

Position paper EUCDW on MFF 2028-2034

The **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** is one of the defining political files of the current European political work. As the European Christian Democratic Workers' organisation (EUCDW), we emphasise that the structuring of social expenditure within the new MFF is of fundamental importance. In this context, we strongly advocate maintaining the **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** as a stand-alone fund.

The ESF+ is the only EU instrument with a primary and explicit social mandate. Its unique focus, combined with cohesion policy, makes it indispensable for promoting social inclusion, upward mobility, and the social market economy that lies at the heart of the European People's Party. From a Christian Democratic perspective, social rights are inseparable from shared duties and responsibilities within a multilevel governance framework. The ESF+ reflects precisely this balance: it supports the most vulnerable while enabling citizens to develop their skills and contribute meaningfully to society.

EUCDW therefore calls for the ESF+ to be preserved as an independent fund that should be prioritised within the MFF. This is essential to ensure a socially fair, competitive, and future-oriented economic model. This aligns directly with our core identity as the party of the social market economy. Strengthening Europe's social market economy requires a strong, genuinely European MFF that empowers regions and sub-national levels, rather than a renationalised approach that fragments cohesion and shared priorities.

The current MFF proposal risks seriously diluting the EU's ability to invest in social policy. Although the NRPPs include a 14% social spending target, the competitive nature of the proposal's architecture risks further decreasing the available amount when Member States decide to focus investment in other policy fields. Combined with a very broad definition of social objectives, this represents a significant decrease in social spending compared to the current ESF+.

The ESF+ plays a critical role in connecting citizens, workers, businesses, agriculture, environment, and social objectives which are of key priority to EUCDW. At the same time, the MFF requires significant administrative simplification to ensure accessibility for all stakeholders. The MFF should serve as leverage to encourage meaningful structural reforms within Europe, in line with shared European objectives. The ESF+ is not just a fund; it is a **cornerstone of Europe's social market model**. Preserving its autonomy is vital to strengthening both solidarity and competitiveness within the European Union.

To summarize these are our priorities:

- ESF+ must remain a separate stand-alone fund
- The fund helps strengthen competitiveness, cohesion and social inclusion
- Christian Democracy requires balancing rights and responsibilities