

Germany Sets Its Terms Before the EU Summit: Budget Cuts, Trade Shield, “Emergency Brake” News

16 OCTOBER 2026

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As the European Council opened in Brussels on 15 October, Germany pressed three demands. On 12 October, Merz, Italy’s Giorgia Meloni and Belgium’s Bart De Wever asked Council President António Costa for an “emergency brake” on burdensome EU laws. On 14 October, Merz told the Bundestag that Berlin and Paris want a new trade protection instrument. Merz also rejects the Irish presidency’s €1.622 trillion 2028–2034 budget proposal as a basis for agreement.

Germany leads the “frugal” bloc against 17 “Friends of Cohesion”, who back a text that spares agriculture and cohesion funds while cutting com-

petitiveness, research and external action. Costa wants a deal by year-end; diplomats say there is no hurry. Spain's snap election adds uncertainty.

The summit is not over, and compromises can still be found. Even so, Berlin's timing deserves criticism. Pushing trade protection amid tense international trade relations, on the eve of a summit meant to project unity to allies, partners and competitors, risks signalling division and inviting retaliation. Combined with budget cuts and a legislative brake, it hands rivals a story of a bloc arguing with itself. A joint Franco-German framing softens this, yet it is doubtful that such a fragile topic should be opened publicly rather than settled quietly beforehand.

References:

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