

Mr António Costa
President of the European Council
European Council
Rue de la Loi 175
B-1048 Brussels

Brussels, 13 October 2026

Subject: **Eurochambres calls for a strong European Competitiveness Fund**

Dear President Costa,

Ahead of the European Council on 15-16 October, I am writing on to express the concerns of Eurochambres, the association of European chambers of commerce and industry representing 20 million businesses, regarding the Multiannual Financial Framework negotiating box published by the Irish Presidency on 10 October.

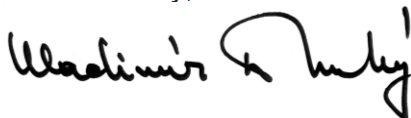
The negotiating box proposes a reduction from €409 billion to €362 billion in the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), or 11.5%, which is significantly greater than the overall cut of 8% compared to the Commission's proposal. At a time of de-industrialisation and with Europe falling further behind the US and China on innovation and technology, underinvesting in our competitiveness is the opposite of what businesses need.

This disproportionate cut follows a clear pattern. The heading covering competitiveness, research and defence is slashed by almost 13%, while agriculture and cohesion lose only 3%. Since the Draghi and Letta reports of 2024, competitiveness has rightly been identified as an EU priority, yet this proposal instead earmarks it as the first place to cut costs.

For businesses, these are not abstract numbers. The ECF is designed to support SMEs scaling up, de-risk private investment in strategic technologies, and simplify access to EU funding. Because much of this support works through guarantees and blended finance, each euro cut means an exponential amount of private investment that will not be unlocked. Reducing the ECF in this context is not budgetary prudence; it is a strategic mistake.

The ECF was conceived as Europe's main tool for maintaining industry, innovation and quality jobs on this continent; weakening it now means paying a far higher price later. I therefore call on you and the member states to revise the negotiating box so that savings are shared proportionately across priorities, and to preserve the ECF, including Horizon Europe, with an envelope of at least the €409 billion proposed by the Commission.

Yours sincerely,



Vladimír Dlouhý
Eurochambres President

cc:

Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland

Thomas Byrne, Minister of State for European Affairs and Defence, Ireland