and data on recoveries.

Budgetary reinforcement of the EPPO and OLAF

The Commission notes Parliament's repeated calls for reinforced capacities for the EPPO and OLAF and to strengthen cooperation between them.

The EPPO's creation in 2017 impacted OLAF's staffing levels due to synergies and efficiencies between the two services. As per the original Legislative Financial Statement, the EPPO was to operate under stable staffing with 115 full-time equivalents as of 2023. However, it received higher contributions and staff allocations than originally planned every year since its creation. Additional resources were added in duly justified cases during the process of adopting the

¹¹ Directive (EU) 2017/1371.

annual budgets and, for extraordinary needs, during the year via amending budgets. In 2024-2026, the EPPO received more reinforcements to account for Poland's and Sweden's participation, increased salary and housing costs, its independent IT architecture, and additional European Delegated Prosecutors and Seconded National Experts.

Taking into account OLAF's experience in the conduct of administrative investigations and the objective of avoiding the duplication of administrative and criminal investigations, up to 45 posts and credits for external staff were transferred to EPPO. Over the period 2019-2027, when considering both transfers to EPPO and reinforcements to OLAF via the Commission allocation procedures, the staff (posts and external staff) of OLAF will have decreased by 38.

OLAF cooperates intensively with the EPPO under their respective regulations and working arrangements, under which OLAF reports any suspicions of crime that might fall under the EPPO's remit, and duplication of investigations is avoided by means of a cross-checking mechanism. OLAF can also assist EPPO investigations by conducting complementary administrative investigations and support the EPPO where necessary.

Following the ECA's recommendation in its Special Report 26/2025, and building on the AFA review, the Commission will assess the arrangements required for the creation and governance of a common repository of fraud allegations to improve information-sharing between OLAF and the EPPO.

c. Level of error and control systems

Preventive and corrective measures

The Commission implements multiannual control strategies to safeguard EU funds, where errors or weaknesses are detected through its controls, this results in preventive measures, (i.e., corrections, interruptions or suspensions before Commission's payments take place) and corrective measures (i.e., corrections after the payments take place) up to programme closure. Under shared management, Member States conduct controls to detect and recover unduly paid amounts. Deficiencies identified in the national management and control systems may trigger financial corrections. In 2024, Commission efforts, together with those of Member States in shared management, led to the recovery of EUR 2.66 billion (EUR 1.18 billion preventive, EUR 1.48 billion corrective), primarily in cohesion and agricultural policies.

Actions to reduce the level of error

Parliament and the Council welcome the decrease in the overall error rate, but consider it is still too high, particularly in cohesion policy. The Commission notes all errors reported by the ECA and duly follows up all cases where it has a legal basis to act, working with the Member States and implementing partners, requesting

financial corrections where relevant and the necessary remedial actions to further improve management and control systems.

Cohesion policy

The Commission welcomes the decrease in the ECA's estimated error rate for cohesion policy expenditure compared to 2023 and 2022, and notes that the difference in the assessment of the error level by the Commission (as reported in its annual activity reports) and the ECA has further converged.

To foster a common understanding of methodologies, the Commission has enhanced its dialogue with the ECA via dedicated workshops. In 2025, they focused on quantifying public procurement irregularities in cohesion expenditure according to the Commission's quantification grid (that the ECA will use as of the 2025 statement of assurance audit).

Throughout 2025, the Commission closely monitored the implementation of the action plan agreed in 2024 with audit authorities aiming to strengthen their detection capacity: progress is reported in several areas, including analysing root causes of errors, sharing results with the authorities managing the programmes, updating and upgrading audit checklists to ensure their completeness and coherence, and making better use of various databases to support audit work.

In parallel, recognising that the complexity of implementation arrangements can contribute to the risk of error, the Commission actively promotes the use of simplified cost options and schemes that involve financing not linked to costs.

Common agricultural policy (CAP)

The Commission made significant progress in simplifying rules and preventing errors via the efficient use of available information. The 2023-2027 CAP delivery model allows Member States to tailor interventions to their needs. For example, the Commission supports Member States in the design and implementation of eco-schemes and encourages the use of simplified cost options.

The use of new technologies (like the Area Monitoring System, Copernicus Sentinel data and Artificial Intelligence) helps prevent and detect errors in the CAP. The Commission continues to provide support to Member States in addressing and preventing errors by providing guidance, fostering capacity building, exchange of best practices, and monitoring the quality of the Integrated Administration and Control System.

Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

There is a robust control and audit system in place for the RRF. It includes an updated audit methodology for (i) protecting the EU's financial interests, (ii) reinforcing controls on Member States' internal control systems in State aid and public procurement, and (iii) strengthening cooperation within the Commission.

Revisions of national Recovery and Resilience Plans considered previous implementation experience and recommendations from the ECA, Parliament and Council, aiming to reduce differences in the interpretation of EU legislation by the ECA and the Commission. The Commission proposed removing any ambiguous or unnecessary language from the Council implementing decisions, so they only contain essential requirements for demonstrating the fulfilment of a measure.

The Commission agrees with the Council's caution against 'new rules, contradictory requirements or more restrictive conditions imposed on member states *ex-post*¹² during implementation. Changing guidance on the interpretation of legal concepts in the last year of the instrument's implementation would cause new legal and practical issues for Member States.

Horizon Europe

The Commission continued to refine its approach to the implementation of lump sums under Horizon Europe, considering feedback from past pilots, the ECA, and continuing stakeholder engagement as part of its assessment of projects using lump-sum funding. This allows the Commission to maximise the simplification potential for beneficiaries while focusing controls on beneficiaries' implementation of funded projects in line with the agreed deliverables.

External action

The Commission accepted the ECA's recommendations and is following up on its findings. As regards the question of whether the Commission's implementing partners should grant ECA auditors full access to documents, the Commission constantly facilitates exchanges between the relevant entities and the ECA in order to find appropriate solutions.

European Development Fund

Parliament notes with concern that the estimated level of error in 2024 is 6.5% (8.9% in 2023). To reduce errors related to the clearing of pre-financing, the Commission has requested its partners to review their reporting templates to make it easier to identify the expenditure incurred.

The Commission also reviewed its control strategy and started implementing key recommendations, including by developing a risk profiling dashboard to (i) measure partners' compliance with financial and operational standards and access to

¹² See paragraph 11.4 of the Council's discharge recommendation.

documents, (ii) strengthen ex post controls and (iii) improve reporting to the Commission by pillar-assessed organisations.

4. Transparency

The Commission is committed to ensuring a high level of transparency of EU funding by providing extensive publication of funding data in the Financial Transparency System and the Funding and Tenders Portal. In the future, the new Single Gateway portal will provide even more transparency.

a. Transparency of EU funding

With transparency as a guiding principle, the Commission goes beyond the applicable legal requirements and applies the highest transparency standards among international organisations, helping to demonstrate results achieved with EU funding.

In line with the discharge resolution, calling the Commission to ensure that all grant agreements, including operating grants, respect the necessary requirements related to transparency, traceability and visibility of fund¹³, the Commission notes that information on the objectives and results of projects implemented by NGOs (including advocacy activities) is already public on the EU Funding and Tenders Portal. In addition, interest representatives that register in the Transparency Register as not representing commercial interests (typically including NGOs) must report their lobbying activities, declare their main sources of funding, and disclose each contribution above EUR 10 000 that exceeds 10% of their total budget, including the contributor's name. The Commission's proposed Performance Regulation for the 2028-2034 MFF standardises result indicators, which will further improve transparency, as will the planned centralising and expanding of the information available in the future Single Gateway provided for in that Regulation. The Commission reiterates its support for civil society organisations, including through operating grants within the current programming period, in line with the EU Strategy for Civil Society, that recognizes the need for adequate, sustainable and transparent funding for civil society.

The Commission has been cooperating with Parliament in the framework of the Budgetary Control Committee's Scrutiny Working Group on the funding of NGOs and other entities, and has provided all requested documentation, while respecting the applicable legal framework to protect confidential information.

¹³ See paragraph 161(xxi) – 2025/2145(DEC)

On transparency under the RRF, the Commission agrees that ‘full and reliable information on the final recipients is essential in order to prevent misuse of funds, detect fraud and ensure equal standards of accountability across all Member States’¹⁴ and notes that Parliament ‘will consider all appropriate measures within its prerogatives to ensure compliance, including legal action’¹⁵. The Commission points out that it is obliged to implement the instrument as agreed by the co-legislators, including the legal provisions on final recipient reporting, and considers that it has applied these provisions consistently and soundly, in the light of the conditions and legal definitions set by the RRF Regulation.

In the discharge procedure, the Commission has highlighted the efforts made to ensure Member States comply with, and go beyond, their obligations. The Commission will continue to strongly encourage Member States to provide additional data and will apply the instruments at its disposal if they fail to comply with the Regulation’s legal requirements.

As from the next MFF, the Commission proposals provide for publishing information on recipients of EU funding under all management modes on the centralised website ‘Single Gateway’ (including the enhanced Financial Transparency System)¹⁶. Under the Commission proposal for the NRPPs, information on beneficiaries, final recipients, contractors, and sub-contractors will be published both at national and EU level in the Single Gateway¹⁷.

b. The Commission's own transparency and accountability

The Commission upholds the highest transparency standards across its activities and decision-making. Commission staff are subject to rules on records management and archives, and security recommendations for the acceptable use of public instant messaging applications and any other corporate communication tool. In this regard, the Commission ensures compliance with the EU’s rules on public access to documents, including text messages (registration of work-related communications).

Senior officials, like all staff, are bound by the obligations of the Staff Regulations, including on ethics and integrity (e.g. ad hoc conflicts-of-interest declarations, spouse employment declarations, or requests for approval of outside activities). The Commission provides information, training and advice on ethics matters to support staff and managers in meeting their obligations. Transparency Register

14 See paragraph 278 - 2025/2145(DEC)

15 See paragraph 6 - 2025/2145(DEC).

16 Article 12 - COM/2025/545 final.

17 Articles 63 and 64 - COM/2025/565 final.

obligations apply to all managers, who must disclose their meetings with interest representatives listed in the Register.

The names and mandates of Special Advisers attached to each Member of the Commission are publicly available on the [Commission website](#).

The Commission takes note of Parliament's concerns regarding the functioning and effectiveness of the formal harassment procedure. Under the auspices of the Chief Confidential Counsellor, the Commission will involve independent experts as a complement to the review already launched by the Commission on the implementation of its anti-harassment policy¹⁸. More broadly, the Commission will continue its efforts to ensure a safe environment for reporting, including by strengthening awareness, accessibility, and trust in the available channels, and, in the context of the ongoing review of the Whistleblowing Guidelines, will seek to align them as closely as possible with the standards set out in Directive (EU) 2019/1937.

5. Sustainability of debt

The Commission agrees that 'the sustainability of Union debt must be factored into all future budgetary decisions'¹⁹. The timeline for debt repayment related to non-repayable support under NextGenerationEU runs until 2058, giving the EU an extended period to manage repayments without significant disruptions or compromising financial stability. Pursuant to Article 256 of the Financial Regulation, the Commission issues an annual report assessing the sustainability of contingent liabilities and EU budget headroom, supporting the monitoring of budgetary sustainability.

The Commission welcomes Parliament's endorsement of its proposals for new own resources and agrees that 'the development of genuine new own resources is essential to prevent debt servicing costs from crowding out priorities under future multiannual financial frameworks'²⁰. Introducing new own resources requires political will and engagement from all sides. The Commission proposals include a fixed annual debt service amount. NextGenerationEU repayment will be kept under the ceilings of the financial framework. Interest rate risk will be very limited as of 2028, as there will be no new net issuance after 2026, and the annual fixed debt service amount ensures full predictability.

18 Commission Decision of 12.12.2023 C(2023)8630

19 See paragraph 7 - 2025/2145(DEC).

20 See paragraph 47 - 2025/2145(DEC).

6. Looking ahead

In July 2025, the Commission presented its proposal for an ambitious, agile and forward-looking 2028-2034 MFF. It builds on the strengths and fundamental principles of the current framework, and the lessons learned from it, while making it simpler, more flexible and more impactful²¹, and takes into account recommendations from Parliament, the Council and the ECA in the context of the discharge.

Robust governance, transparency, and strong political oversight are integral to every part of these proposals. The Commission is working closely with Parliament and the Council to achieve an ambitious, balanced, and timely agreement on the next MFF and sectoral programmes.

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²¹ See COM(2025) 570 final.