



EUROPEAN UNION



#HorizonEU

THE EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION
PROGRAMME
2021 - 2027



HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL WORKSHOP

General Introduction

speaker: Sarah Stroobants, NCP Flanders

How to write a good proposal – Tips (I)

- Read the **call text & relevant destination** carefully -> **every word counts**
- **Questions before you start:**
 - ☐ Why bother? What problem will you try to solve?
 - ☐ How does the project idea address the EU policy?
 - ☐ Is there already a solution to the problem?
 - ☐ Why now (urgency)? Why has it not been done before?
 - ☐ Why you? Are you the best people to do this work?
- Ensure your project idea is **fully aligned with the topic description** and activities are within its **scope**
- Prepare an **outline** of your proposal as a first step

Outline or 'one page proposal'

- Serves to **substantiate the project idea**
- Helps define the project idea **in relation to the call topic & the scope**
- **First tool to communicate** the project plan & objectives
- Elements that could go into the outline
- **Graphical presentation** / graphical abstract of your project idea



1

One page proposal

The One-Page proposal serves to substantiate the project idea. It will be useful as a basis for the communication with project partners as well as for consultation with e.g. National Contact Points (NCPs).

Programme (Horizon Europe or other):	
Call Topic and Funding Scheme:	
Deadline:	
Planned Title of the project:	
Objectives/Aim of the project:	
Project background:	
Expected results and lead users of these results:	
How do you want to achieve the objectives? Work phases of the project (can correspond to work packages)	
Consortium in brief:	
Planned duration of the project:	
Expected budget:	

Full proposal

Three sections correspond to the main evaluation criteria of your proposal



Administrative form (Part A - generated by the IT system)	Technical part –Section 1 Excellence (Part B)	Technical part – Section 2 Impact (Part B)	Technical part – Section 3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation' (Part B)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information including proposal title, duration in moths, fixed and free keywords • Abstract • Participants and organisation data • Budget for the proposal • Ethics & security <div data-bbox="300 1011 682 1189"> <p>Importance of abstract, title and keywords !</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 Objectives and ambition • 1.2 Methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Project's pathways towards impact • 2.2 Measures to maximise impact – dissemination, exploitation and communication • 2.3 Summary – Impact canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 Work plan and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of work packages - Work package description - List of deliverables - List of milestones - Critical risks for implementation - Summary of staff effort - Subcontracting cost items - Purchase cost items - Other cost categories items - In-kind contributions • 3.2 Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole



How to write a good proposal – Tips (II)

- **Answer to all detailed instructions** in the proposal template
- A proposal is a convincing exercise, **NOT a scientific paper**
 - Pre-significance (instead of post-significance)
 - Focus on **need-to-know information** – only cite crucial references
- Evaluators make up their mind quickly -> Start with a **brief summary**
- Not all evaluators of your proposal will be expert in your (sub)discipline
 - Make the proposal **easy to read** – clarity of the proposal!
 - **Layer technical information**

How to write a good proposal – Tips (III)

- Avoid general statements/being too vague -> **be concrete, be specific**
- **Avoid repetition** -> use cross-references to other parts of the proposal
- Don't promise the world -> **be ambitious but also realistic**
- **Quantify** where possible & meaningful – **Substantiate**
- **Avoid under or over-estimation of resources** to carry out the project
- Make your proposal **visually attractive** (figures, tables, lists, images etc)
- **Ensure consistency** of the different parts of your proposal

Ensure consistency throughout your proposal

- Building the different elements of the proposal while **safeguarding consistency**
- Consistency between **PART A & PART B** as well as between **different sections** of PART B

Some examples:

- Effort and resources in PART B (Section 3.1) and Budget table in PART A

3.1 Work plan and resources [e.g. 14 pages – including tables]

⚠ Please make sure the information in this section matches the costs as stated in the budget table in section 3 of the application forms, and the number of person months, shown in the detailed work package descriptions.

- Consistency **between the narrative** in Section 1 on Excellence and Section 2 on Impact (dissemination, exploitation & communication) **and the description of the work** in Section 3 on Implementation (work plan, work packages, tasks, effort & resources)

- Consistency of **terminology, numbers & titles**

Last but not least

- Ask **feedback** from a colleague/support staff not directly involved
- Ask for **support**

Get guidance:

- [Funding & Tenders portal](#)
- Support office of your organisation
- National Contact Point



- Don't give any excuses to be marked down - **make it worth the investment**
- Don't wait until the last minute -> **resubmit improved versions**



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HORIZON EUROPE

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THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION



BE-NCPs network Workshop on proposal writing for Horizon Europe – 20.09.2023

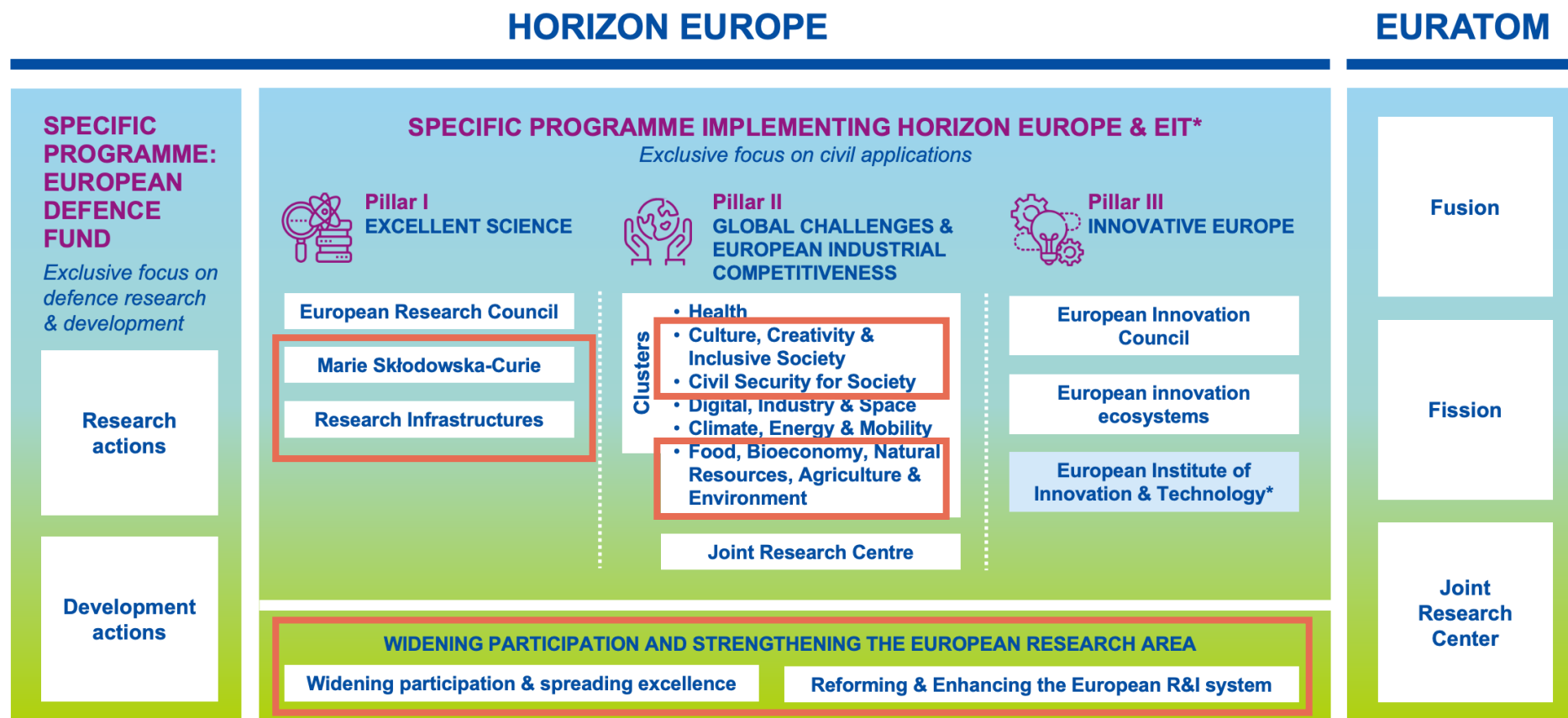
The experience of REA - European Research Executive Agency

Marc Tachelet
Director of REA

Cécile Menétrey-Monchau
REA call coordinator – Cluster 2

REA's part (23%) in Horizon Europe (€95.5m)

Horizon Europe supports research and innovation through Work Programmes, which set out funding opportunities for research and innovation activities.

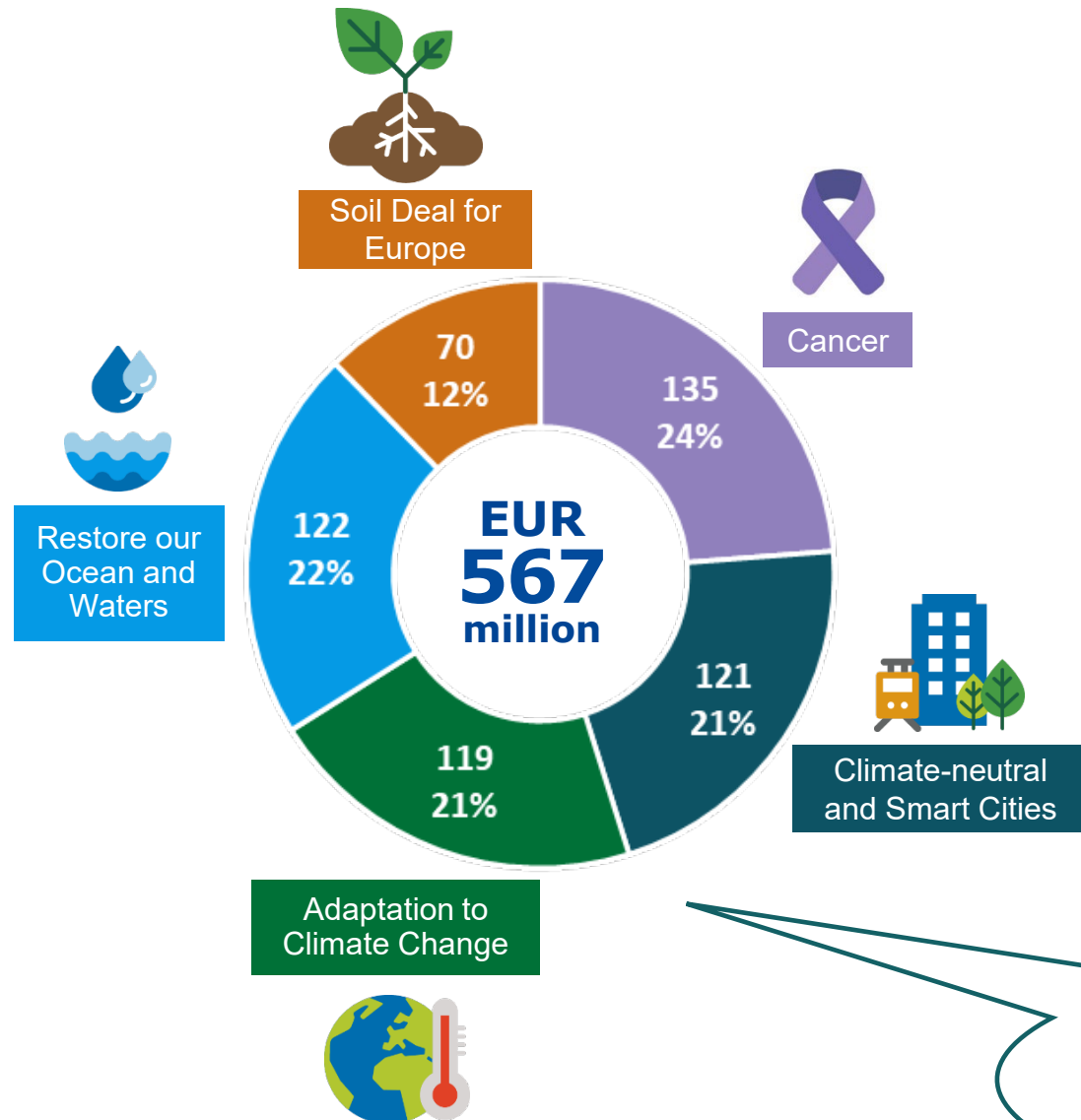


* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

Novelties under Horizon Europe

- Missions
- Reinforced focus on impact
- Lump sum funding and unit costs
- Blind evaluation and rebuttal (right-to-react)
- Cross-cutting features
 - International cooperation
 - AI

EU Missions to tackle global challenges



Part of Horizon Europe pillar 2, **five EU Missions** were launched in September 2021 to provide concrete solutions to the greatest challenges and to directly support the EU priorities: the European Green Deal, new European Bauhaus, Europe fit for the Digital Age, Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, an Economy that Works for People, EU's long-term Vision for Rural Areas.

Missions stem from Research and Innovation and aim for more. Horizon Europe will provide initial funding of up to EUR 1,9 billion for the first three years.

By the end of 2022, **25 missions calls** had been launched and fully evaluated; **71 grants** had been signed for a total of **EUR 567 million** and involving **1525 beneficiaries**.

[Communication 19.07.2023](#)

EU missions are on track to achieve their ambitious goals by 2030

Strengthened focus on impact for the programme

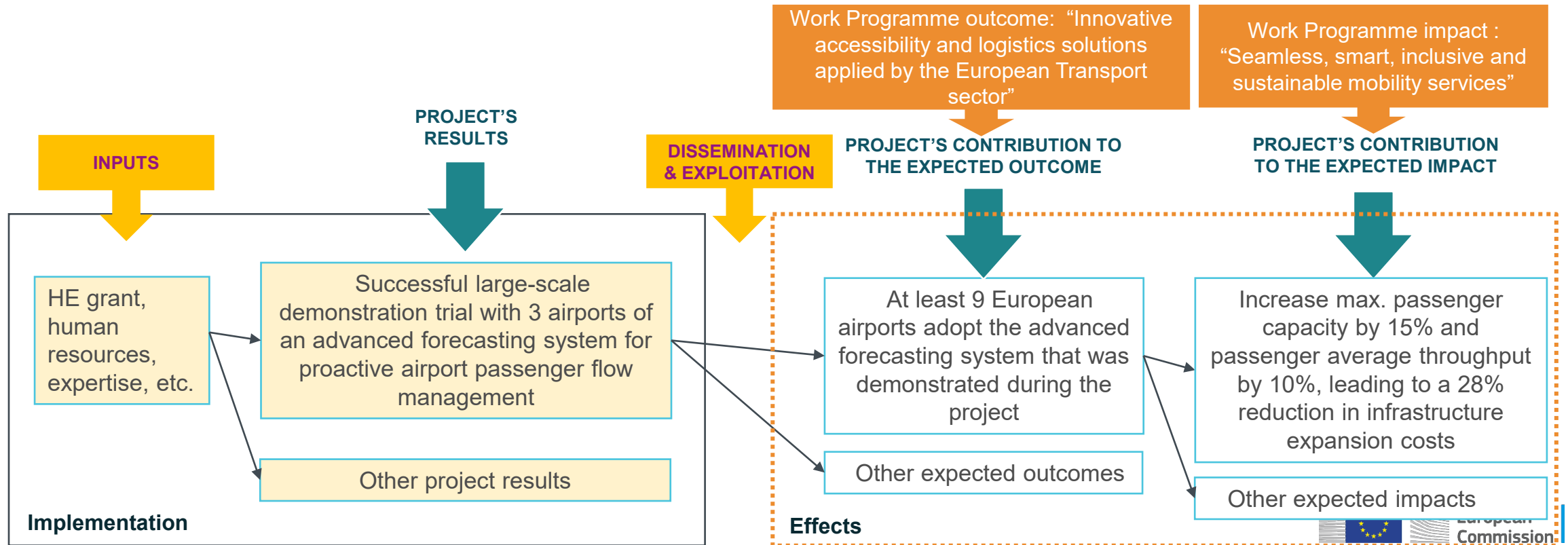
- HE is Impact driven: focus on wider long-term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science

Impact area	Key Impact Pathways (9) (some examples)	Short term (outputs) Medium term (outcomes/results) Long term (Impacts)
1. Scientific impact	1. High quality new knowledge	Publications => citations => world class science
	3. Diffusion of new knowledge	Sharing => diffusing => collaboration
2. Societal impact	4. Addressing EU policy priorities and global challenges	Results => solutions => benefits
3. Economic impact	7. Innovation based growth	Innovative results => innovations => economic growth

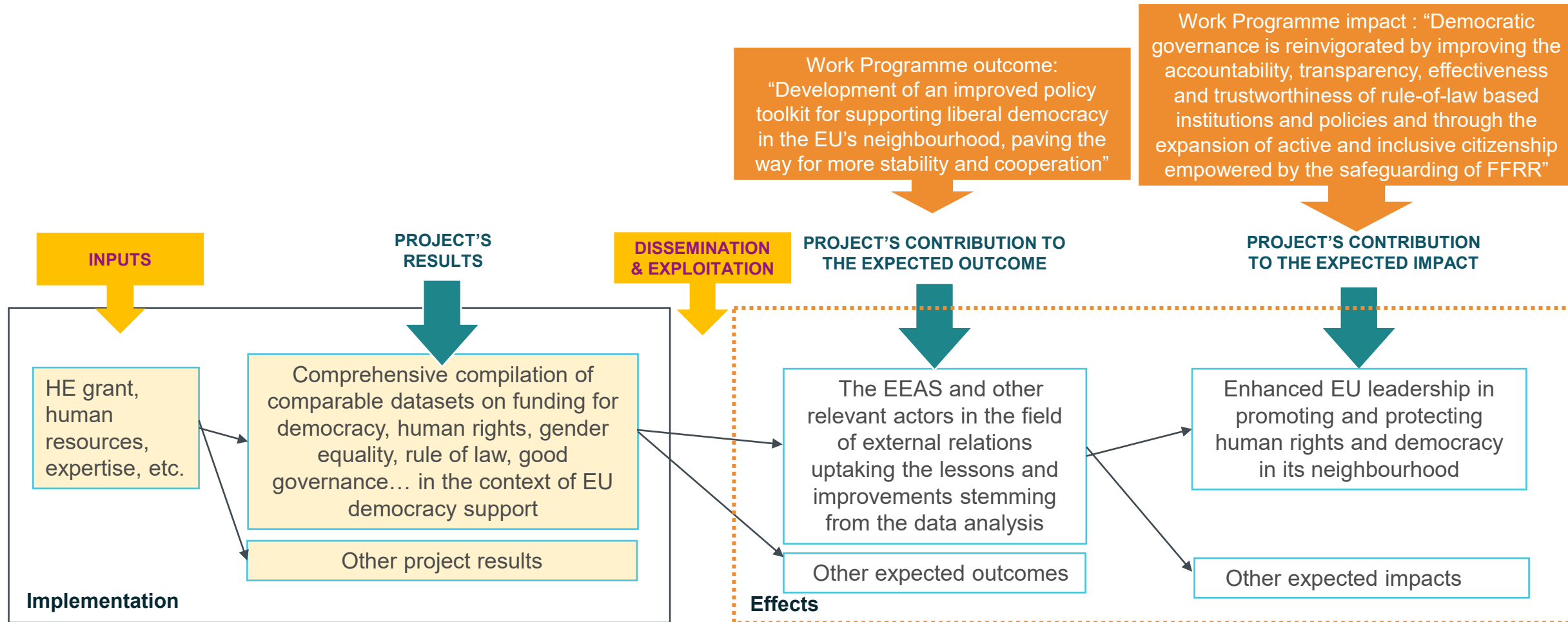
Evaluating the Impact criterion for proposals

Project's
pathway towards
impact

...by thinking about the specific contribution the project can make to the expected outcomes and impacts set out in the Work Programme.

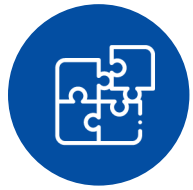


Evaluating the Impact criterion: an SSH example



How to address impact in HE – some tips

- WP spells out the expected mid-term outcome and long-term impact.
 - Check topic description for expected outcome (scope)
 - Check destination text for expected impact
- Get terminology right: output, outcome, impact
- Demonstrate the expected outcome/impact against what is expected.
Do not paraphrase the WP, translate it to your proposal.
- Identify potential barriers (e.g. regulatory; targeted markets; user behavior) and propose mitigating measures
- Identify and address possible negative environmental outcome or impact
- Scale the impact of your proposal to size and scope of your project



Lump sums

Lump sum evaluation and grant agreement follow a standard approach with the same:

- Evaluation criteria
- Independent experts
- Pre-financing and payment scheme
- Reporting periods and technical reporting, **focusing on completion of work packages**

One lump sum share is fixed in the grant agreement for each work package:

Work package completed = payment

- Payments do not depend on a successful outcome, but on the **completion of activities**.
- Work packages can be modified through amendments (e.g. to take into account new scientific developments)



Two lump sum options

The type of lump sum is specified in the text of the topic you are evaluating.

Option 1:

- The call for proposals defines a **fixed lump sum**.
- The budget requested by applicants **must be equal** to this fixed lump sum.
- The proposal must **describe the resources mobilised** for this amount.

Option 2 (most common for REA):

- Applicants **define the lump sum** in their proposal.
- They are **free to define the amount** necessary to carry out your project.
- The lump sum chosen must be **justified by the resources mobilised**.



Writing a lump sum proposal

- To write a lump sum proposal, applicants:
 - Use the standard Horizon Europe application form
 - Present the objectives and methodology of your project and address the expected outcomes and impacts as in any Horizon Europe proposal
 - Describe in detail the activities covered by each work package.
- applicants provide a **detailed budget table** with cost estimations for each cost category per beneficiary (and affiliated entity if any) and per work package.
- The cost estimations must be an **approximation of applicants' actual costs**. They:
 - are subject to the same eligibility rules as in actual costs grants
 - must be in line with your normal practices
 - must be reasonable / non-excessive
 - must be in line with - and necessary for - your proposed activities.



Evaluating lump sum proposals

- **Selection of experts:** particular focus on experts with project management experience
- Proposals are evaluated by independent experts against the **standard evaluation criteria:** excellence, impact, and implementation.
- The cost estimations are assessed under the **implementation** criterion:
 - cost estimations are **reasonable and non-excessive**
 - the resources proposed and the split of the lump sum **allow completing the activities.**
- Experts can make **concrete recommendations** on the budget. This will be reflected in a modified lump sum amount in the grant agreement.
- Cost estimations that are clearly overestimated or underestimated lead to a **decreased score** under the implementation criterion



Guidance available

One dedicated [lump sum page](#) on the Funding & Tenders Portal with:

Guidance documents

- [What do I need to know? & Quick guide](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- [Detailed guidance for participants](#)
- [Lump sum video guidance for experts](#)

Reference documents

- [Model Grant Agreement Lump Sum](#)
- [Decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme](#)

Studies

- [European Commission assessment](#) (October 2021)
- [European Parliament \(STOA\) study on lump sums in Horizon 2020](#) (May 2022)

Events

- Future events
- Past events and recordings

Funding opportunities

- List of Horizon Europe topics using lump sum funding



Unit cost for personnel

(EC decision being finalised)

- Further simplification measure to reduce error rates in financial claims. Advantages similar to lump sums (no auditing, no proof documents, etc.)
- Building further on the use of average personnel costs (already on offer)
- Applicable, by applicant/beneficiary, across the board (all or nothing)
- Pre-fixed rate, calculated as a global average for an entity's total personnel
- Can be updated every two years – applicable only for new grants
- Requires audit certificate
- When: possibly already in the course of 2023.

Unit cost – calculation daily rate (EC decision being finalised)

total staff costs of the beneficiary in the last closed full financial year
(annual work units in the last closed full financial year) * 215

The result of the daily rate formula will be subject to a cap per country. The cap applicable to each individual country will be calculated as follows:

EUR 9 618 * country-specific correction coefficient
18days



Pilot on Blind evaluation

Blind evaluation

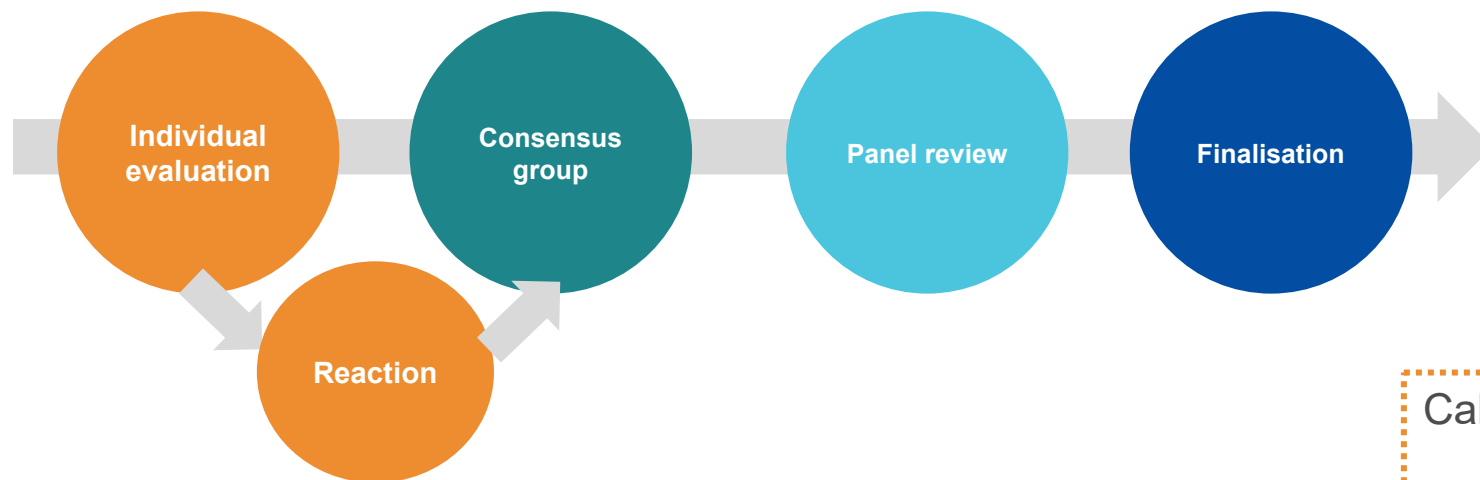
- A pilot to **avoid alleged bias** towards large well-known organisations
(A recent independent study has not revealed such a bias)
- The pilot aims to identify whether blind evaluations create difficulties and/or effectively mitigates the (perceived) risk of reputational bias
- launched in the WP 2023-24 for all first of two-stage calls in 2023
- **Do not present yourself or your consortium in a way that would allow you to be identified**

REA's experiences with a few pilots

- No serious incumbents for a smooth evaluation but more elaborate admissibility checks required
Out of 116 proposals, one declared inadmissible (acronym of coordinator disclosed)
- Reduces capacity to check on Col
- Impact is questionable (applied to first of two two-stage only)



Right-to-react (Rebuttal)



- to increase transparency, to correct any factual errors or major misunderstandings by experts at an early stage.
- Applicants send their reactions to draft experts comments
- Experts take applicants' reaction into account during consensus discussions.



we disclose individual experts readings with little quality control

Results from pilots under review and alternatives to increase transparency are being explored

Calls participating in the pilot:

- HORIZON-EIC-2021-PATHFINDEROPEN-01,
- HORIZON-CL6-2021-BIODIV-02;
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01 (ERA Chairs)
- HORIZON-CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-02

Preliminary findings (EC still to assess)

- Applicants try to add new info
- Higher no of evaluation review requests
- Assessment: coordinators are positive
experts neutral
high impact on EC services
- Impact only in 1 out 89 cases



European
Commission



Gender Equality Plan

Check the [General Annexes of the WP](#) for complete information

Gender Equality Plan (starts being applicable in calls with deadline in 2022)

legal entities from MSs and ACs that are public bodies, research organisations **OR** higher education establishments **must have a gender equality plan**, covering minimum process-related requirements (announced in WP general annexes and in participant registry).

A **self-declaration in THE participant registry** is requested at proposal stage.

This eligibility criterion does not apply to other categories of legal entities, such as private for-profit organisations, including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

After a difficult start – causing delays in Grant Agreement Preparations – the matter quickly settled and has become a well established practice



Specific attention points

Evaluation form includes:

- Main part with the three **evaluation criteria** where you give comments and scores
- **Additional questions:** The evaluators are asked to take a position on additional questions linked to the selection procedure or policy considerations.

Additional questions in Horizon Europe evaluations

- Use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC)
- Use of human embryos (hE)
- Scope of the application
- Additional funding
- Activities not eligible for funding
- Dual use technologies: exclusive focus on civil applications
- Do no significant harm principle
- Artificial Intelligence



Use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) and human embryos (hE)

- experts assess whether the proposal involves the use of **hESC** and **hE**. This is independent of, and serves to verify, the applicants' answers in the ethics issues table.
- If you consider that your proposal involves hESC, you must state whether the use of hESC is, or is not, **necessary to achieve the scientific objectives** of the proposal and the reasons why.

Your answers to these questions and the comments provided will be used by the ethics experts in charge of the **ethics assessment**. Proposals involving hESC can be funded only if the use of hESC is necessary to achieve its objectives.



Exclusive focus on civil applications (Dual use technologies)

- Participants confirm that the proposal has an exclusive focus on civil applications. Activities to serve military purposes cannot be funded.
- Evaluators are asked to **confirm** that this is the case.
- Evaluators will not reject proposals for this reason but will reflect the **removal of the disallowed activities** in the final score (disregarding these activities may lead to a lower score).



Do no significant harm principle (DNSH)

European Green Deal

In line with the European Green Deal objectives, economic activities should not make a significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives (EU Taxonomy Regulation)

- Applicants **can refer to the DNSH principle** when presenting their research methodology and the expected impacts of the project.
- However, evaluators **will not score applications in relation to their compliance with the DNSH principle** unless explicitly stated in the work programme (e.g. actions in the European Innovation Council Work Programme 2021).

The six environmental objectives :



Climate change mitigation



Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources



Pollution prevention & control



Climate change adaptation



Transition to a circular economy



Protection and restoration of biodiversity & ecosystems



Artificial Intelligence for Europe

AI systems display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals

(from High Level Expert Group)

- AI is an important driver for [European Industry](#); if not well developed it can also become a problem (e.g. [Microsoft's Tay Chatbot](#))
- Europe's stance at G20 early September:
Europe calls for establishing a framework for safe, responsible AI, with a similar body as the IPCC for climate.
Such framework should address the societal risks as well as the opportunities of AI.



Artificial Intelligence in HE

AI can foster better science:

- *use of AI for proposal writing (Large Language Models – ChatGPT):*
 - ==> risk of increase in proposals (easier to write)
 - ==> positive: democratize science (for researchers less proficient in EN)
 - ==> positive: savings in literature reviews
- *use of AI in proposed research:*
 - experts assess whether a proposal involves AI and the robustness of it
 - Check available [guidance](#)

Area under development: EC is aware that more guidance is needed to promote a more positive approach on AI.

International cooperation

Increased emphasis following the European Economic Security Strategy :

- promoting the EU's competitiveness (Single Market, strong and resilient economy, skills, EU's research, technological and industrial base;
- **protecting the EU's economic security – impacts on HE:**
 - List of critical technologies
 - Possible reinforced use of article 22(5) and 22(6) – limiting access to funding for third countries and/or EU based entities under foreign control
 - Control strategy on ownership and control of legal entities under review
 - Stronger controls on transfer of IPR and exclusive licensing (during project implementation)
- partnering with the broadest possible range of partners to strengthen economic security

International cooperation

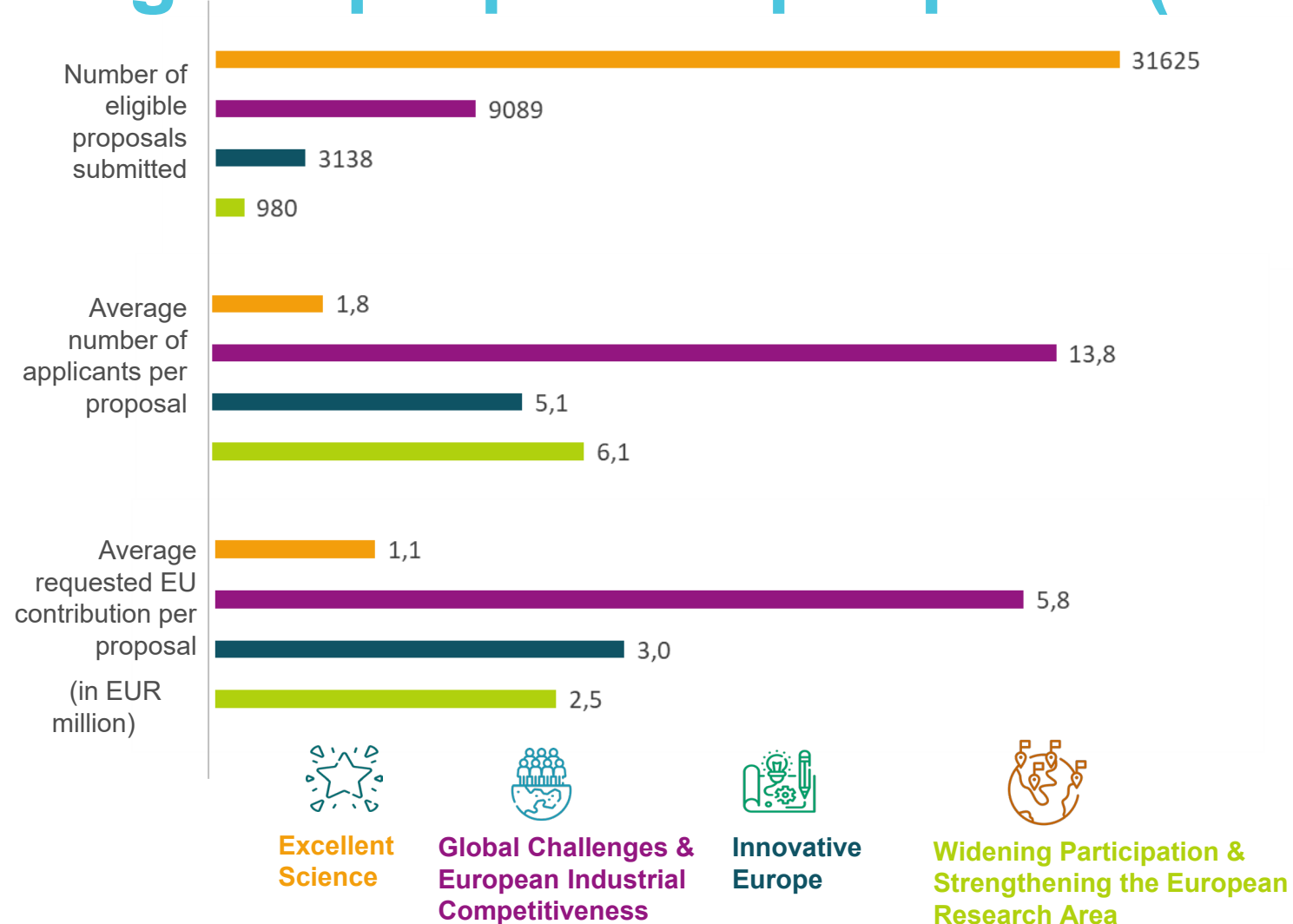
Association agreements under negotiation:

- General principle: participation in calls under condition that – by time of GA signature – the association becomes effective (Morocco, UK)
- **Recent developments for UK:**
 - Political agreement still to be endorsed by Council
 - Eligibility for funding as of calls 2024
 - 2022-2023 calls: evaluations not impacted (to safeguard applicants access to UK government guarantee mechanism) but no longer delays in Grant Agreement Preparations as we immediately reject funding (no longer 2-step procedure)
 - Further guidance under review (e.g. calls using budget from 2023 & 2024; prizes; etc.)

Horizon Europe monitoring

Horizon Europe mid-term evaluation is ongoing
Draft conclusions are under preparation
(not yet for public disclosure)

Eligible proposals per pillar (2021-2022)

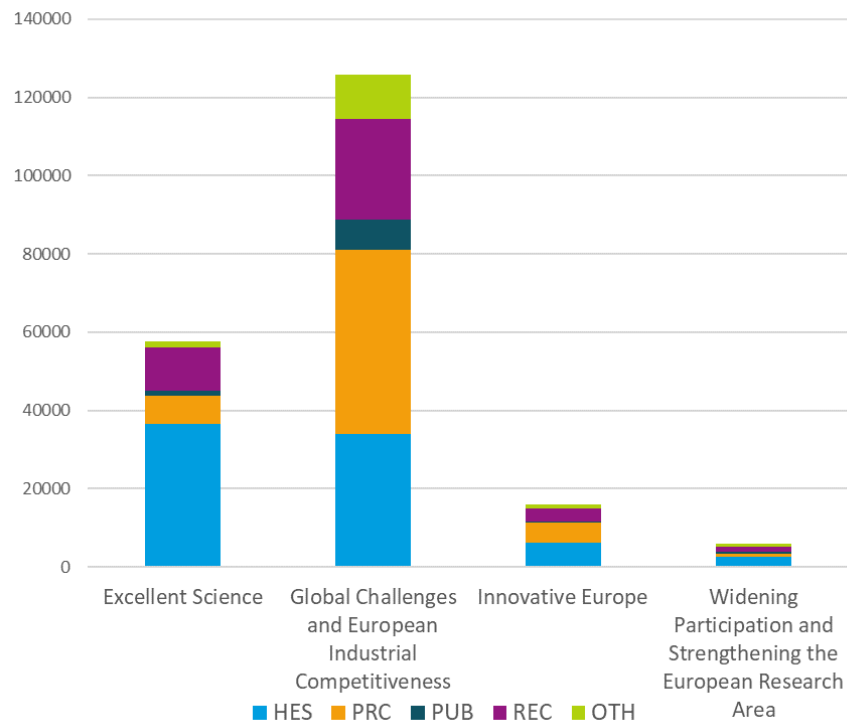


Given its strong focus on mono-beneficiary grants, the **Excellent Science pillar** attracted 70% of the proposals but the number of applicants per proposal and the EU financial contribution requested per proposal are the lowest, on average, under this pillar.

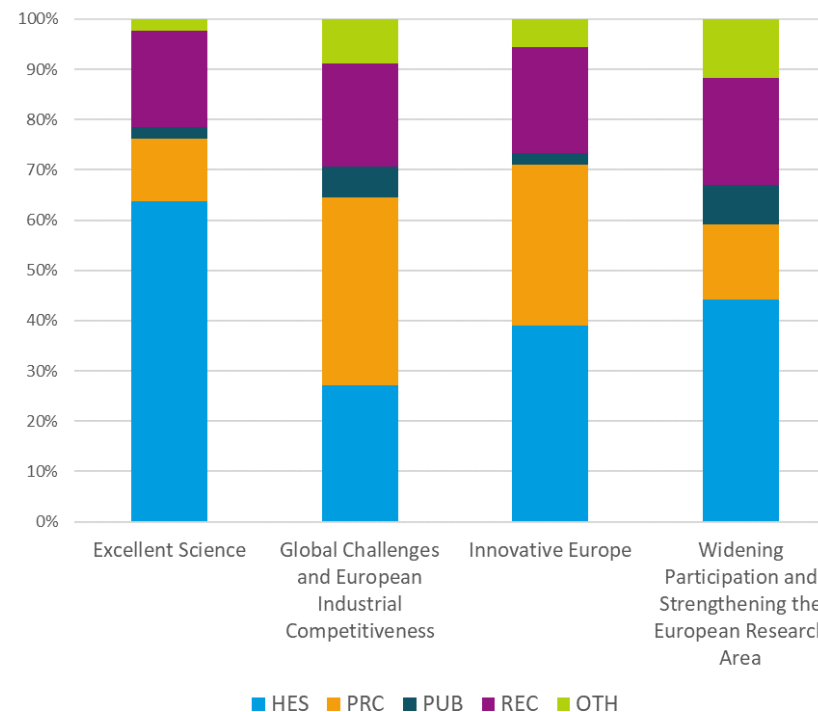
20% of the eligible proposals were submitted under **Pillar 2, Global Challenges & Industrial Competitiveness**. Those involved the highest number of applicants on average and requested the highest financial contribution from the EU.

Applications in eligible proposals (2021-2022)

by organisation type

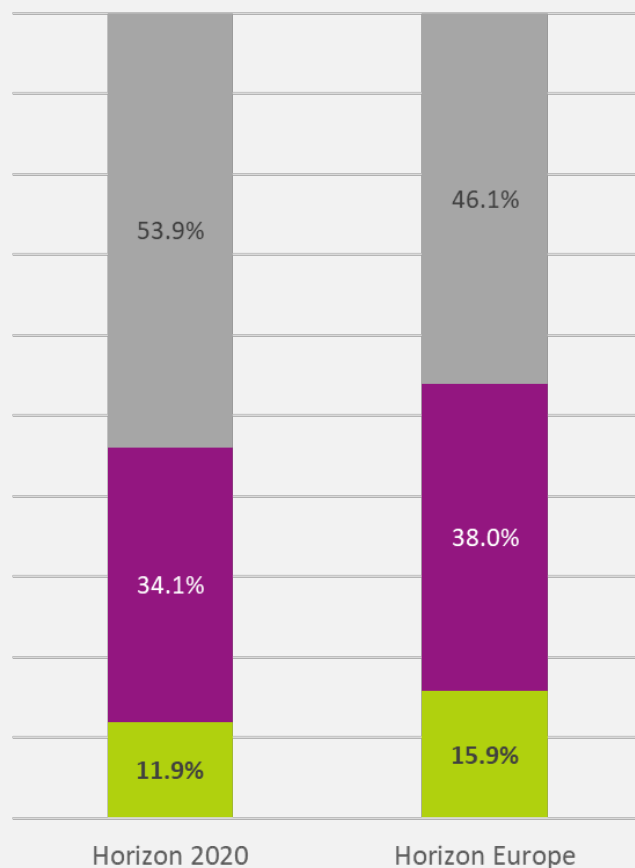


Higher education institutes (HES) mostly applied under pillar 1 and pillar 2, while private for profit entities (PRC), public bodies (PUB) and research organisations (REC) mostly applied under pillar 2.



Higher education institutes represent 64% of all applications under pillar 1 and 44% under the horizontal pillar. Pillar 2 is dominated by the private sector (37% of all applications). Research organisations represent a constant fifth of the applications in all pillars. When the EIC Accelerator is excluded, applications under pillar 3, innovative Europe, mostly originate from HES (39%) and PRC (32%).

Success rates of proposals⁶ (2021-2022)



- High quality proposals retained
- High quality proposals not retained
- Proposals below threshold



7 108 Proposals retained

After evaluation, 7 108 proposals were retained for funding on the 44 832 eligible proposals submitted.



15.9 % Success rate of Proposals

Success rate of proposals³ has increased from 11,9% in Horizon 2020 to 15.9% in Horizon Europe.



EUR 20.5 billion EU contribution

A total amount of EUR 20.5 billion of EU funding was requested in the proposals retained



22% Success rate of application

The success rate of applications is higher in Horizon Europe than in Horizon 2020 (14.1%). Under Horizon Europe, 22 out of 100 applying organisations are participating in proposals retained for funding



71% Oversubscription rate

The oversubscription rate expressed as the **percentage of high quality proposals not retained** is slightly lower than in Horizon 2020 (74%). 7 high quality proposals out of 10 can't still be funded.



2562 Seal of Excellence

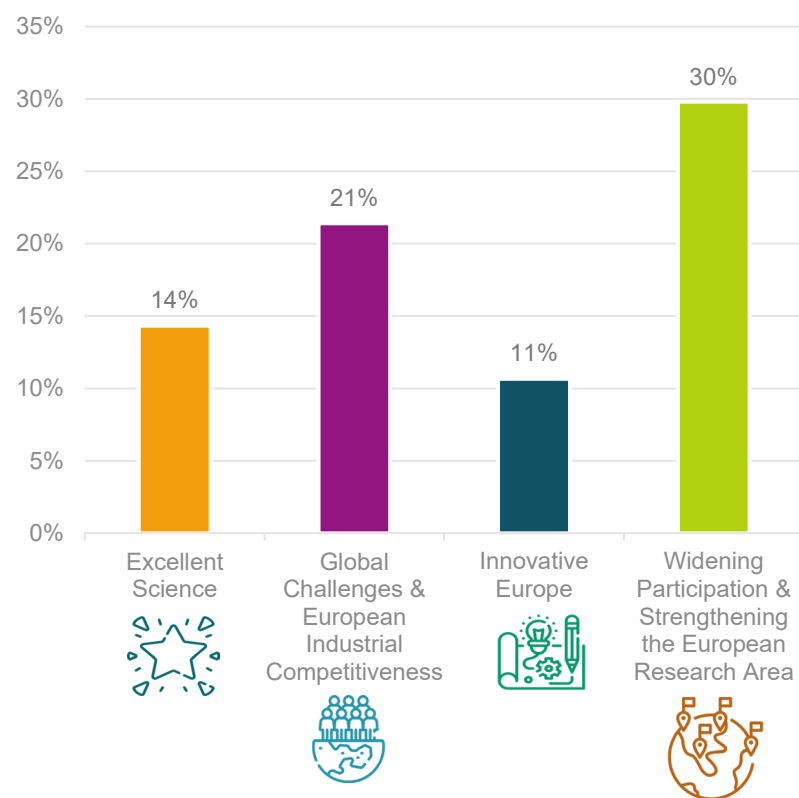
Under Horizon Europe, 2562 proposals had been granted with the seal of excellence quality label by end of 2022.

⁶. The success rate of proposals is calculated as the percentage of proposals retained for funding out of the total number of proposals

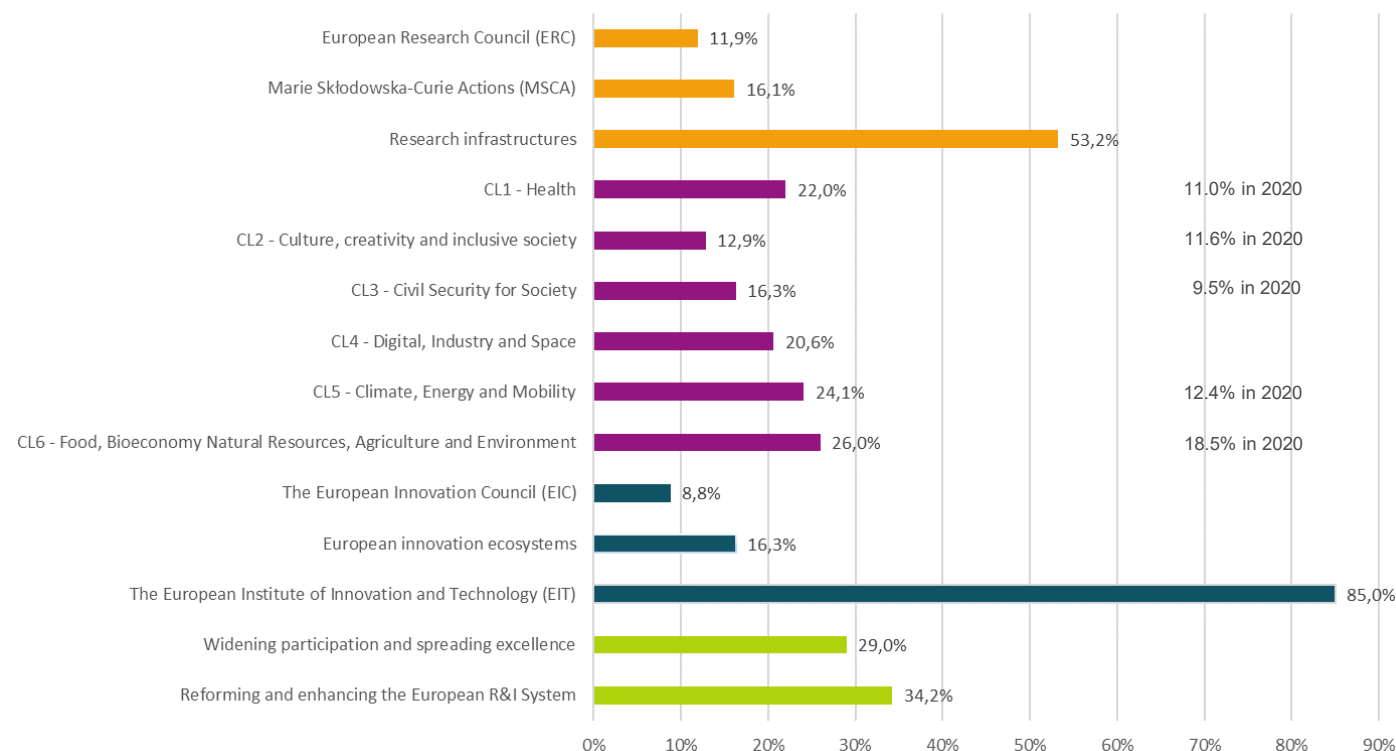
Success rates of proposals (2021-2022)

by programme part

The average success rate of proposals⁷ varies from one pillar to the other. It is the lowest under the Innovative Europe pillar (11%) and the highest under the horizontal pillar – Widening Participation & Strengthening the ERA (30%)



Highest success rates are observed for proposals submitted under research infrastructures (53.2%) and unsurprisingly also under EIT (85%) as the EIT can only give grants to KICs.



⁷ The success rate of proposals is calculated as the percentage of proposals retained for funding out of the total number of eligible proposals submitted

Seal of Excellence



2562

Seal of Excellence

Under Horizon Europe, **2562 proposals** had been granted with the seal of excellence quality label by end of 2022.

The **Seal of Excellence quality label** is awarded to excellent project proposals evaluated above the quality thresholds but not be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.

Seal of Excellence certificate attest the quality of the proposal and facilitate the search for alternative funding at national level. The Seal of Excellence promotes building of synergies between programmes, by allowing win-win strategic investments on projects that meet common objectives.

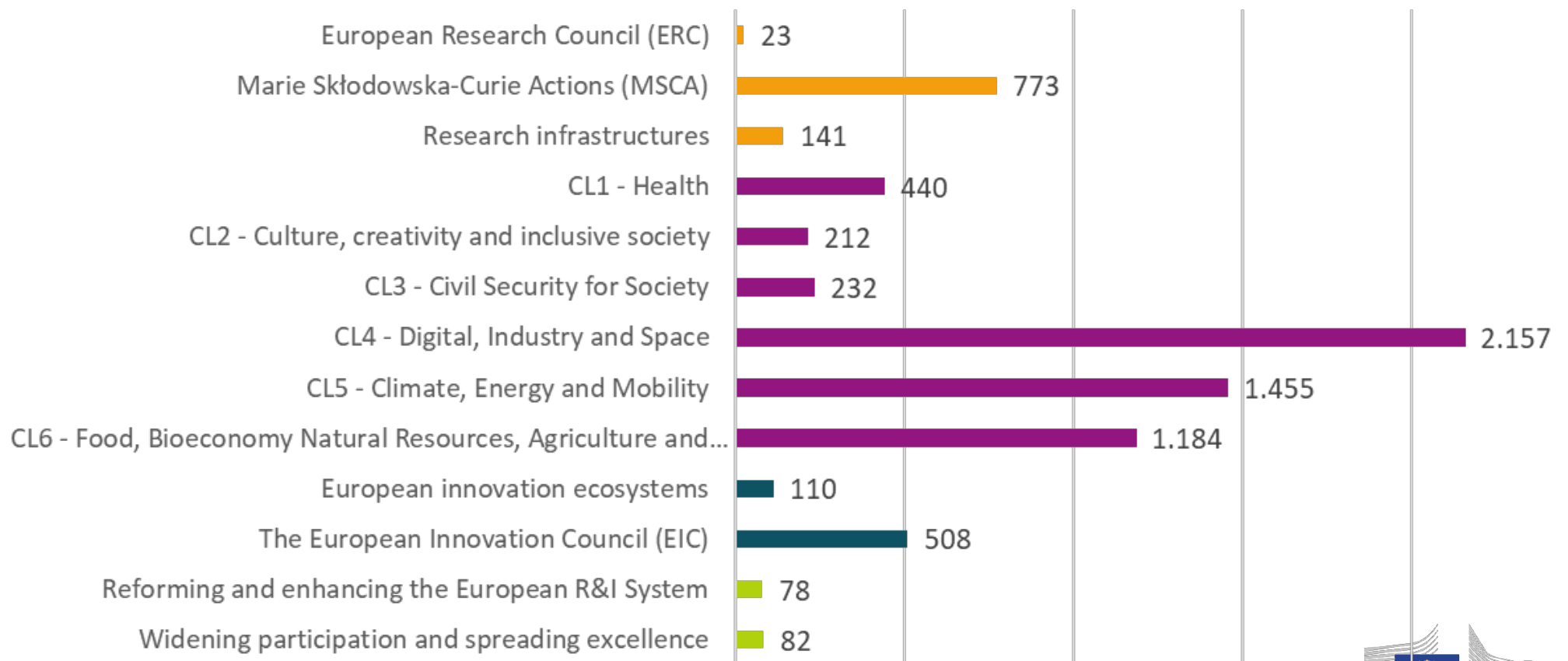
- **569 proposals** submitted under **EIC** (EIC Accelerator and EIC Transition)
- **1 proposal** submitted under **WIDERA** Teaming for excellence
- **6 proposals** submitted to **Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change**
- **1 976 Seal certificates** were awarded to outstanding researchers under **MSCA** (MSCA PF and MSCA COFUND) in 2021. Data for MSCA call of 2022 is not yet available

Participation of SMEs*

SME participation levels in Horizon Europe have not changed dramatically compared to Horizon 2020.

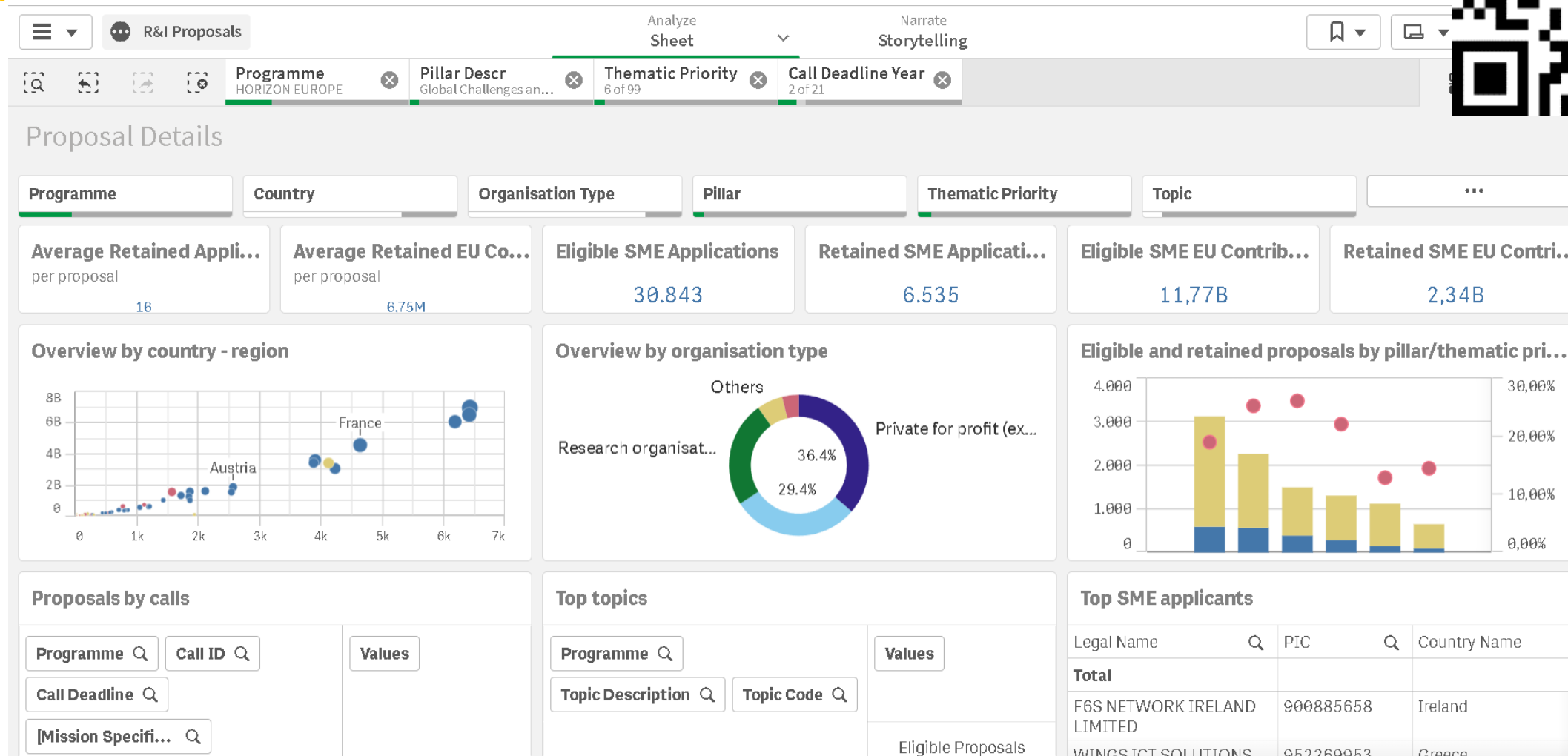
SMEs represent **19% of the participants** and have received **18% of the EU funding** so far or a total of EUR 2,86 billion.

Each SME will receive EUR 387.000 on average which is higher than in Horizon 2020 (257.000 EUR), mostly as a result of the discontinuation of the H2020 SME instrument - phase one.



* note: SME status is self declared by the participants and EIC accelerator data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

The Horizon Dashboard



[Link to the Horizon Dashboard](#)

Lessons learned

Identified issues in proposals

Cross-cutting priority	First impressions (REA view)
Open science (excellence)	Well understood and often properly addressed
Gender (excellence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Many last minute GEPs developed for compliance- Uptake of gender dimension in R&I project often poorly addressed (often confused with gender balance)
Dissemination and communication obligations (impact)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Often leading to lower score- Check obligations spelled out in the topic conditions “e.g. <i>proposals must include structured cooperation with the e-platform Embassy of Good science, ...</i>”
AI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- AI robustness difficult to demonstrate (by applicants) and difficult to assess (by experts)

Consult the videos on the expert area on the Funding & Tenders Portal:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/videos>



Do's and Don'ts for proposal writing

Do's:

- Familiarise yourself with the EU policy objectives; putting proposal in context
- Read the WP – every word matters
Keep close to WP, objectives and indicated budget, check if Lump Sum funding applies
Understand the evaluation criteria
- Build a strong and multidisciplinary consortium (use partner search tool)
- Address the project's pathway towards impact
- Use CORDIS website for past and ongoing EU funded projects
- Use the templates – fill out tables as required
Use the guidance available (F&T Portal, internet, Info days)
- Enrol to become an expert – exp. experts become excellent proposal writers

Do's and Don'ts for proposal writing

Don'ts:

- Rush: take you time to develop your idea and find the partners/entities required for your project
- Over-sell (too many/too ambitious outcomes).
- Use buzzwords. Explain your project in realistic terms
Chapt GPT will not write for you a winning proposal
- Submit last minute (Stress leads to mistakes)
- Write more than the page limit

Do's and Don'ts

Tips:

- Contact NCPs
- Identify/learn from successful applicants
- Resubmit improved versions until the deadline

[More](#) on [REA website](#)

Thank you