

The European Council must choose Europe

On 10 October 2026, the Irish presidency of the Council of the EU put forward a new negotiation box with revised budget figures for the EU budget 2028-2034. We recognise that the Irish government faced the impossible task of finding a compromise between diverging views on Europe's future. However, their solution will damage Europe and threaten its future in an increasingly competitive and uncertain world.

The Irish Presidency proposed a much deeper cut to the MFF budget than the Cyprus Presidency did in June by reducing the EU budget by 8% to €1,622 billion in constant prices (€1,826 billion in current prices). It is lamentable that too many Member States see a decrease in their national contribution to the EU budget as a solution for domestic fiscal consolidation. This view dangerously overlooks that many of the challenges Member States face cross borders and cannot be addressed individually: the new global disorder requires more Europe, not less.

The Guild is particularly worried that the proposed cuts are uneven across the different headings and programmes of the next MFF. Heading 1 appears more ring-fenced than headings 2 and 3, even though these build Europe's future and will determine our competitiveness, prosperity and resilience in the years ahead.

The nearly 10% decrease in **the next Horizon Europe framework programme (FP10)**, to €140 billion in constant prices (€158.2 billion in current prices), is unacceptable. The rationales for this decision are also difficult to grasp. In recent weeks, we have celebrated new Nobel Prize winners who have benefited from Horizon Europe funding, including through the European Research Council. The latest Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU report stressed that the EU again failed to reach the 3% of GDP target for research and development (R&D) investment. Together, the EU and its Member States will need to invest an additional €565 billion to meet this goal by 2030. Another European Commission report highlighted that the ongoing Horizon Europe would need more than €150 billion extra to support all high-quality proposals and that, because of budget shortages, 75% of these proposals remain unfunded.

[R&I does not compete with other policy priorities](#): we need R&I for Europe's competitiveness, security, social cohesion, prosperity, food sovereignty, environmental protection and climate transition. It is urgent to recognise that putting R&I at the core of our budget is a necessity for our future. Investing in Europe's research leadership and cross-border collaborations through FP10 has clear EU added value; hence, [we urge](#) the European Council to give FP10 the highest priority in the next MFF and a commensurate budget of €177 billion in constant prices (or €200 billion in current prices), an amount also defended by the European Parliament.

The Guild is also deeply concerned about the proposed disproportionate 16% cut to **Global Europe**, reducing it to a modest €150 billion in constant prices (€168.8 billion in current prices) that would be spread too thinly given the wide programme of activities for each region and across the global stage. This would severely affect Europe's capacity to build prosperous global and regional partnerships,

support health resilience and address shared challenges faced by Europe and other global regions alike, while its traditional allies grow more confrontational. In line with the renewed impetus given to science diplomacy, and the AU-EU Innovation Agenda, Global Europe must contribute financially to each thematic priority of Europe's Global Gateway strategy. This must include [research, innovation and higher education collaboration between Africa and Europe](#) to enable the development of equitable, mutually beneficial long-term partnerships. Global Europe's contribution to multilateral activities must also be safeguarded, not reduced by 25%. Europe's geopolitical position and the welfare of our societies depend on long-term partnerships and on Europe playing a reliable role in a changing world order.

The Irish Presidency also proposed to cut down the Commission's proposal for **Erasmus+** from €36.2 billion to €34.7 billion in constant prices (from €40.8 billion to €39.2 billion in current prices). Europe's flagship programme, with demonstrated European added value for nearly 40 years, aims to become more accessible in the next seven-year period. How can this possibly be achieved without further investment? The Irish proposal lags far behind what is actually needed, which the [higher education sector identified as €60 billion](#) (in current prices), with the European Parliament supporting €47.4 billion in its recent position. Member States have evidence of the impact of Erasmus+. They must be the first ones to safeguard its budget. The attractiveness, reach and impact of Erasmus+ will be further affected by cuts to the Global Europe instrument, since its global cooperation opportunities and talent attraction depend on it.

Secretary-General **Jan Palmowski**: As the US and China base their geopolitical and economic position on scientific leadership, Europe cannot afford to stay behind. We must demand a reversal of the cuts proposed by the Irish Presidency, because without strong investment in Horizon Europe, we cannot be competitive globally, nor will we be able to generate the growth necessary to ease social tensions domestically. In science, as in higher education and diplomacy, Europe's Member States need each other. They cannot do it alone. They must choose Europe.