



HORIZON EUROPE CO-DESIGN – IMPLEMENTATION

REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE ONLINE CONSULTATION AND THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION DAYS EVENT

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*Research and
Innovation*

**REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE ONLINE CONSULTATION AND
THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION DAYS EVENT**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the combined results of the online consultation on the Implementation Strategy of the research and innovation framework programme Horizon Europe launched by the Common Implementation Centre of DG RTD and of the sessions held during the R&I Days.

Stakeholders were invited to contribute to the co-designing exercise on the implementation of the future research and innovation programme through a web-survey addressing the whole project lifecycle, from proposal submission to efficient reporting and exploitation of results. Within the framework of the R&I Days, there were five sessions related to implementation issues, as well as a dedicated space for discussion with stakeholders.

This report provides an overview of comments and ideas received on the different areas of the implementation strategy. It will nurture the ongoing work on the actual drafting of the Implementation Strategy. From the web consultation, a total of 1549 answers from 64 countries has been received. For a consultation of this nature, this is a really positive number.

Feedback from respondents indicates a broad agreement on the draft Orientations towards Horizon Europe Implementation Strategy that accompanied the web survey. Answers show a general **acknowledgement of simplifications introduced in Horizon 2020**, considered as good starting point for further simplification under Horizon Europe. Respondents appreciate the continuity approach taken by the Commission for the rules for participation and, by extension in a wider sense, to the implementation of the new programme. Nonetheless, scope for **further improvements across the entire project life cycle** is also highlighted by respondents' answers.

The main messages can be summarised in the following way:

There is a global call for further **simplification** under Horizon Europe. Respondents to the online consultation underline the importance of having a flexible programme, ensuring equal opportunities between applicants. They call for simpler rules and clearer guidance, especially regarding personnel costs and would like to see the rules being more aligned with beneficiaries' usual accounting practices. They also endorse the proposals to implement simpler templates, both for proposal submission and for technical and financial reporting. Many comments mention also the importance of enhancing synergies between different EU funding programmes: the further alignment of the rules of the different EU funded programmes is perceived as an important way of simplification.

Respondents also underline the importance of establishing a **transparent and trust-based system**. Among the elements highlighted, the improvement of the transparency of the evaluation procedure is often mentioned, together with the importance of ensuring the transparency of the selection of experts evaluating proposals.

Many comments state the importance of appropriate **communication and feedback** to applicants and beneficiaries. The importance of having sound guidelines accompanying all aspects of the project lifecycle is reaffirmed several times. Trainings are considered a very important aspect, as well as ensuring efficient support to applicants, especially through the network of NCPs. Many respondents also raise the need of improved feedback on applications. Respondents

also assert that the implementation on Horizon Europe should be underpinned by robust and efficient IT tools. Most of them are very supportive of the digital transformation carried out by the R&I Framework Programme and of the Funding & Tenders Portal in particular. However, there are also requests to improve the current Portal, making it more user-friendly and further enlarging it to fully cover all centrally managed grants and procurements.

Last but not least, respondents demonstrate a strong interest for the implementation of the novelties of Horizon Europe, especially regarding missions and the EIC.

INTRODUCTION

Following the political agreement on the draft legislation in spring 2019 and in parallel with the strategic planning process, the Common Implementation Centre of DG RTD has launched a co-design process to prepare the Implementation Strategy of Horizon Europe. The Implementation Strategy will set out how the programme will be managed in practice. The design of Horizon Europe Implementation Strategy is key to ensure from the start that implementation modalities (legal documents, processes, tools, guidance documents...) properly support the policy objectives of the programme. The Implementation Strategy will cover the entire project life cycle, from proposal submission to efficient reporting and exploitation of results.

In the same way as the strategic programming process, the Implementation Strategy is being drafted in the spirit of co-creation. Engaging with external stakeholders and beneficiaries is crucial in the preparation of the Implementation Strategy. An extensive co-design exercise has thus been launched, involving three components:

- All interested stakeholders were invited to contribute to the co-design of the Implementation Strategy through a web survey addressing the whole project life cycle.
- In the framework of the Research and Innovation Days, five sessions were directly related to the Implementation Strategy and also contributed to the co-design exercise.
- National and Regional consultation events are organised in Member States in close cooperation with NCPs. The objective is to encourage the active participation of beneficiaries in the discussion on the implementation of Horizon Europe.

Based on an initial analysis of lessons learned and of the new requirements inherent to Horizon Europe, a [supporting 'Orientations' document](#) has been published together with the online consultation. Under each implementation process, a short explanation of the current state of play was provided, including a description of current practices, experience gained and lessons learned, followed by new features of Horizon Europe. Each section ends with a provisional list of the main orientations identified so far. The web-based consultation has been designed through an EU survey questionnaire allowing stakeholders to respond to specific questions related to these orientations. The survey was organised in twelve sections covering the full project lifecycle. Respondents also had the opportunity to react to any other issue that they consider relevant and important.

The online consultation was launched on 30 July 2019, in parallel with the web-based co-design exercise on the first strategic plan for Horizon Europe. Due to the significant interest shown by stakeholders, the deadline to answer the online consultation was extended to 4 October 2019.

The R&I Days were held in Brussels on 24-26 September. Five sessions during these days were directly related to the Horizon Europe Implementation strategy. Evaluation, simplification, use of results for better policy making, optimising innovation results, and the use of data and intelligence for better R&I policy were thoroughly discussed.

This report presents an integrated overview of the responses to the online consultation assessed by the Commission services and, the discussions held with stakeholders at the R&I Days. It follows the structure of the orientation document.

Each of the twelve chapters includes an analysis of the number of replies received to the web consultation, an assessment of whether the orientations put forward by the Commission had been endorsed, and their popularity, which are the main messages expressed by stakeholders and, whether there are interesting ideas coming through.

These results, as well as the feedback of stakeholders gathered during consultation events in Member states, will nurture the ongoing work on the actual drafting of the Implementation Strategy for Horizon Europe.

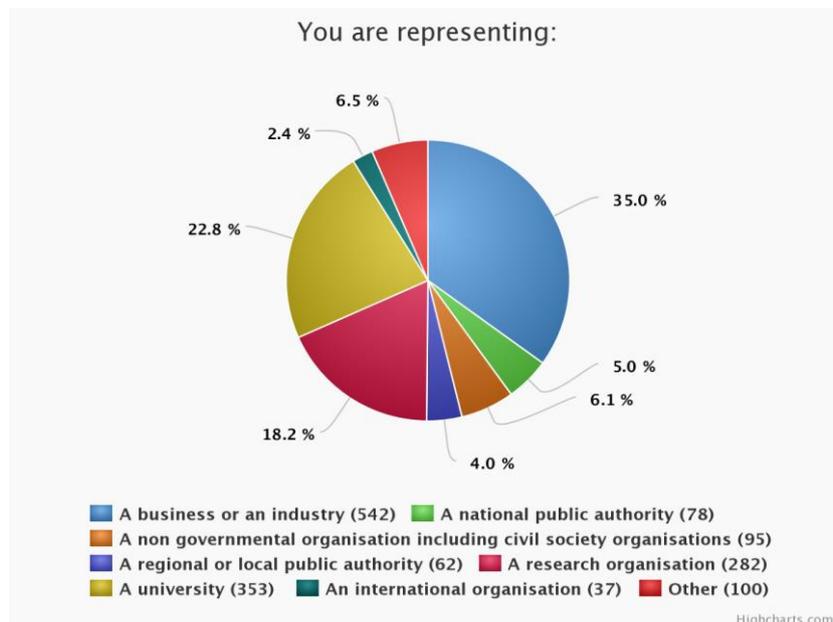
0. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Number of replies, broken down by categories

1549 answers to the online questionnaire have been received in EU Survey.

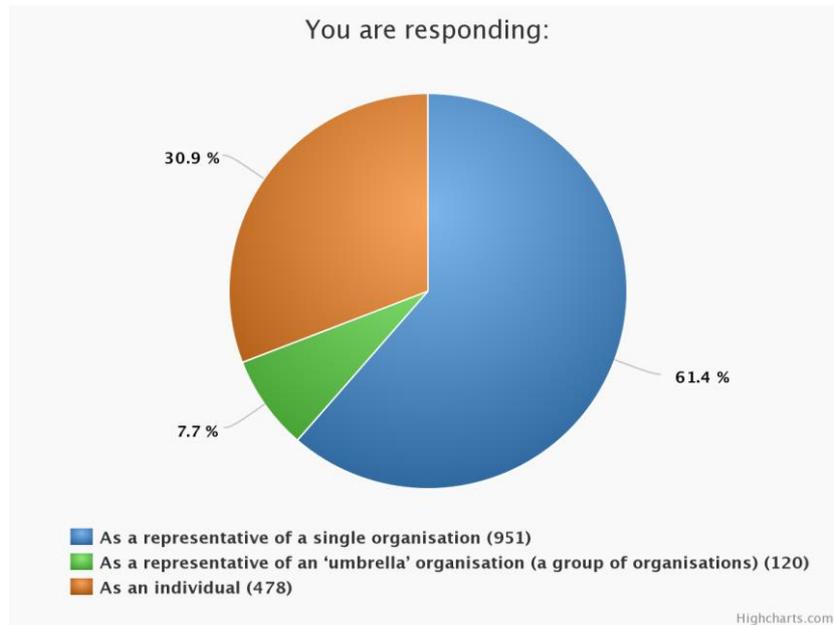
Type of organisations represented

- The majority of respondents (41%) are representing a university or a research organisation;
- 35% of respondents are coming from a business or an industry;
- A smaller number of responses came from national, regional or local public authorities (10%), non-governmental organisation (6%) and international organisations (2%);
- The other respondents (6%) did not identified themselves in any of these categories.



Type of respondents

- 61% of respondents are responding as representative of a single organisation;
- 31% of respondents are responding as an individual ;
- 8% of respondents are responding as representative of an umbrella organisation.

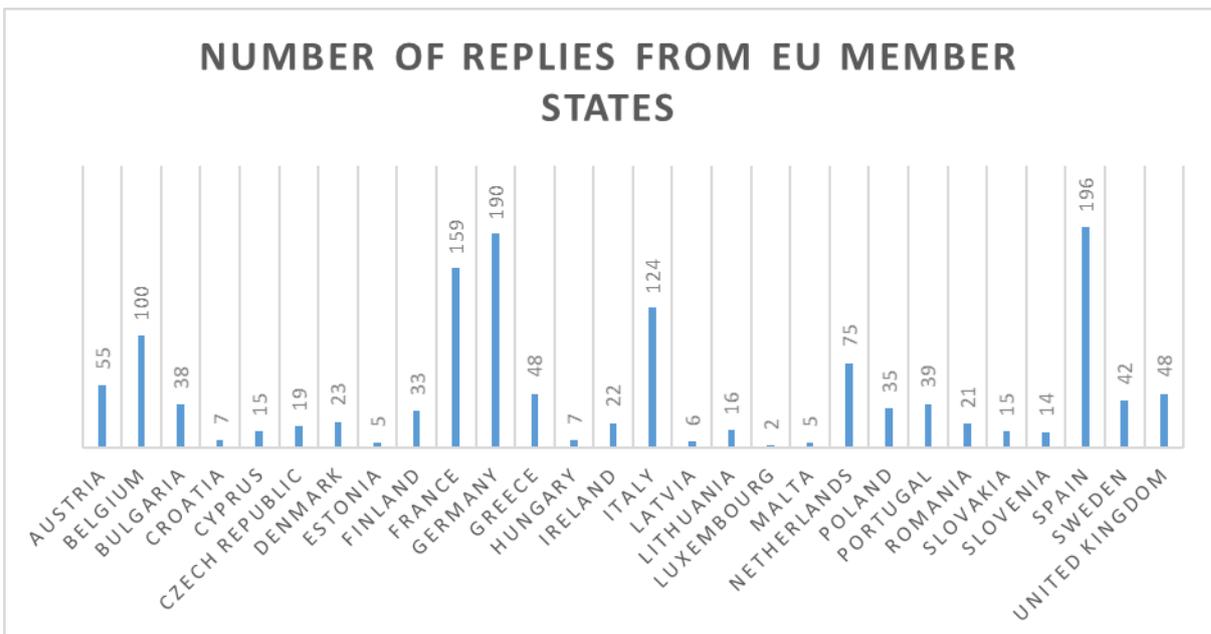


Geographical breakdown: large diversity

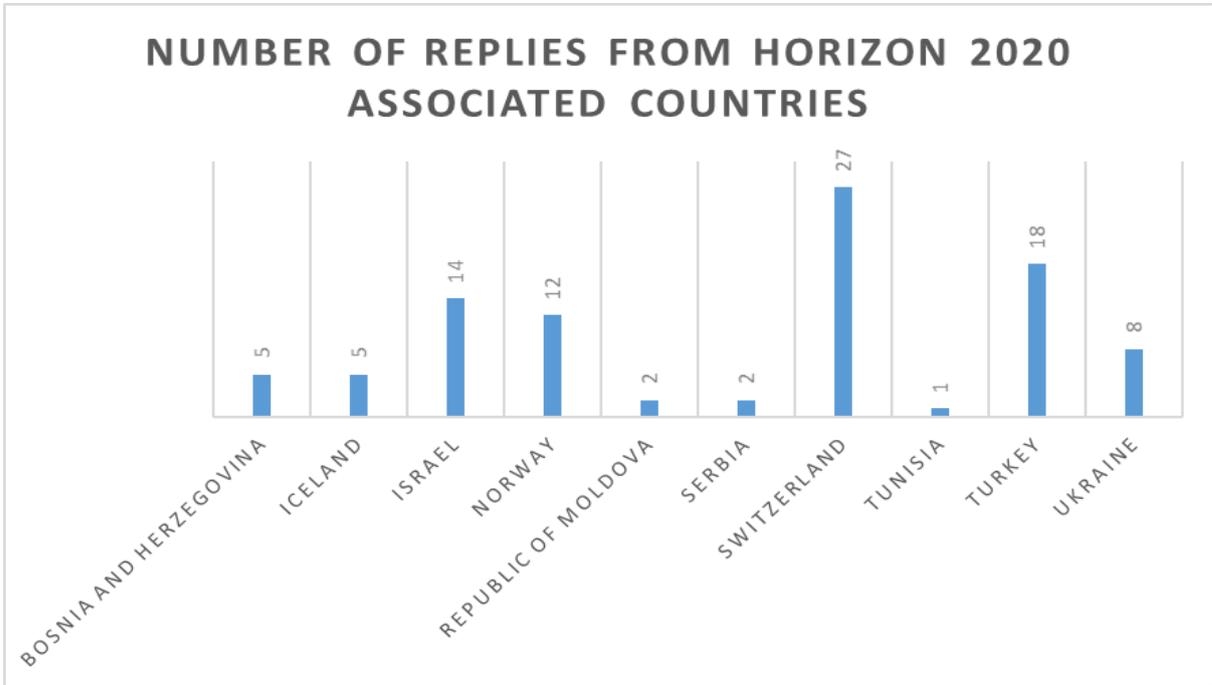
Answers have been received from 64 countries:

- 88% of answers are coming from the 28 EU Member States;
- 9.5% of answers are coming from Horizon 2020 Associated countries;
- 2.5% of answers are coming from other countries.

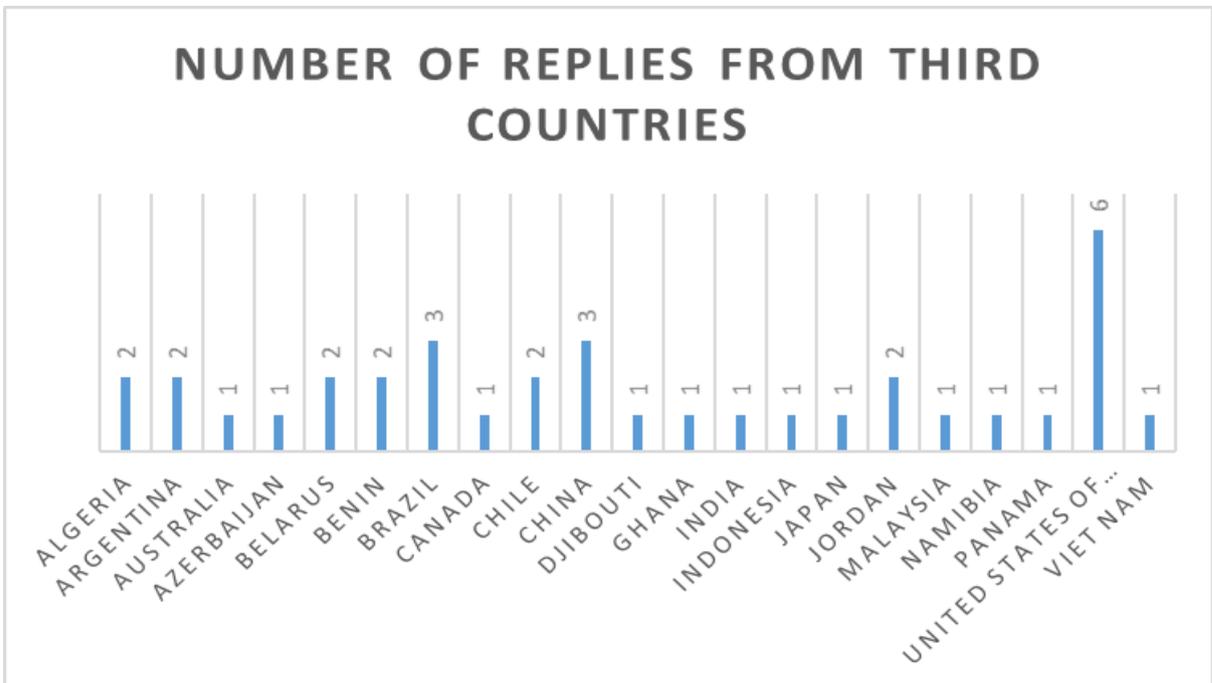
Among EU Member States, the highest number of responses comes from Spain (196 answers), Germany (190 answers), France (159 answers), Italy (124 answers) and Belgium (100 answers).



Among the Horizon 2020 associated countries, the highest number of responses comes from Switzerland (27 answers) and Turkey (18 answers).



Among the third countries, the highest number of responses comes from the USA (6 answers).



Interest of respondents in EU R&I framework programme

- 77% of respondents are currently involved in at least one project funded by an EU R&I research programme;
- 15% of respondents have proposed and/or participated in project(s) funded by an EU R&I research programme in the past;
- 5% of respondents have never participated in projects funded by an EU R&I research programme, but would be interested to do so;
- 3% of respondents do not intend to participate in projects funded by an EU R&I research programme, but may be interested in the results of the programme.

The majority of respondents are currently involved in at least one activity funded by the current R&I framework programme. However, almost one in four respondents are interested in Horizon Europe without being currently involved in Horizon 2020, thus signalling a broad community of interested stakeholders.



I. WORK PROGRAMME

Number of replies, broken down by categories

In total, there were 1549 respondents for this section, providing responses to the mandatory structured question 1.1 on important elements for the preparation of a good proposal.

Of these, 1501 responded to the structured question 1.2 (How important are these elements for the preparation of a good proposal for the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' part of the future Horizon Europe work programmes?).

687 also responded to the open question 1.3. (What could be improved in the structure of the work programme and/or its calls to make it easier for applicants?), although this figure includes a number of duplicate or blank responses.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

Overall, the proposed orientations are generally endorsed by a large majority of respondents.

The most popular elements are:

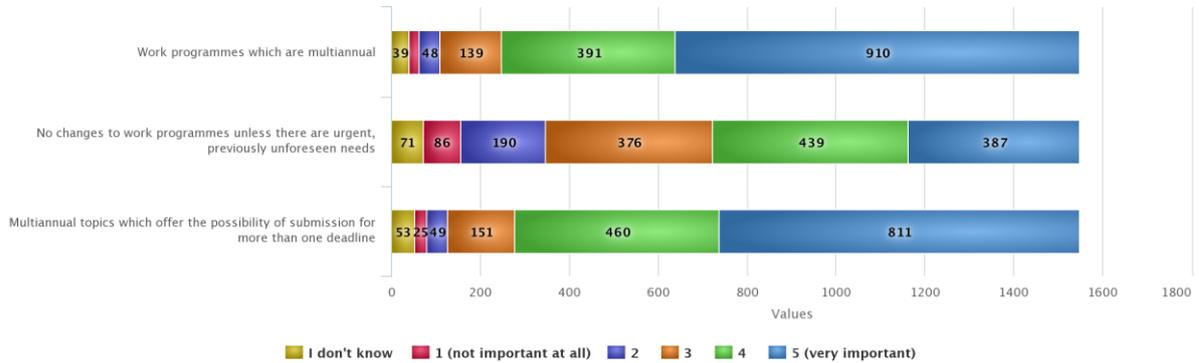
- Multiannual work programmes (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 84% of respondents);
- The possibility of submission for more than one deadline (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 82% of respondents);
- Topics which allow for a wide range of possible pathways to achieve the targeted impact (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 78% of respondents); and
- Topics which distinguish between the short-term outcomes expected and the longer-term impacts targeted (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 75% of respondents).

Less clear-cut is the response to the proposal to make no changes to work programmes unless there are urgent, previously unforeseen needs. Here, 53% of respondents consider this to be 'very important' or 'important' for the preparation of a good proposal for the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' part of the future programme, with 18% saying this was 'not important' or 'not important at all'.

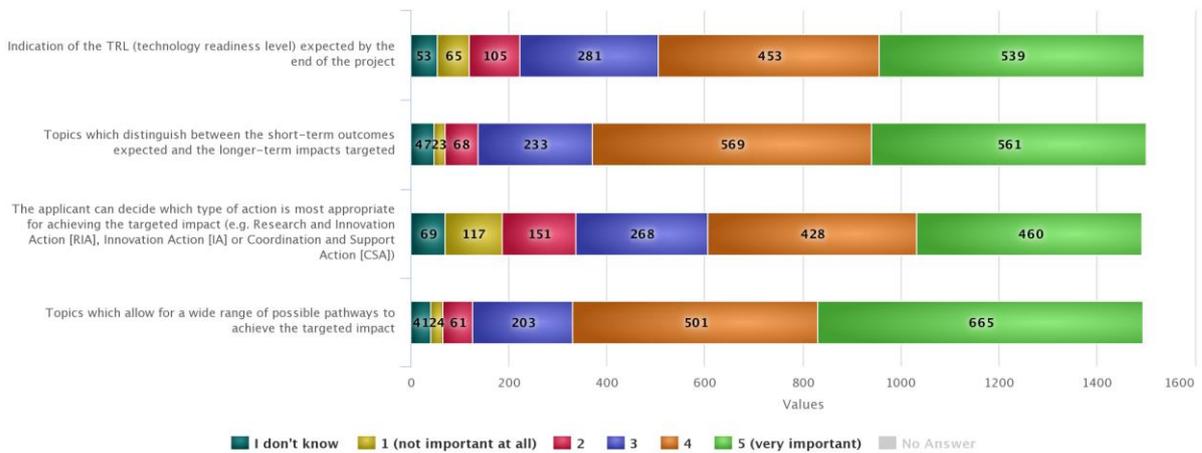
The proposal to allow applicants to decide which type of action is most appropriate for achieving the targeted impact also met with a more mixed response, with 57% rating this as 'very important' or 'important' and 17% saying this was 'not important' or 'not important at all'.

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1.1. In your view, how important are these elements for the preparation of a good proposal?



1.2. In your view, how important are these elements for the preparation of a good proposal for the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' part of the future Horizon Europe work programmes?



What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is generally positive or neutral, with only around 10% of responses being judged as rather negative.

Around a third of responses address issues which go beyond the structure and text of the work programme itself and relate to subjects such as submission and evaluation, as well as to the Funding & Tenders Portal.

A large majority of respondents argue for a **simpler, shorter and less complex work programme**. This message was echoed by participants at the R&I Days, notably in the session "Horizon European toolbox: Simplify the life of researchers". While some comments request a simpler work programme structure, very many respondents also ask for less complex and less prescriptive (top-down) topic descriptions, balanced by clearer expected impact sections. Typical comments along these lines are "Leave more freedom to applicants to achieve the goals of the call and to select their own pathways. Focus more on the impact of the achievements than on the prescription how to achieve it", "Descriptions of expected impacts that are very clearly to understand but at the same time with proper space for creative solutions or responses in terms of project outcomes", "Leave room to propose creative ideas" and "Be clear on the problem and open to the solution". In contrast, a much smaller number of respondents prefer more narrowly focused topics,

generally in the interest of reducing over-subscription. Others ask for a balance between focused and impact-oriented topics and open, nonprescriptive ones.

Very many of the comments on the structure of the work programmes suggest **different ways of presenting the information**, such as overview tables, to aid navigation through the work programme texts. This appears to demonstrate a lack of awareness of the full functionality of the Funding & Tenders Portal (e.g. search by call, topic, or keyword; filter by opening date, deadline, cross-cutting priority etc.), while other respondents suggest improvements to the user interface of the Portal.

Several respondents also request that the work programmes include **information on previously funded projects and the scientific/technological gaps** that still need filling, as well as more precise details (including links) of relevant policies.

The free-text responses also shed some light on the **disparate views held on updating the multiannual work programmes during the period of their validity** (see above). On the one hand, some respondents appreciate the predictability and forward planning enabled by a stable multiannual work programme, particularly if this is published well in advance of the first deadlines, pointing out that this should lead to higher quality proposals. On the other hand, some voices highlight the need to build in flexibility to change the work programme *"based on new insights, even if there is no real urgency"*, or to *"allow for external changes that occur and could be incorporated for improved outcomes"*, particularly in areas where industry participation is important.

Similarly, comments elucidate the general support for the proposal that topics should indicate the TRL (technology readiness level) to be reached by the end of the project. While 64% of respondents feel this to be 'very important' or 'important', it is clear from the comments that **the usefulness of TRLs varies across the different work programme parts and may need to be adapted to the different fields of knowledge and research**. Several respondents suggested that the concept of technology readiness level should be complemented or replaced by SRLs (defined by respondents as either systems or societal readiness levels).

In this context, several respondents commented on the importance of ensuring an appropriate balance between the different types of actions (RIA/IA/CSA) and TRL levels, i.e. *"balance between curiosity-driven research and applied research with a significant budget for collaborative and low TRL projects"* and covering the whole value chain.

Finally, while responses to question 1.2 indicate quite strong support for the proposal of topics where applicants can decide on most appropriate the type of action for achieving the targeted impact (see above), many respondents commented that this would be potentially confusing for applicants and evaluators alike, and possibly inconsistent with the expected impacts.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

There are a number of suggestions for 'open' calls in the 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' part of the work programme, although this appears to be understood in various ways. A few respondents explain that they are referring to calls with no fixed deadlines, or with multiple cut-off dates to allow proposals to be submitted whenever they are sufficiently mature. Another suggestion for 'open' calls is that each work programme part should have a budget envelope for topics where proposals are evaluated only on excellence and impact. One respondent also suggested that open, multiannual topics could allowing a

consortium to solve parts of a specific challenge by making a proposal at a lower-TRL (e.g. RIA) and then return later in the programme with a follow-on proposal to push to a higher TRL using another action (e.g. IA).

To respond better to over-subscription, one suggestion is to adjust the topic budgets within a call to reflect the number of submissions received.

II. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

Number of replies, broken down by categories

There have been 1549 active respondents for this section, providing responses to the mandatory structured question 2.1 (What aspects are most important to you in the submission and evaluation process?). Answering the question 2.2 (How important are the following specific changes in your view?) was not mandatory, but it is interesting to note that almost all the respondents (1489) chose to answer it.

Of these, 616 responded to the open questions 2.3 (What other modifications to the submission and evaluation system do you consider necessary, and why? Would they entail trade-offs with other desirable changes?) and 483 responded to question 2.4 (Where relevant (e.g. for missions), how should the evaluation process combine an assessment of the intrinsic quality of individual proposals with their potential contribution to a consistent portfolio?).

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

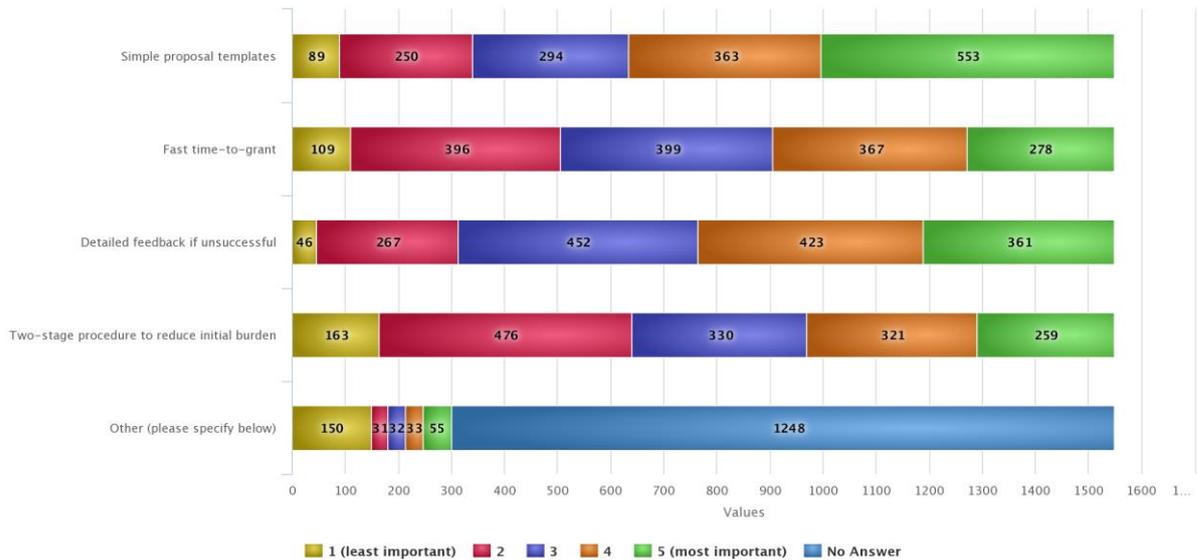
Overall, the proposed orientations are generally endorsed by a large majority of respondents.

The most popular elements are the following:

- A simple proposal template is the most important aspect for the submission and evaluation process (59% of respondents chose it as their first or second choice), followed by detailed feedback to rejected applicants (51% of respondents chose it as their first or second choice). A two-stage procedure to reduce burden to applicants is the less important aspect. It is interesting to notice that respondents from business and industry sector selected a fast time-to-grant as the second most important aspect.

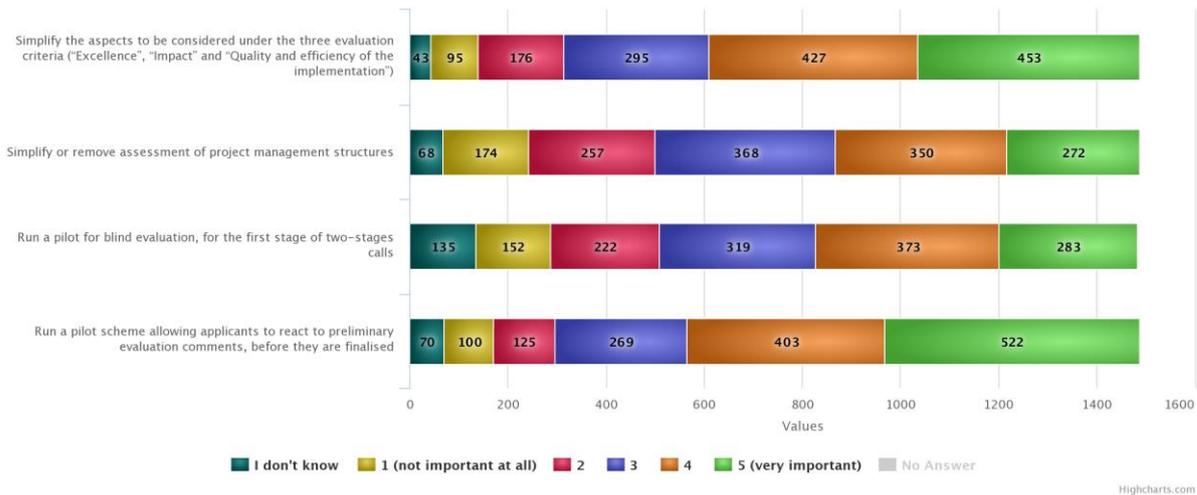
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2.1. What aspects are most important to you in the submission and evaluation process? (rank your answers by order of preference)



- To run a pilot 'right to react' scheme (62% of respondents chose it as their first or second choice) and to simplify the aspects to be considered under the three evaluation criteria (59% of respondents chose it as their first or second choice) are the most important proposed changes. To simplify assessment of management structures and to run a pilot on blind evaluations are the less important changes.

2.2. How important are the following specific changes in your view?



- To the open question 2.3 on other modifications considered as necessary, simplify proposal template and evaluation process seem to be repeated in addition to the need to select good quality of experts.
- For the evaluation of missions, the main message is the following: *'The quality and excellence of an individual proposal should never be compromised.'*

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is generally positive or neutral, with around 16% of responses being judged as rather negative for question 2.3 and 12% for question 2.4.

The answers to the open questions seem to insist on **the need to simplify the proposal template by reducing its length** and on the importance to have **an evaluation process as transparent as possible**. The need to **ensure that the proper experts are selected** (appropriate expertise, geographical diversity, interdisciplinary) is raised several times. To bring back negotiations and shorter time-to-grant are important messages. These messages were echoed by participants at the European Research and Innovation Days, notably in the session "Detecting excellence: accessible and transparent proposal evaluation in Horizon Europe".

Many answers to the open questions are endorsing elements presented in the proposed orientations accompanying the co-design exercise:

On evaluation modalities:

- Two-stage procedures are generally welcome, but concerns are raised regarding the length of the procedure;
- Re-calibrating the scoring system to limit ex-aequo proposals;
- The introduction of blind evaluation is generally welcome, even if some respondents are sceptical with its practical implementation.

On evaluation criteria:

- Several respondents would like to see improved explanation on what will be assessed under each evaluation criteria. The issue was raised more particularly regarding impact.

On proposal template:

- A significant number of respondents support the idea of decreasing the page limit;
- Several respondents praise the idea of having structured fields when possible;
- Many respondents point out that some elements are repeated in the proposal template.

On interaction with applicants:

- Improving the quality of the feedback given to unsuccessful applicants, helping them to prepare better projects, is by far the most common comment from respondents;
- The concept of hearings/interview is generally supported.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

There is a suggestion to change completely the evaluation criteria and the structure of the proposal to ask for a much shorter proposals and concentrate on what is the

(new) idea, what problem does it solve, how will the project be carried out (work packages), how will the results be implemented.

A number of answers refers to impact and how to evaluate it. This could be linked to the expected impacts that are explained in the work programme. Regarding the Impact criteria, several respondents mention the necessity to address further the environmental impact of proposals. Other respondents propose to develop further web-based solutions to limit travels during the submission and evaluation process.

III. MODEL GRANT AGREEMENT

Number of replies, broken down by categories

There have been 1549 active respondents for this section providing responses to the mandatory structured question 3.1 (Would the use of the same standard Model Grant Agreement (MGA) for all EU directly managed funding programmes facilitate synergies between them?).

Answering question 3.2 (Which provisions in the current Horizon 2020 Model Grant Agreement should be revised?) and question 3.3 (Should the MGA contain a data sheet with key information on costs, forms of funding, reporting and payment schedules?) was not mandatory. It is however interesting to note that an important number of the respondents chose to answer them (995 answers to question 3.2 and 1467 answers for question 3.3).

478 respondents also answered to the open question 3.4 (How can we improve the clarity of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement for Horizon Europe), although this figure includes a small number of non-exploitable responses.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

Overall, the proposed orientations are generally endorsed by a large majority of respondents.

The most popular elements are:

- That the MGA would contain a data sheet with key information (considered 'very useful' or 'useful' by 77% of respondents);
- That the use of the same MGA for all EU directly managed funded programmes would facilitate synergies between them (considered 'certainly' or 'almost certainly' by 67% of respondents, and also highlighted during the R&I days 'Simplification' session).

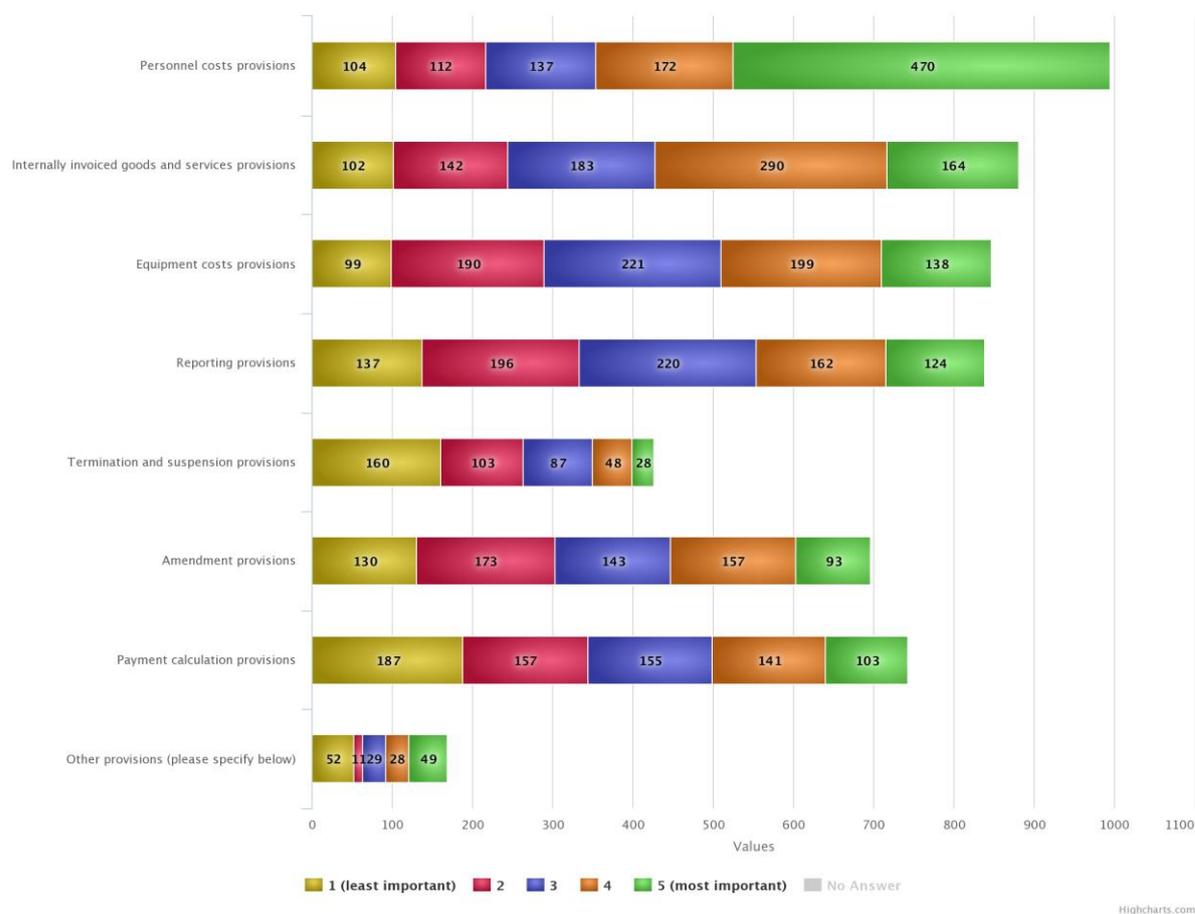
On the elements of the current Horizon 2020 MGA that should be revised, the most popular proposals are:

- That the provisions on personnel costs in the current Horizon 2020 MGA should be revised (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 64% of respondents to question 3.2); and
- That the provisions on internally invoiced goods and services in the current Horizon 2020 MGA should be revised (considered 'very important' or 'important' by 52% of respondents to question 3.2).

Furthermore, 40% of respondents to question 3.2 consider a revision of the current Horizon 2020 provisions on equipment costs to be 'very important' or 'important'. The majority of respondents who specified another provision to be revised would like to see the provisions on third parties revised, in particular subcontracts versus normal contracts.

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3.2. Which provisions in the current Horizon 2020 Model Grant Agreement should be revised? (rank your top 5 provisions by order of preference)



Yet, during the R&I Days session “Horizon European toolbox: Simplify the life of researchers”, concerns about the daily rate calculation were raised (i.e. questioning the real simplification aspects). Eventually, one of the overall conclusions of this session was that it is needed to find a **right balance between continuity and further improvement**.

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is generally positive or neutral, with only 9% of responses being judged as rather negative.

Around 60% of the responses address issues with structure and text of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AMGA, see below), 15% address issues with specific rules that should be revised, and 10% express a positive sentiment with the current document. The remaining responses address other issues, not all related to the Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

A large majority of respondents argue for **shorter, less complex and more dynamic version of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement**. Typical comments along these lines are “Provide a more concise summarised version of the AMGA with

then links to the longer version”, “Simplify and use plain language” and “Use more graphical/visual annotations”.

Many comments also request more, real-life examples in the annotations, suggesting links to the FAQ webpage and video presentations. Several respondents also request less updates and more stability in the rules.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

There are a number of suggestions for converting the Annotated Model Grant Agreement into a website with an overview of the different topics, e.g. personnel costs, third parties, IPR provisions etc. A few respondents suggest that the document should be available in several languages to ease understanding across the EU. Another suggestion is to separate the document into several documents for each type of action and programme, e.g. Research and Innovation Actions, MSCA, ERC, SME instrument etc.

IV. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

Number of replies, broken down by categories

Overall, there are 1549 respondents to the mandatory structured questions 4.1 (What would be useful in your view to improve the dissemination and exploitation of projects results?).

Out of these respondents, 1420 replied to the open question 4.2 (Dissemination & Exploitation (D&E) is part of the evaluation criteria and constitutes a separate Work Package in the project's life cycle. How can beneficiaries' understanding around D&E be improved?), and 584 to the open question 4.4. (How could we strengthen the feedback to policy and decision-making, based on R&I results, at EU, local, regional, national, international levels?).

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

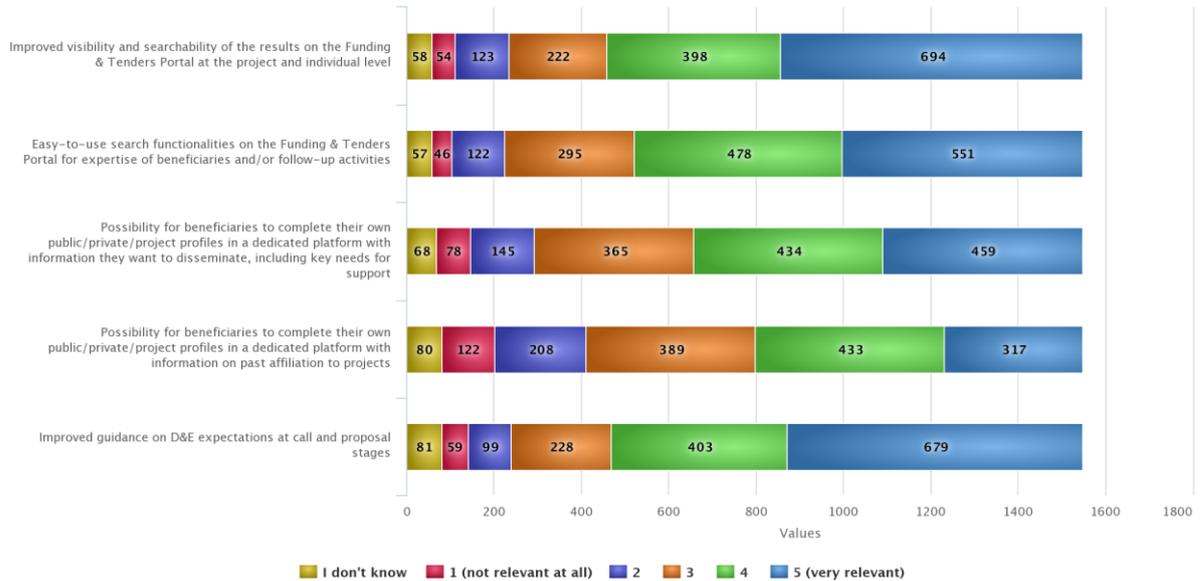
In response to question 4.1 (What would be useful to improve the dissemination and exploitation of project results?), the majority of the respondents seem to find the proposed orientations relevant or very relevant.

The most popular elements are:

- Improved visibility and searchability of the results on the Funding & Tenders Portal at the project and individual level (considered 'very relevant' or 'relevant' by 71% of respondents);
- Improved guidance on D&E expectations at call and proposal stages (considered 'very relevant' or 'relevant' by 70% of respondents);
- Easy-to-use search functionalities on the Funding & Tenders Portal for expertise of beneficiaries and/or follow-up activities (considered 'very relevant' or 'relevant' by 58% of respondents).

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4.1. What would be useful in your view to improve the dissemination and exploitation of projects results?



During the R&I Days, the support tools made available by the Common Implementation Centre of DG RTD, including CORDIS, the Horizon Dashboard, the Horizon Results Platform and the 'Boosters' were presented and received with enthusiasm.

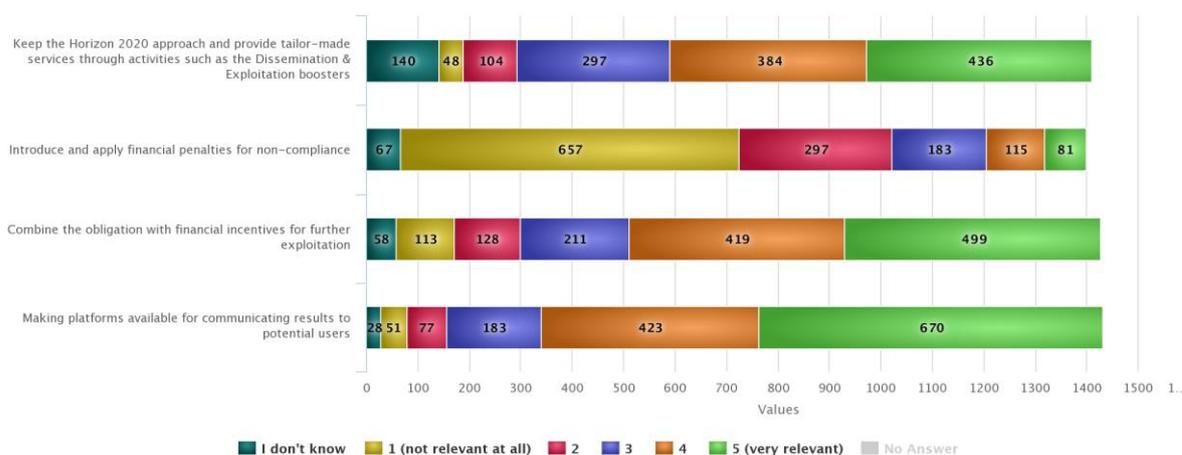
During the dedicated session at the R&I Days, synergies with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other EU programmes were also considered as a constructive means to improve the dissemination and exploitation of R&I project results. In this regard, the pilot call with Interreg CE, focusing on the exploitation of past project results (notably from Interreg CE & Horizon 2020/FP7 programmes) was seen as a good example.

In response to question 4.2 (How can beneficiaries' understanding around D&E can be improved?), the most popular element is the creation of a follow-up support mechanism on D&E for beneficiaries (supported by 61% of respondents). Enhancing trainings and raising awareness around D&E and maintaining D&E as subject to proposal evaluation is also supported by 50% of respondents.

In response to question 4.3 (How could the European Commission could incentivise beneficiaries to report on dissemination and exploitation after the end of the project?), the majority of the respondents seem to agree with most of the proposed orientations. However, 47% of the respondents find the proposal on financial penalties for non-compliance as not relevant at all whereas 6% of respondent consider this approach as very relevant.

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4.3. How could the European Commission incentivise beneficiaries to report on dissemination and exploitation after the end of the project?



Interestingly enough, during the R&I days, some participants said that it should be up to the Commission to ensure this follow-up link whereas some others said that the beneficiaries should indeed be further motivated to report back. The Impact Award was seen as an attractive option in this respect. Another idea pointed to the clustering of projects in similar thematic areas, which could enable the latter to work on a unified exploitation plan.

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is positive. In relation to open question 4.4 (How could we strengthen the feedback to policy and decision making, based on R&I results, at EU, local, regional, national, international levels), 30% of respondents appear neutral whereas about 8% seem to have a negative predisposition.

Several messages relate to the importance of cooperation and diffusion of knowledge towards the concerned stakeholders (at EU, local, regional, national and international levels):

- Encouraging more structured **cooperation with the European Parliament**; / Organising hearings at the European Parliament; / Replicating successful initiatives, such as the MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme or the 'Science needs Parliament' initiative from Spain;
- Encouraging more structured **cooperation with regional & national authorities** (e.g. in the form of agreement allowing the allocation of dedicated resources for D&E);
- Encouraging **EU funded cross-border/transnational** (Interreg), **national and regional Programmes** to include possibilities for an uptake of EU R&I project results;
- Enhancing **coordination** among Project and Policy Officers, EC Scientific Advisors, the JRC and DG COMM;
- Using **Programme Committee** meetings for raising visibility of R&I project results with policy relevance;

Other messages highlight the importance of communicating on D&E and on feedback to policy:

- Using R&I Days and similar **events**;
- Organising **targeted D&E workshops for policy makers** to enhance understanding about the expectation and the need of taking up research results;
- Organising **D&E roadshows** (per country/region even with third partner countries/regions) targeting local authorities;
- Strengthening the role of **NCPs**;
- Establishing regular contacts with local and regional **media** / encouraging the dissemination of R&I results in standard mass media and social media;
- Involving **citizens** into science and into policy making from design to implementation.

Respondents also raise several actions that could take place at project level:

- The **call** text should provide clear and consistent definitions and expectations for Impact, Dissemination and Exploitation;
- Introducing a **call** for proposals or tender to fund a project which would assess the results coming out of the projects running under a particular section of the work programme;
- Allocating some **funding** to outreach activities after the project ends, either as part of the original project budget or as a 'bonus';
- A specific section on feedback to policy could be introduced in the **submission** form, similar to the one on Ethics; Proposers should specify the end-user community in the application and involve a relevant member in the consortium; Encouraging partnerships between policy makers and R&D organisations for joining together a proposal is also recommended;
- Mainstreaming feedback to policy in the **evaluation** process: it is suggested that (i) exploitation of R&I results for sustainable policy making becomes an explicit evaluation criterion, and that; (ii) evaluators with feedback to policy experience or representatives of national/regional authorities are invited to the evaluation panel;
- Giving more emphasis on D&E in the final **report**; / A dedicated D&E report could also be requested to be delivered at the end of the project. It could be made public and sent upon request to any public authority.
- Using **datamining** on the project results per section of the work programme;
- **Clustering** of projects against a specific policy area while encouraging them to undertake joint D&E activities;
- Encouraging a change of mentality as projects normally focus on peer reviewed journals as a D&E tool; in this context it is important that the **project officer** gives guidance to the projects to help them diversify their dissemination options; / Introducing a 'research uptake' **methodology** which would encourage feedback to policy as part of the project outcome;/
- Initiating the role of '**observer**' for projects: this position could be occupied by representatives of local/regional authorities; the latter could also be involved in the project in the configuration of an advisory board or of an 'end-user forum';

Some comments also mention the importance of platforms to share project results:

- Accelerating knowledge circulation at all relevant policy making levels (EU, local, regional, national) through a future EU R&I **data hub**;
- Using a single, user-friendly **platform** for sharing project results in terms of papers/research concluded/data, and where project results and policy

documents are interlinked. (*N/B: in this context, some respondents brought up the issue of website maintenance after the end of the project; they suggested that funding is allocated for keeping their website running or that the latter is replaced by the aforementioned platform*).

Some respondents highlight the importance of changing mentality and **culture** in the process of policy making, with a need for reconciling short-term political goals with the longer-term research time frame remains a challenge for an effective evidence based policy-making.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

One interesting idea is the possibility to fund "**policy start-ups**", formed on the basis of policy recommendations of past projects, which could then be continued with regional/local funds.

V. DATA AND REPORTING

Number of replies, broken down by categories

Overall, there are 1549 respondents to the mandatory structured questions 5.1 (Which parts of the Horizon 2020 reporting templates and guidance require improvements?) and 5.3 (Have you already used the Horizon 2020 Dashboard?).

Out of these respondents, 621 replied to the follow-up structured question 5.3.a (Which parts of the Horizon Dashboard do you find most useful?) and 1435 replied the structured question 5.5 (The European Commission proposes to create a central EU R&I data hub on data from the EU R&I investments made at EU, national, regional and local levels. Do you consider this could support the definition of R&I policies in Europe at local, regional, national and European levels?)

Between 330 and 470 respondents answered the open questions 5.2 (Please give us one concrete suggestions for improving the project reporting), 5.4 (Which other aspects would you like to have a specific dashboard?) and 5.6 (What additional orientations would you suggest for maximising the value and use of data from EU R&I programmes?)

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

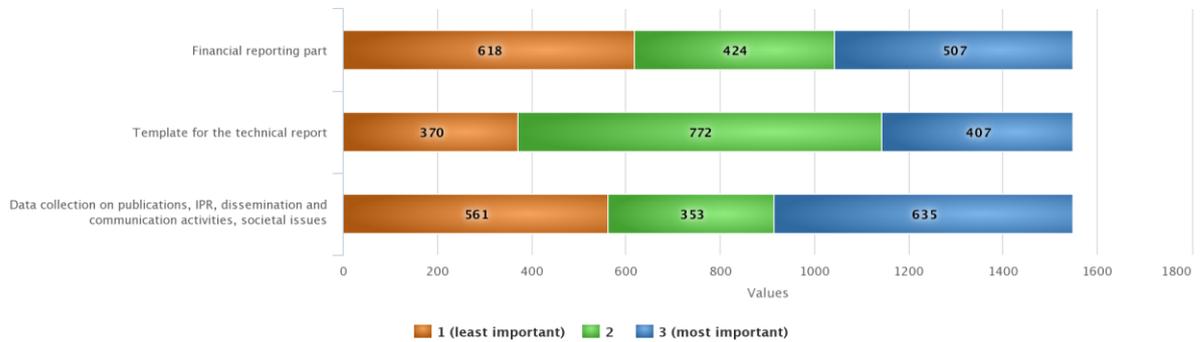
On reporting templates:

- ***Financial reporting part:*** The overall sentiment is rather positive. Concerning the need for changes, 33% of respondents believe it sure needs improvements, 40% do not consider improvements as priority and 27% are undetermined.
- ***Technical reporting part:*** 26% of respondents consider changes in the templates as a priority, 24% do not think changes are necessary and 50% are undetermined.
- ***Data collection on publications, IPR, dissemination and communication activities, societal issues:*** In this section, again there are mixed opinions: 36% of respondents consider changes necessary, 41% do not consider changes as a priority and 23% are undetermined.

The most critical comments concern the questions on the part on dissemination, which some consider as difficult to fill-in, especially for some parts like the one on social media. Moreover, some comments express the opinion that gender questions are sometimes filled with fictional data, and others state that there are redundant gender questions appearing in different parts of report.

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5.1. Which parts of the Horizon 2020 reporting templates and guidance require improvements? (rank your top 3 answers by order of preference)

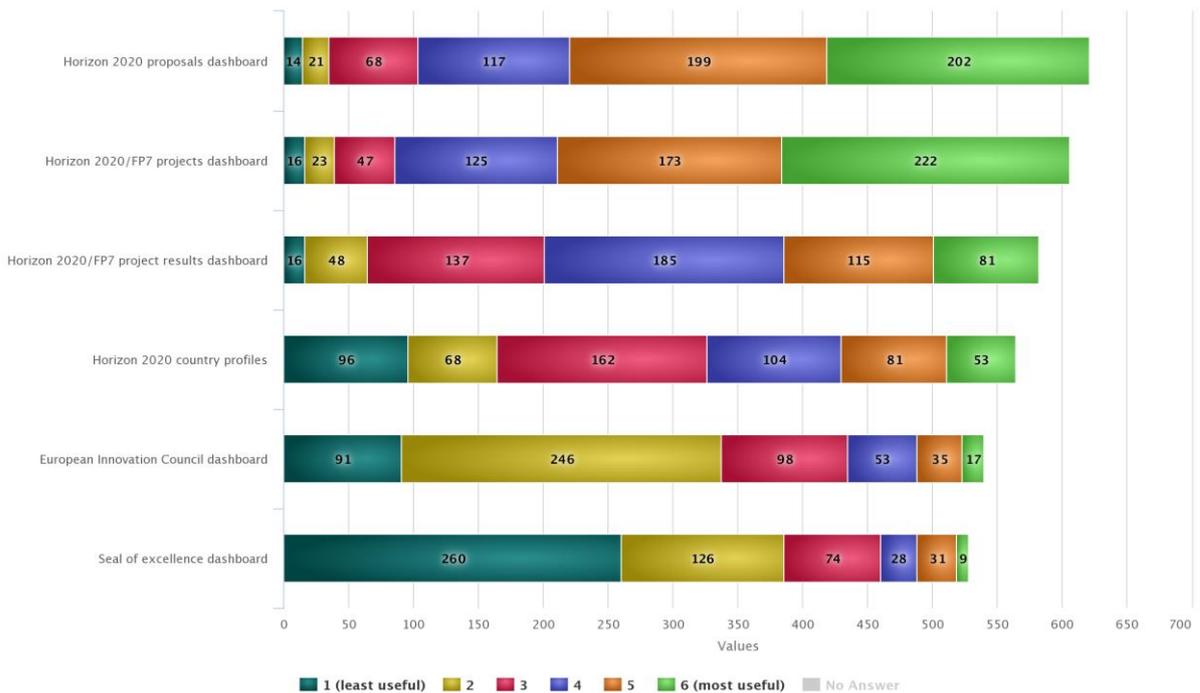


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On Horizon Dashboard:

- Only two out of five respondents (43%) have already used the Horizon 2020 dashboard
- Without surprises, respondents perceive the proposals and projects dashboard as being the most useful followed by the project results, the country profiles and, far behind, specific views for EIC and SoE.

5.3a. Which parts of the Horizon Dashboard do you find most useful? (rank your answers by order of preference)



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On the R&I data hub:

- The vast majority of the respondents (65%) consider that the creation of a datahub could support the definition of R&I policies at various levels in Europe to a great or very great extent.
- Only 3% of the respondents are strongly against the proposal.

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

On the **concrete suggestions for improving the project reporting** (question 5.2), the main messages are the following:

- **Improving support and guidelines:** providing guidelines on how to fill in the sections; having more guided questions; improving support on how to report for open data and IPR; providing more concrete examples; create videos in the Funding & Tenders Portal (for the reporting part);
- **Simplifying financing reporting:** financial reporting should be streamlined; focusing more on the use of lump sums; giving clear instructions to project officers; accepting only totals in macro-categories; including checks on funding percentage per beneficiary and not at project level; revising the current way of entering cost items;
- **Revising the templates:** allowing referring to deliverables so that information will not replicate; limiting the input for text boxes to control the length of the report; revising the dissemination part, asking more on societal impact; focusing more on project results, outcomes and exploitation (for industry not asking questions on the state of the art or other similar generic information);
- **Limiting the reporting periods** to two (one in the middle and one at end of project).

On the **concrete suggestions for dashboards on other aspects** (question 5.4), the main messages (sorted by the number of times they are mentioned by respondents) are the following:

- Need for **beneficiary dashboard and partner's search functionality** and more data on **collaborations**;
- Need for better **dashboard on outputs and results:** covering research data, tools and solutions developed, project outcomes, publications, success stories, dissemination channels...;
- Need for **Improved user-friendliness:** suggestions are made to improve user-friendliness, search via key words and to add more details;
- Need for **overview by topic:** projects, budget, countries, partners,... for health, cancer, climate, aviation...;
- Need for more info **per call/work programme parts:** key indicators, success rates;
- Need for **cross programme** dashboard covering EFRD, RurDEV, LIFE,... showing correlation between various programmes.

On the **additional orientations to maximize the value and use of data from EU R&I programmes** (question 5.6), the main messages are the following:

- Reinforcing the use of existing dashboard and databases, communicating widely about them to researchers, policy makers, SMEs, general public...;
- Many comments repeat the needs of improving the user-friendliness of existing platforms, ensuring an easier access to results;
- Coordinating further with national and regional initiatives;
- Developing further guidance on data management, strengthening the promotion of FAIR principles;
- Developing the use of ID numbers for researchers and organisations.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

On reporting templates:

- Providing sample reports for a 'fictional' project;
- Providing training on how to fill reports for project coordinators;
- Providing the possibility print publications, possibility to upload for other members of consortium except from project coordinator;
- Ensuring that the coordinator is able to share the same screen view as the Project Officer;
- Providing the possibility to work offline on a report template and upload;
- Creating a TV channel (or Youtube) to promote the results from EU projects;
- Asking for the opinion of entrepreneurs to revise the template.

On Horizon Dashboard:

- Beneficiary dashboard;
- Partner search tool;
- Overview dashboard per call for proposals;
- Cross framework programmes dashboard;
- Include financial data in dashboards (execution versus planned).

On the R&I data hub:

- Access to the data hub: Need for a portal/ Compliance with open access policy/ Security – do we want organisations outside EU to access this data ?;
- Contents of the data hub: People mostly interested in results, innovation outputs data / Funded organisations, thematic areas,.../ In all EU languages /Respect FAIR principles;
- Data collection process: Must be simple and continuous/ Use of common standards/ Validation process necessary;
- Suggestion to streamline programmes at the different levels (similar application forms etc...);
- Actors to be involve : International organisations/ Big national funding schemes, EU research groups and non EU research groups /Not only for universities and research institutes but also SMEs, non-governmental organisations...;
- Need for Communication: Communication activities will be needed to promote the use of the hub.

VI. CONTROL STRATEGY

VI.A EX-ANTE CONTROL

Number of replies, broken down by categories

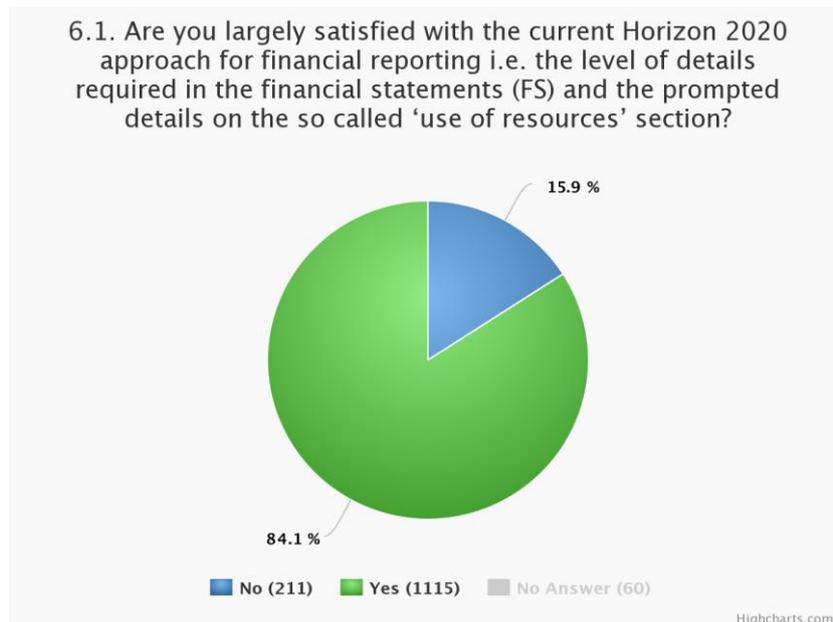
1489 respondents answered the structured question 6.1 focusing on ex-ante control strategy (Are you largely satisfied with the current Horizon 2020 approach for financial reporting?). 130 respondents used the free-text box to explain what changes in the approach for financial reporting they would like to be introduced under Horizon Europe.

347 respondents answered to the open question 6.2. (Would you have ideas for improvements of the Certificate of Financial Statement (CFS) system or suggestion for changes?)

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

The objective to build ex-ante control under Horizon Europe on the foundations and achievements of the common ex-ante control strategy designed for the implementation of Horizon 2020, is accepted by a large majority of respondents.

84% of respondents answered that they are largely satisfied with the current Horizon 2020 approach for financial reporting (i.e. the level of details required in the financial statements and the prompted details on the 'use of resources' question).



What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

If the proposed orientations are generally endorsed and the effort to simplify and harmonize ex-ante control is recognized, respondents also explained what changes could be brought to the current approach for financial reporting.

In their comments, a majority of respondents are calling for further simplification of the reporting procedure, to limit the administrative burden on participants and facilitate the participation of small organisations and newcomers. They highlight the following elements:

- The overall reporting procedure requires too much time and expertise from participants, and can hamper their participation in the programme;
- The level of details asked appears as too high;
- Personnel costs and equipment costs remains complex;
- Some Project officers ask for extra details on the use of resources;
- Exchange of information with Commission/Agency should be faster;
- Additional guidance on reporting requirements should be provided
- Some respondents also called to focus the controls on the outcome and impacts of the activities and on the quality of the delivered results.

Regarding the open question for ideas for improvements of the Certificate of Financial Statement (CFS) the large majority of responses require no change to the CFS.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

Although the majority of respondents are in favour of maintaining the CFS as it is, there are a number of new ideas and suggestions to improve it:

- Having more guidelines and follow-up of CFS questions;
- Having more simplified and thus less expensive CFS;
- Having more interactive, online and user friendly CFS;
- Having a CFS per reporting period;
- Having a list of competent CFS auditors or having it done by an EC service;
- Having more risk based audits in order to have better control rather than more control.

Many of the respondents are also are mixing the CFS and the second level audits in their replies. Other respondents have expectations that CFS findings should be more homogenous with second level audits.

II.B EX-POST CONTROL

Number of replies, broken down by categories

1227 people responded to the structured questions 6.3 (What type of benefits would you expect from a System and Process Audit (SPA)?), 1173 responded to the question 6.4 regarding the validity of SPA and 1019 responded the question 6.5 on the limitation of SPAs. For these two last questions, respondents could choose several answers.

353 people replied to the open question 6.6 (Would it be useful to seek synergies with national research and innovation funding bodies in the audit field? How could this be implemented in practice in your view and based on your experience?).

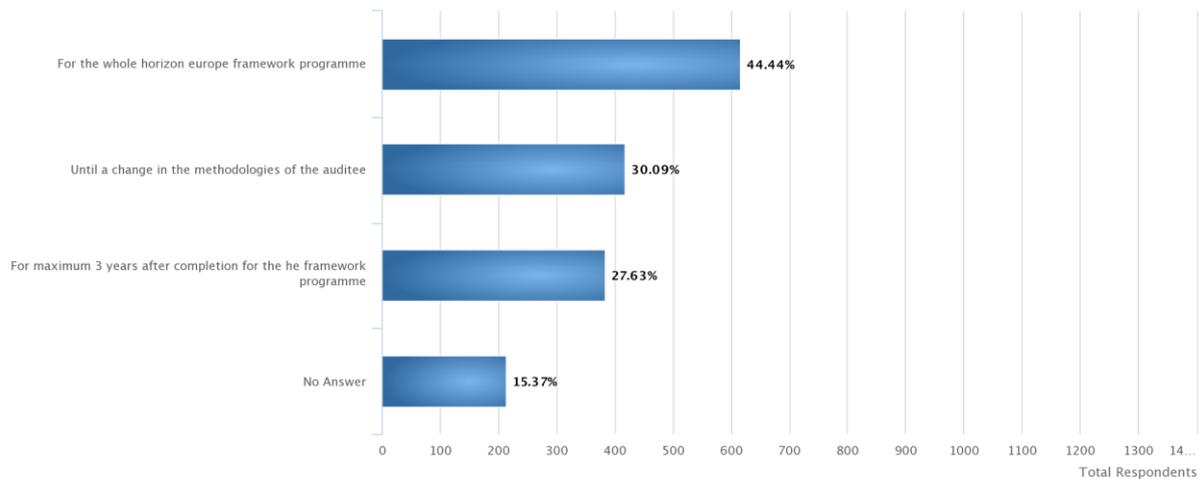
Overall, have the proposed orientations been endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

Overall, the proposed orientations are generally endorsed by a large majority of respondents.

The most popular elements are:

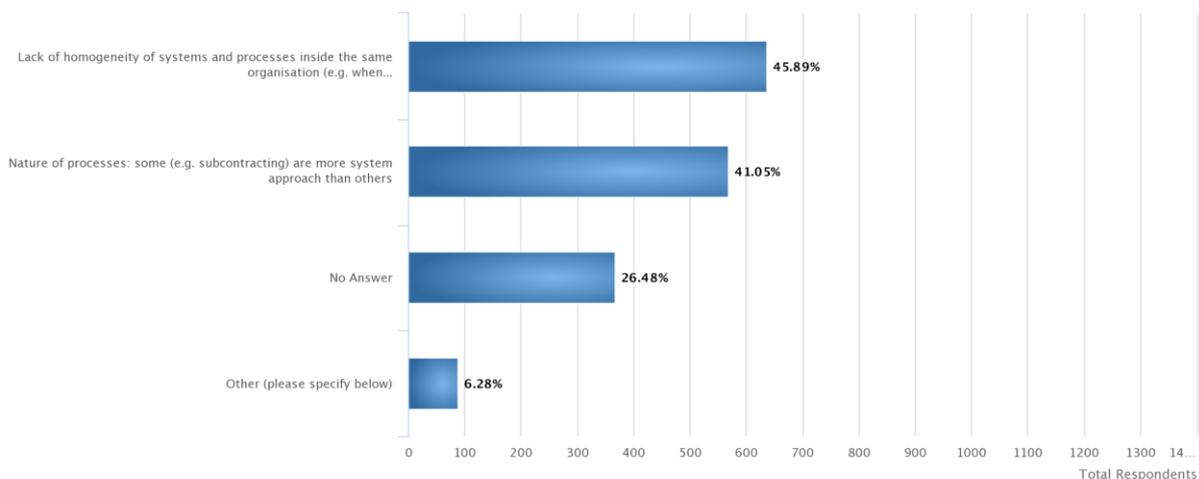
- In terms of **validity of SPAs**, the preferred option is “for the whole duration of Horizon Europe”, followed by a “until a change in the methodology of the auditee” and “for a maximum 3 years after the end of the framework programme”.

6.4. The Systems and Process Audits (SPA) should be valid...



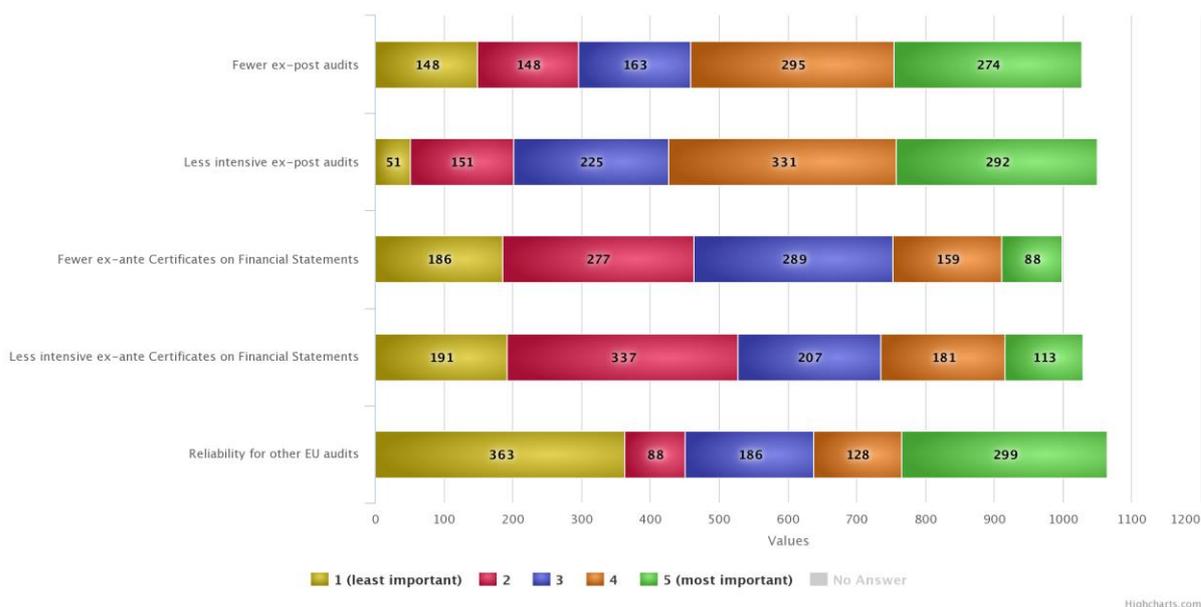
- Regarding the **limitations of a SPA**: the most chosen option is the “lack of homogeneity of systems and processes inside the same organization”, closely followed by the “nature of processes”.

6.5. What are the limitations to a SPA?



Less clear-cut is the response on the type of benefits beneficiaries would expect from a SPA. The preferred answers, ranked by order of preference, are the following: less intensive ex-post audits, fewer ex-post audits and more reliability on other EU audits. The ideas of having less intensive ex-ante CFS, as well as fewer ex-ante CFS are rather mitigated in terms of priority among respondents.

6.3. What type of benefits would you expect from a Systems and Processes Audit (SPA)? (rank by order of preference)



What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is generally positive or neutral.

Regarding the open question 6.5 on other limitations to SPAs, the responses are balanced among positive and negative opinions. The main messages are the following:

- SPAs need to follow national regulation, to be done by local auditors and to be considered valid for future audits;
- SPAs are seen as an additional burden for beneficiaries. They should be a simplification and not extra heavy control of system and processes;
- SPAs should be done for each cost category separately;
- The costs of a SPA should also be taken into account as this could be useful only for a certain size of organisations;
- SPAs could be jeopardized by changes in the rules of the Grant Agreement;
- Beneficiaries must adhere to laws and regulations that are beyond their control and thus might need to make changes to processes during the framework programme period. Thus, there should be an option to report changes to processes without having to repeat the whole SPA certification process.

Regarding the open question 6.6 on synergies with national research funding bodies in the audit field, exploitable answers mainly talk about:

- The need of more common auditing practices;
- The need to involve Member States national government entities;
- The potential difficulty to implement synergies in terms of cost/efficiency aspect;
- The possibility of having synergies only if grant agreement's eligibility criteria are aligned,
- The fact that synergies should be sought only if they brings less burden for beneficiaries.

VII. EXTENDED USE OF SIMPLIFIED FORMS OF COSTS

Number of replies of the Horizon Europe co-design implementation, broken down by categories

There have been 1549 active respondents for this section, providing response to the mandatory structured questions 7.1 (Have you been involved as applicant and/or beneficiary in a lump sum pilot project) and 7.2 (Do you think lump sum project funding will make R&I Framework Programme more accessible to new participants/experienced participants/smaller actors).

15% of them declare to have been involved as applicant and/or beneficiary in a lump sum project, vs 85% who have not been involved.

It is surprising that a high number of respondents (71% to 88%) answered the non-mandatory structured questions 7.3 (To what extent will the abolition of cost reporting and auditing in projects funded by lump sums make project management and administration easier?) and 7.5 (What is the impact of lump sum project funding on the internal management of the consortium) and the open non-mandatory question 7.4 (What is your perception of the system of payments for lump sum project funding?). This exceeds enormously the number of people with direct experience on this field. This data could be read as a signal of the high interest R&I programme beneficiaries have on this topic.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

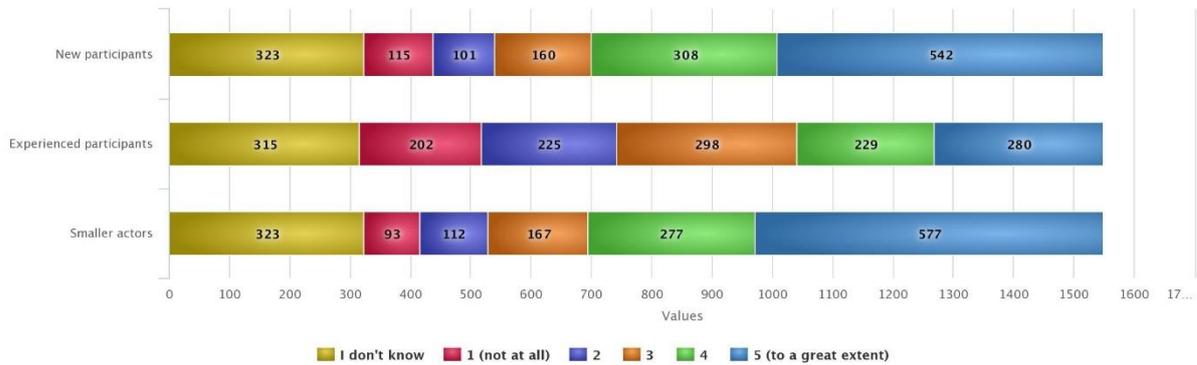
Among those who have been involved as applicants/beneficiaries of lump sums, the answers to the questions on different proposal writing and consortium building show that:

- ***"To what extent was proposal writing different in comparison to other proposals you may have written under Horizon 2020?"***
42% of respondents declared substantially and to a great extent, compared to 19% not at all and very little, 19% in the middle of the scale and 20% who do not know
- ***"To what extent was consortium building different in comparison to other proposals you may have submitted under Horizon 2020?"***
46% of respondents declared substantially and to a great extent, 24% not at all and very little, 21% in the middle of the scale and 19% who do not know

When asked whether the ***"lump sum project funding will make R&I Framework Programme more accessible?"***, 55% of respondents answered that the programme will be substantially more accessible to new participants and smaller actors vs 33% to experienced participants.

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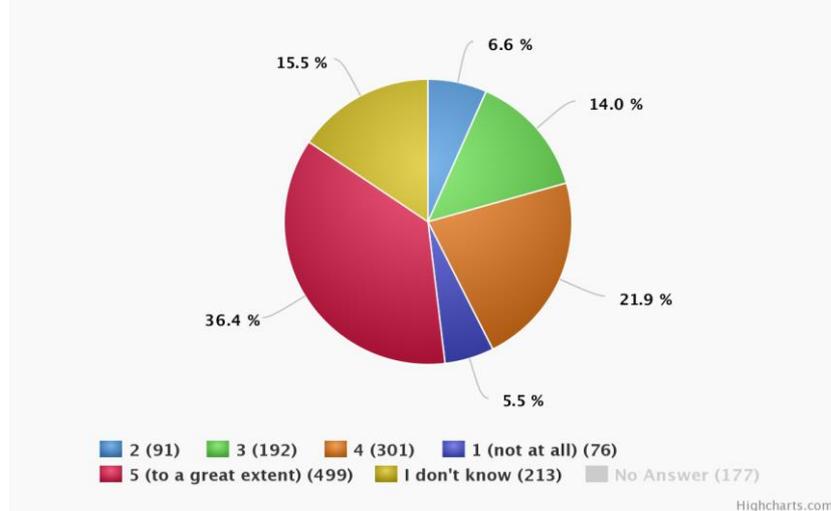
7.2. Do you think lump sum project funding will make R&I Framework Programme more accessible to...



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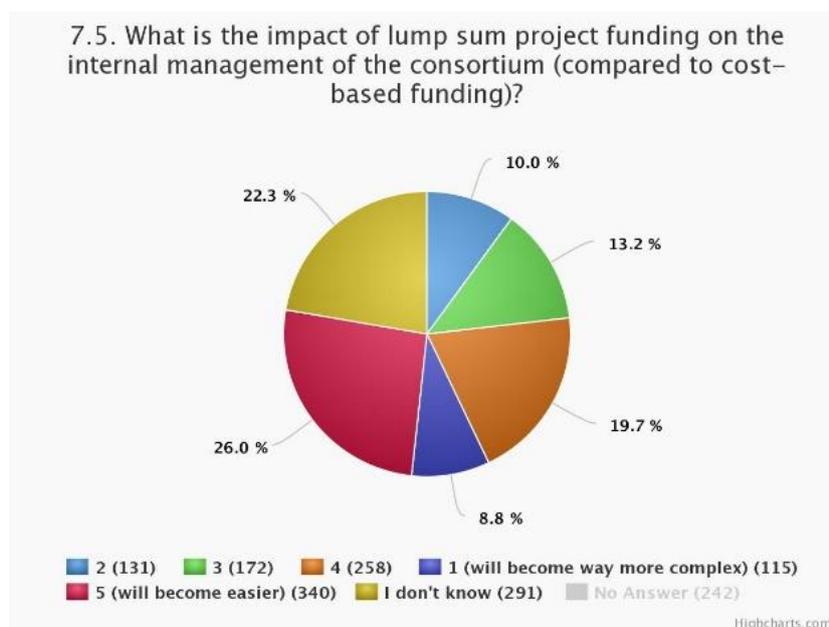
Regarding whether **"the abolition of cost reporting and auditing in projects funded by lump sums makes project management and administration easier?"**, 58% of respondents answered to a great extent and substantially, vs 12% saying not at all and almost nothing.

7.3. To what extent will the abolition of cost reporting and auditing in projects funded by lump sums make project management and administration easier?



Highcharts.com

To the question of the **"impact of lump sum project funding on internal consortium management compared to cost abased funding"**, almost 46% say that it will become easier and very likely vs 19% who says that it will become more complex.



What is the overall sentiment coming from the consultations? What are the main messages?

The feedback received from beneficiaries who answered the web consultation and the discussions during the R&I days is very much divided, between very positive and very negative opinions, while the share of those for who remain indifferent is not very large. This image is fully in line with the perception observed since the launch of the lump sum pilots, from applicants, NCPs, and stakeholders in general.

In the web consultation there was only an open question in the lump sum section: **"What is your perception of the system of payments for lump sum project funding?"**. Although according to the statistics, the overall sentiment is almost 50% positive, 30% neutral and 20% negative, the analysis of the main messages shows a divided picture between "those who like the lump sums", and "those who dislike them". As a result, the main messages are clearly split into two groups of "rather positive" and "rather negative". However, the amount of positive replies outweighs the negative ones.

A majority of respondents argue that lump sums are positive. They declare that lump sums will bring a reduction on administrative burden and resources devoted to management and, will free internal resources within the consortia, which could be devoted to technical and scientific work within the project. However, beneficiaries join the Commission's view that lump sums are not appropriate for all type of projects. A substantial share of beneficiaries underline the potential of lump sums in opening the programme to newcomers and SMEs.

On the negative side, respondents highlight that although some aspects will be simplified, new issues will arise, for instance increased paperwork for proposal writing. There is also the perception that responsibilities and liabilities between beneficiaries will be less clear and, may lead to increased financial risks. Hence, potential benefits of result-based lump sum could be offset by increased risks. Beneficiaries fear that performing partners could be penalised by non performing ones, when the accomplishment of work package is not achieved, as foreseen, at the end of a giving reporting period. The complexity that frequent

request of amendments, due to changes in the split of work among partners, could bring is mentioned as well as a potential drawback.

Based on the replies, and mainly on the negative ones, it appears that **there is not enough knowledge about how lump sum pilots are conceived and, how do they function**. There seems to be a misunderstanding between Option I (lump sum fixed by the Commission in the work programme) and Option II (lump sum proposed by beneficiaries at the moment of submitting their proposal and fixed during Grant agreement preparation). Furthermore, beneficiaries' opinions and responses show that there is often a confusion regarding the fact that lump sums are paid upon accomplishment of activities as presented in Annex 1, and not upon successful results of projects. There is, therefore, a large margin for improving communication in this field, if its use is to be extended under Horizon Europe.

Interesting new ideas coming through?

It is interesting to keep in mind the results from the statistical analysis underlying that using lump sums could bring an easier access to the programme for SMEs and newcomers. We should assess the experience of members of these communities involved in the current and upcoming pilots, in view of future activities.

Beneficiaries underline the need to ensure high expertise by project officers, since it would be critical for project assessment under this simplified form of costs. Furthermore, they warn about the workload of certain project officers and their spare capacity to undertake an in-depth and close technical/scientific project monitoring.

The possibility of using "partial lump sums" for certain cost categories within standard projects is suggested as a path for further exploration.

VIII. OUTREACH

Number of replies, broken down by categories

Overall, 1549 respondents have answered to the mandatory structured question 8.1 (Which support service they have interacted with within the course of Horizon 2020?).

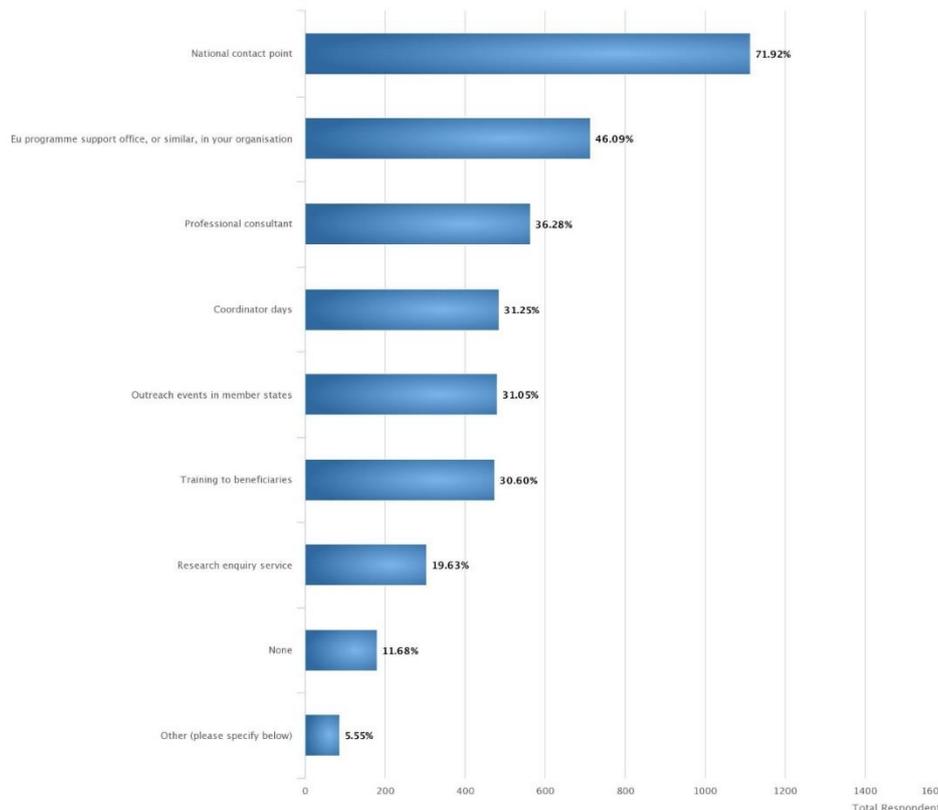
Only a limited number of respondents answered to the follow-up open question 8.2 detailing ways to improve the support services (315 exploitable responses).

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

According to the replies, the majority of respondents had support interaction with their National Contact Points (72%). The second most solicited support service are the EU programme support offices in respondents' own organisations (46%). 36% of respondents interacted with a professional consultant. 1 out of 4 respondents participated to training to beneficiaries, coordinator days and/or outreach events in Member states organised by the Common Implementation Centre of DG RTD.

Only 11% of respondents have indicated not to have interacted with any support service.

8.1. With which support services have you interacted, if any, during the course of Horizon 2020?



The overall feeling towards support services is generally positive, even if many ways of improvement are proposed, as detailed in the following section. Feedback from the EU R&I Days underlines that the Co-creation “spirit” is very welcome (multidirectional communication channels: web-consultation, EU R&I Days event and consultation events in Member States on Horizon Europe implementation as well as the Outreach events organised on Horizon 2020 Implementation).

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

There is only an open question in this section: ***“For each support service you indicated, what would you propose to improve?”***

The overall sentiment of the free-text replies is positive (58%). Most of the answers target the NCPs, the events and trainings organised by the EC and the Research Enquiry Service.

On the **NCPs**, a significant number of answers underlines the **overall quality of NCPs support**. Other respondents are raising the issue of **differences in the level of support and guidance provided by the NCPs in different Members States**. Several respondents also mention that NCPs are often overloaded and that European Commission should support Member States efforts towards strengthening the NCPs network, making sure that sufficient resources are allocated to them.

Most of respondents are satisfied with the quality of support and information received during **outreach events and trainings** organised by the European Commission. However, respondents would like to have **more trainings focusing on targeted issues** (e.g. dissemination and exploitation) and dedicated to different type of beneficiaries (RTOs, SMEs, newcomers...). The majority of respondents who talk about it appreciated the Coordinator Days, and some of them would like these events to be organised **more frequently**. Some answers also suggest using the Coordinators Days as an opportunity for organising networking meetings and face-face meetings with project/policy officers. **More webinar and e-learning solutions** and better and earlier information on events to take place are welcomed as ways to widen the participation to outreach events and trainings.

On the **Research Enquiry Service (RES)**, several respondents point out the excessively **long response time** that they faced and **the lack of thoroughness of some replies received**, as it sometimes only repeat what is already mentioned in work programmes or in already available guidance documents.

Several respondents mentioned that extended support should be offered at **regional and local levels**. NCPs activities at regional level, outreach events of the Commission in Member States (and not only in the capital cities) and training dedicated to local support services are mentioned as possible ways of improvement.

Several respondents are calling for clearer information on available support services: many support services are available, but potential participants are not always informed of what exists.

Several answers also point out the importance of direct contact with EC/Agencies project and policy officers.

IX. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Number of replies, broken down by categories

There have been 1549 active respondents for this section, providing response to the mandatory structured questions 9.1 (What do you think about having all the EU funding programmes available in a single Portal?) and 9.2 (Which additional features of the Funding & Tenders Portal would you find useful?). 1357 respondents also answered the non-mandatory structured question 9.3 (How can we improve the functions of the Funding & Tenders Portal?).

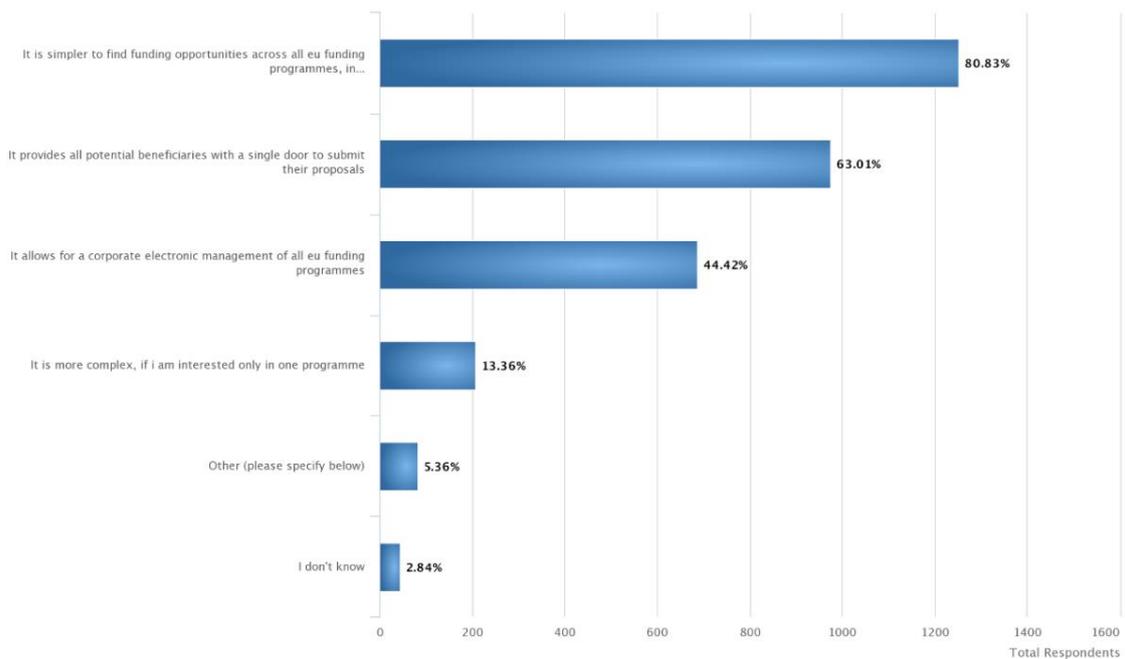
The number of replies shows a great interest in the Funding & Tenders Portal as the relevant questions were answered by almost 90% of all the respondents.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

Overall answers to the questionnaire are supportive of the proposals made in this area.

To the question 9.1 (What do you think about having all the EU funding programmes available in a single Portal?) 81% of respondents consider it is simpler to find funding opportunities across all EU funding programmes.

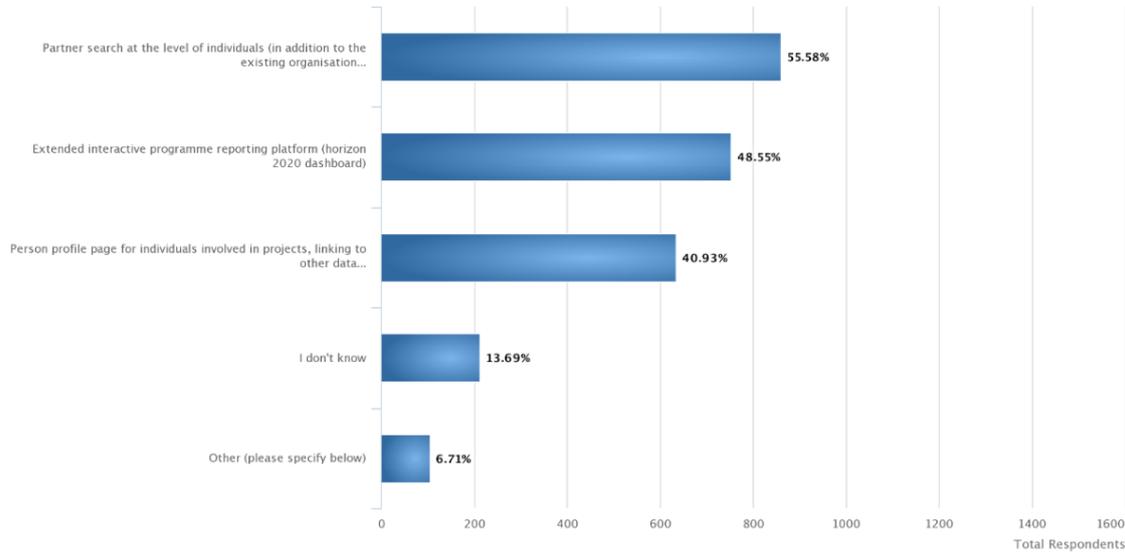
9.1. What do you think about having all the EU funding programmes available in a single Portal?



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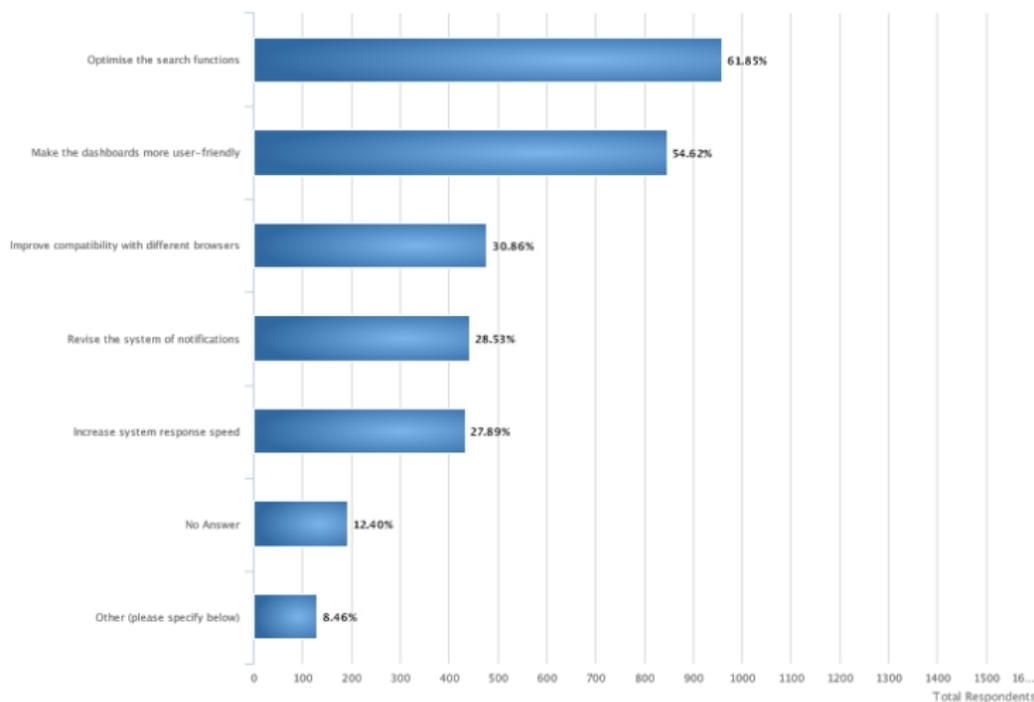
On question 9.2 (Which additional features of the Funding & Tenders Portal would they find useful?), the preferred option is the introduction of a partner search at the level of individuals (in addition to the existing organisation based partner search) for finding potential partners for their projects ideas projects.

9.2. Which additional features of the Funding & Tenders Portal would you find useful?



On question 9.3 (How to improve the functions of the Funding & Tenders Portal?), 62% of respondents asks for an optimisation of the search functions and 55% for making the dashboards more user friendly.

9.3. How can we improve the functions of the Funding & Tenders Portal?



What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

Respondents are generally very supportive of the digital transformation carried out by the R&I Framework Programme and to the Funding & Tenders Portal in particular. Enlarging the Portal to cover all centrally managed grants and procurements is highly appreciated.

However, there is a strong demand for improving the current Portal search functions at all levels: call/topic search, reference documents, etc., and make it more intuitive and mobile responsive. The improvement of the compatibility with internet browser is also considered necessary.

Some respondents underline the fact that running the Funding & Tenders Portal and Sygma with different interfaces does not help.

Respondents underline the complexity of the role assignment systems requested to every beneficiary, and propose a streamlined version for SMEs and small organisations. Furthermore, there is the sentiment that the number of notifications is very high and that they are not always self-explanatory.

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

There is a clear call for a drastic improvement of the search functions and more simplification in the user interface. Improving compatibility with different browsers is also signalled as an area for improvement. Feedback from the EU R&I Days confirms the overall positive feeling on the Funding & Tenders Portal with room for improvement.

X. EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIPS

Number of replies, broken down by categories

More than 1000 replies were received to the structured question 10.3¹ (How to most effectively improve the experience on participating in the calls and activities in the context of European Partnerships?). 380 exploitable replies to the open question 10.4 (How could we make European Partnerships more attractive to prospective partners?) were received.

It is interesting to note that answers were received predominantly from non-beneficiaries (80%) and from non-partners (83%) of Institutionalised Partnerships based on Article 185 or 187 TFEU.

The feedback summarised in this report addresses the operational implementation of European Partnerships, and represents a participant/beneficiary viewpoint (not the policy/partners' view). However, for completeness, some political considerations are reflected from the feedback received during the R&I Days and the policy session on European Partnerships.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

The replies to the structured question 10.3 (How to most effectively improve the experience in participating in the calls and activities in the context of European Partnerships?) **largely endorse the proposed orientations**. Replies in their majority were **positive** (either 'strongly agree' or 'agree')²:

- **By ensuring that the calls would be accessible on the Funding and Tenders Portal: 88 %** (out of 1119 replies, 9% neutral, only 3% disagree/strongly disagree)
- **By ensuring better communication of opportunities for funding in the context of partnerships: 82%** (out of 1099 replies, 15% neutral, only 3% disagree/strongly disagree)
- **By ensuring a single set of rules for participation and for funding** (i.e. application of HE rules for participation without or with very limited derogations): **80%** (out of 1077 replies, 13% neutral, only 7% disagree/strongly disagree)
- **By harmonising and centralising submission, evaluation, and reporting procedures: 81%** (out of 1104 replies, 11% neutral, only 8% disagree/strongly disagree)
- **By ensuring better dissemination and exploitation of results: 61%** (out of 1049 replies, 27% neutral, 12% disagree/strongly disagree)
- **Other** (54 replies): All funding managed at EU level; clearer rules for dissemination and exploitation; actively promote partnerships to tackle

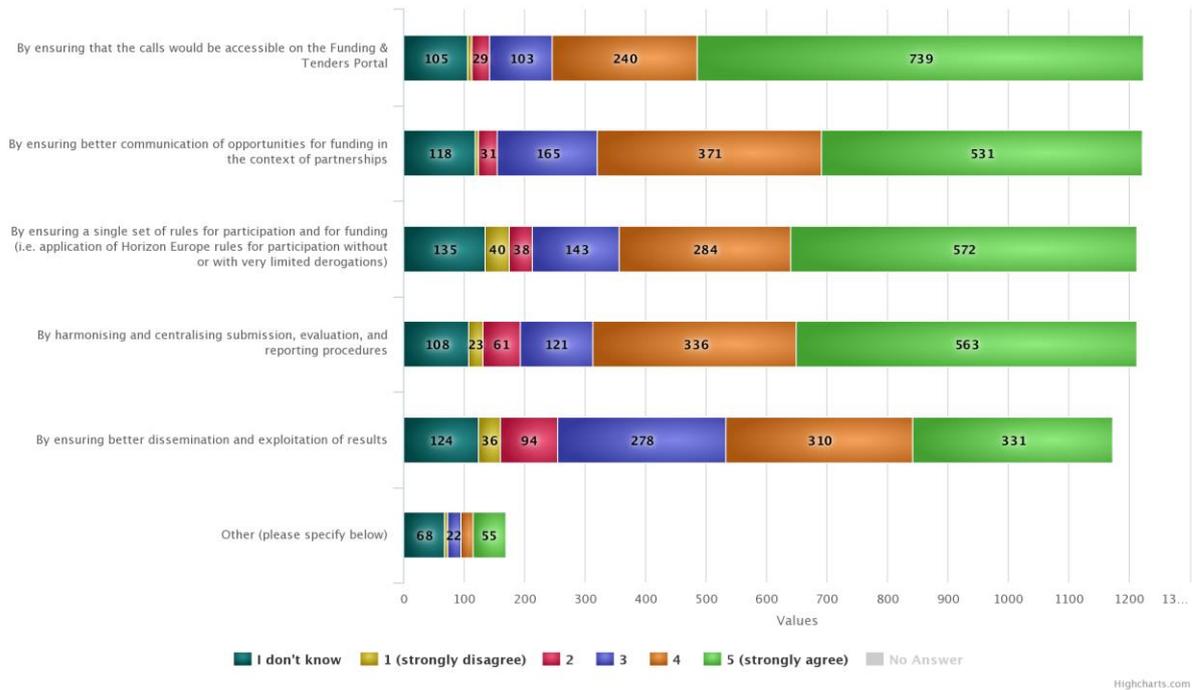
¹ This number is an average of the number of replies given to each statement under the closed question and takes into account the 5 options provided to the respondents (from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

² Numbers are rounded.

**REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE ONLINE CONSULTATION AND
THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION DAYS EVENT**

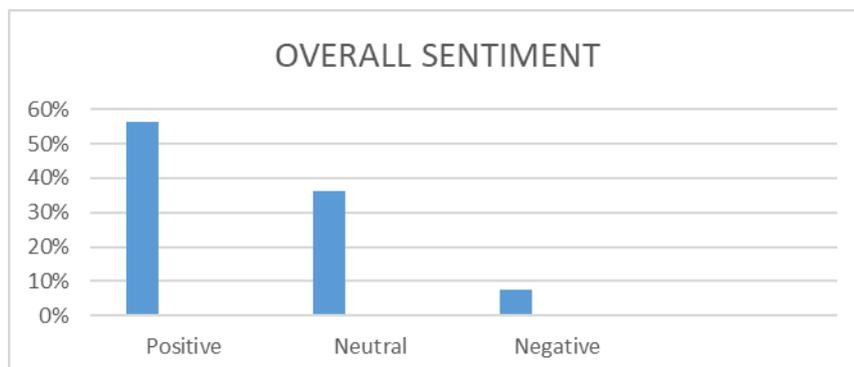
societal challenges; one contract template for all funding under HE; more clarity on how partnerships link to Horizon Europe Work Programmes; projects funded through partnerships to be searchable via CORDIS and shown in Dashboard results.

10.3. How to most effectively improve the experience in participating in the calls and activities in the context of European Partnerships?



What are the main messages? Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

On the open question 10.4 (How could we make European Partnerships more attractive for prospective partners?), the overall sentiment was generally positive.



- **Openness and Transparency:** 25% of respondents state that partnerships are a gathering for the few and privileged. There suggestions to open partnerships included e.g. clearer conditions for accession, multi-annual programming, mandatory inclusion of small

universities and SMEs, more openness of calls/topics. Access to data and results is perceived as an important element in increasing the openness and understanding the added-value of partnerships.

- **Openness as a way to achieve more impact** was also one of the key issues raised at the European Partnerships session during the **R&I Days**. All actors who can contribute should be involved in a meaningful way – for instance foundations, or Member States, regions and cities in order to ensure deployment and scaling-up of solutions. There should also be a clear and transparent policy for including new participants (members and non-members) during the life of a partnership.
- **Harmonisation** amongst programmes at European level, but also with national rules: 20% of respondents underline that they would welcome application of a single set of European rules, including by Member States. It was also mentioned that harmonisation of grant application, management and reporting procedures is important to ensure efficiency and comparability across initiatives.

At the **European Partnerships session of the R&I Days**, it was highlighted that partnerships should allow flexibility and be more disruptive (*“they are platforms where we can make things happen without too many restrictions”*). Therefore, it is important to distinguish between harmonisation of technical operations, on the one hand, and allowing flexibility in implementation, on the other, taking into account the specificities of different sectors.

- **More simplification and reduction of administrative burden:** 20% of respondents requested more simplified processes and procedures, including shorter guides; simpler templates; time lapse between call for proposals and start of project not longer than 6 months; simpler/more harmonised reporting and evaluation; more user-friendly portal; extended use of simplified costs and lump sums; simpler conditions for reporting in-kind contributions.
- **Communication and Information:** 16% of replies focus on the need for more and clearer communication on opportunities for funding at partnership level, including through infographics and factsheets, organisation of info days, reinforcement of the role of NCPs, sharing of successful stories in Brussels and in Member States.
- **Budget:** 11% of respondents commented on the importance of raising the overall funding for partnerships (match budget with technology content, targets and expected impact); some highlighted the need for in-kind contributions to be counted irrespective of origin and, for reimbursement rates to be the same for all partners in a project, including universities and research institutions.
- **Other important messages from the web consultation** (replies under 10%):
 - **Rationalisation of landscape / more effective implementation of partnerships:** Among concrete suggestions: creation of a central partnerships portal or a single handling ‘agency’ for the institutionalised partnerships; call for a free legal advisory on partnerships (incl. GDPR and IPR); respondents also

stressed the importance of institutionalised partnerships covering the whole value-chain, including lower TRL.

- **More co-creation:** Call to meaningfully involve all stakeholders from the beginning and throughout the execution of the programme (incl. in priority-setting, topic-definition and project-execution) to ensure synergies and EU added-value;
- **IPR:** Ensure robust protection of results; ensure 'balanced' open science clauses to boost private companies' participation; clearer/more advantageous exploitation rights for smaller beneficiaries such as SMEs and academic partners;
- **Improved governance:** Need to rationalise and harmonise the governance structures in a more transparent and effective manner. During the R&I Days it was also highlighted that the future governance model needs to allow more strategic orientation and agility, cross-sectoral collaboration and sharing of learnings between partnerships.

- **Other important messages from the R&I Days:**

- **Partnerships need to deliver visible impacts:** Equipping partnerships with the necessary tools to transform R&I results to **regulatory, societal and market update** was one of the main messages of the European Partnerships session of the R&I Days. In this session, it was also mentioned that European Partnerships should be seen as a policy tool to achieve take-up and scaling-up of innovative solutions. They need to have a clear vision from the outset, and should start by defining the public and societal need (technology and digitalisation should not dictate the direction but seen as enablers; excellent R&I is not enough, instead the delivery on policy objectives is key); the purpose of partnerships should be sustainability, not just competitiveness. Strengthening the SSH dimension and going beyond technological innovation in partnerships was also seen as key in achieving more impact. It was also highlighted that work programmes should define from the outset how results will be exploited.

Additional specific comments on individual candidate institutionalised partnerships under Horizon Europe:

- i. **IHI:** Respondents stressed that single-stage and 2-stage calls should be possible: 2-stage topics would secure upfront in-kind commitment and have a more prescriptive content reflecting requirements for industry collaborations with applicants. Respondents also highlighted that consortia should also be allowed to include new SMEs during stage 2 proposal preparation.
- ii. **ECSEL:** Cited as 'complicated'. Respondents called for a single funding source for each beneficiary and single reporting on activities and costs. Call to double the budget for its successor Key Digital Technologies (KDTs).
- iii. **Clean Sky:** Cited as example of 'closed' club, with excessively closed call topics.
- iv. **Eurostars:** Call to open it to non-EU countries.

- v. **FCH:** Comment on the need to reduce membership fees (FCH JU/HER).
- vi. **EIT:** Call to increase visibility/opportunities/outputs in the Funding & Tenders Portal.

XI. SYNERGIES

Number of replies, broken down by categories

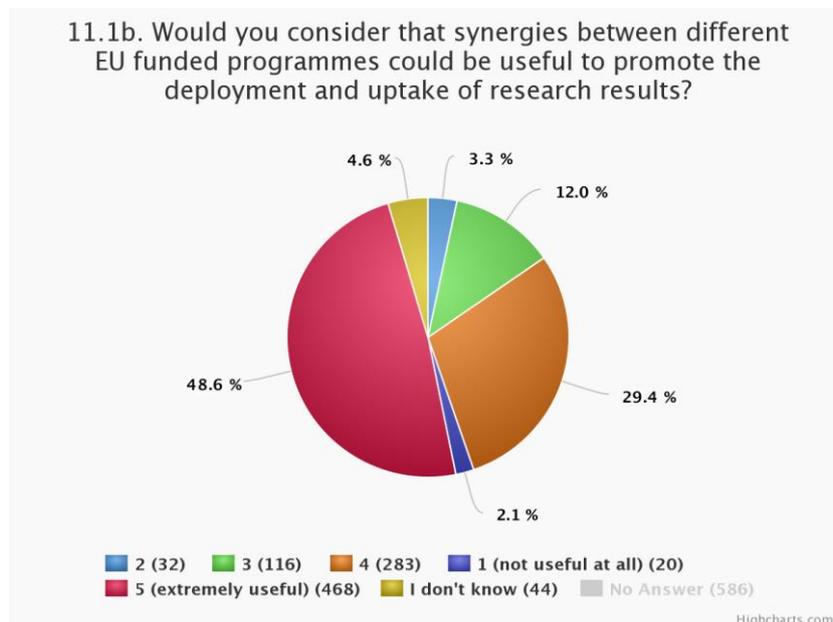
1549 active respondents answered the mandatory structured questions 11.1 (Are you familiar with other EU funded programmes) and 11.3 (Have you received a Seal of Excellence (SoE) under Horizon 2020). 68% of them are familiar with EU programme and 17% had received a Seal of Excellence.

Between 960 and 1330 respondents answered the non-mandatory structured questions 11.1b (Would you consider that synergies between different EU funded programmes could be useful to promote the deployment and uptake of research results?), 11.4 (Do you think that simplified State aids rules will enable stronger uptake of Seal of Excellence projects by national and/or regional public authorities) and 11.5 (statements on the Seal of Excellence).

456 respondents also answered the open question 11.2 (What areas and/or types of projects require adaptations in order to improve synergies amongst EU funded programmes? What would be the key enabling features for making these synergies happen?)

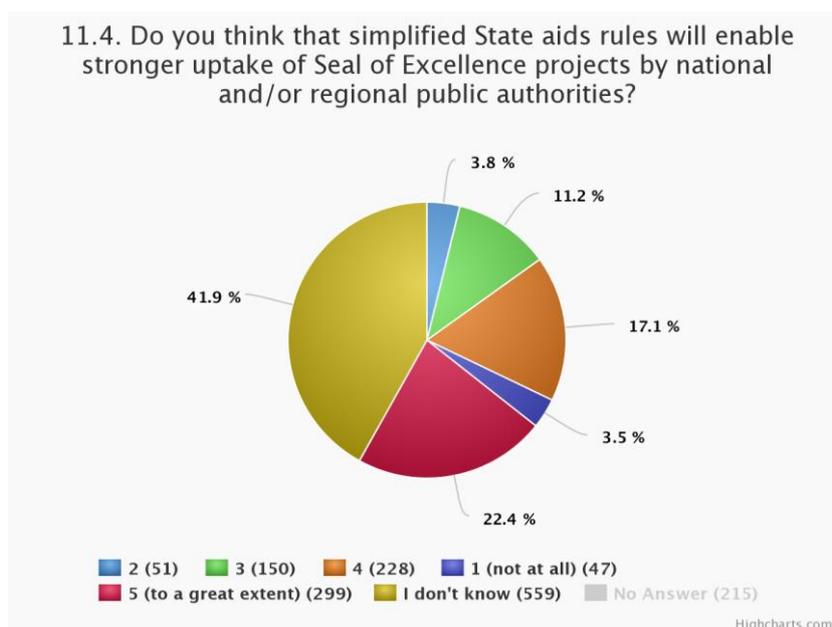
Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

Regarding the question 11.1b on **the usefulness of synergies between different EU funded programmes**, the overall sentiment is positive with 79% of respondents considering them extremely or very useful.



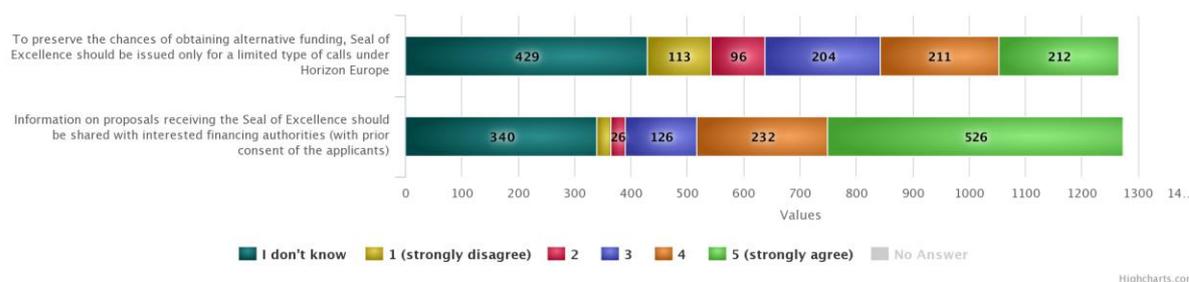
Regarding the question 114 on **simplified State aids rules**, 40% respondents expect that simplified State aid rules will enable a stronger uptake of SoE projects to a great extent and substantially. However, an important proportion of respondents did not know how to answer the question (42%).

11.4. Do you think that simplified State aids rules will enable stronger uptake of Seal of Excellence projects by national and/or regional public authorities?



On question 11.5, there are mixed opinion regarding the **idea of issuing Seal of Excellence only for a limited type of calls under Horizon Europe in order to preserve the chances of obtaining alternative funding**. A relative majority of respondents (33%) agree or strongly agree with this statement whereas a smaller share of respondents (17%) disagree or strongly disagree with it. An important share of respondents (34%) did not know how to answer the question. There is **very strong support for sharing information on SoE proposals with interested funding authorities**. 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement.

11.5. To which extent do you agree with the following statements?



What are the main messages? Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

There is a general message to incentivise synergies. The following ideas are also mentioned:

- Facilitating and encouraging **joint, coordinated, modular and complementary calls between different EU programmes;**
- **Harmonising and standardising eligibility criteria, terminology, funding rates, proposal submission** (especially proposal templates), **evaluation, reporting, control and payment** as a condition for creating synergies amongst EU funded programmes. During the R&I Days, the importance of simplification and harmonization of rules was highlighted,

together with possibility for Regions to replicate Horizon Europe instrument with Structural Funds.

- Call for **joint/combined evaluation**. Automatic award for projects awarded one type of funding, particularly for projects seeking part of funding from a centrally managed programme (Horizon 2020 or CEF) and a regionally/nationally managed programme (ERDF). This was also underlined during the R&I Days;
- Issue/problem of **State Aid rules which prevent easier synergies** between the different programmes and also makes it very complex to applicants;
- **Publication of thematic calls across different programmes**. Better communication of opportunities across programmes;
- **Sharing implementation data**. Synergies should focus on similar/complementary themes and topics, such as HPC and digital skills - not only practical implementation aspects. Synergies to promote deployment/uptake of research results and infrastructure developed with another programme. Idea of a common database of past/current projects to facilitate the search of initiatives/research actions per topic;
- **Providing additional funding**, upon request for further development/exploitation of compatible and complementary results achieved under different projects/programs by new set of project consortia;
- **Sequential synergies**. Different programmes could support different parts of the project or different stages (synergy over time, for example when Horizon Europe would support the R&D phase, while CEF would support the deployment in real market conditions);
- **Erasmus program** (and other similar programs dedicated to education) **should be open to research organizations that are not part of universities**. Erasmus+ could easily connect with MSCA, but differs greatly in funding mechanism and procedures;
- EU Framework Programmes should seek more regional/transnational aspects or strengths in **finding synergies and priorities in the context of EU macro-regional strategies, regional or transnational smart specialisation**;
- **Improved national funding of ERA-NETs**. Advisable to apply the same rules of participation and funding as the framework programme. Financing rules need to be simplified (especially for ERA-NET Cofund scheme) Top-up mechanisms were also mentioned ;
- In Widening schemes ERA CHAIRS and TWINNING the Funding of national Structural Funds for research equipment should be mandatory. In MSCA COFUND there could be joint calls between MSCA and Structural Funds. Main condition for synergies would be the reservation of structural funds for synergies at the planning and programming period;
- Encouraging projects to create synergies with projects from other funding schemes, especially with Interreg was mentioned during the R&I Days.
- Call for a cross-departmental taskforce inside the Commission to map and ensure stronger synergies among the different EU R&I-related funding schemes.
- Encouraging policy work, exchanges and networks as they can contribute to fostering synergies.

XII. GENERAL INPUT

Number of replies, broken down by categories

Almost 30% of all respondents have answered the final non-mandatory question of the questionnaire "***provide further general input regarding the implementation strategy for Horizon Europe***". This figure can be considered as very positive.

Overall, have the proposed orientations been, endorsed? What are the most popular? Any strong negative reactions?

There is an acknowledgement of simplifications introduced in Horizon 2020, that it is considered as a good starting point for the implementation of Horizon Europe.

There is clear endorsement of the continuity in the implementation from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe. The continuity approach taken by the Commission for the rules for participation and, by extension in a wider sense, to the implementation of the new programme is appreciated by respondents.

What is the overall sentiment of the free-text replies? What are the main messages?

Results show an overall positive sentiment, with 73% of positive answers, 9% negative and 18% neutral.

Many answers to the general comments free-text box are complementing answers provided in the different areas of the web-consultation. Below is a brief overview of the main messages per area of the implementation strategy.

In relation to the ***work programme***, the feedback underlines the convenience to move towards less prescriptive topics and less complex calls. Several comments mention the importance of having a balance between top-down and bottom-up calls and between different types of TRLs.

On the ***submission process***, respondents consider that there is substantial margin for simplification. They suggest simplifying the proposal templates, mainly through shortening them. Some comments also tackle the need to allow re-submission of high-ranked proposals not funded.

The request of improving the ***evaluation*** feedback is repeatedly present in many responses. Other comment on evaluation include a more extensive use of two-stage evaluation which could lead to an increase in the success' rate, introducing interviews with proposers, or involving civil society actors in the evaluation process. Many comments mention also the need to improve the quality of experts involved and to make their selection procedure more transparent. Some respondents underline the necessity to revise the redress procedure. A shorter time to grant is also mentioned several times.

On the ***Model Grant Agreement***, many respondents call for simpler financial rules, especially regarding personnel costs, equipment costs and a wider reliance on beneficiaries' usual costs accounting practices. Several comments express some

concerns regarding the corporate formula using a daily rate to calculate personnel costs.

In relation to **project management**, several replies point to the need to improve IT systems and the Funding and Tenders Portal, simplify the amendment process, simplify reporting templates, improve automatic notifications or provide a channel for continuous feedback. Furthermore, some respondents highlight that individual project officers should not set stricter requirements than the standard ones.

Several comments underline that a stronger emphasis should be put on **dissemination & exploitation**. Respondents mention the importance of guidance and training to raise awareness of beneficiaries regarding D&E and the need of support on D&E throughout the whole project lifecycle (however, there are doubts on reporting obligations after the project's end). Some respondents are also mentioning platforms like the "Horizon Results Platform" as a way to showcase project results and increase their exploitation potential.

In the area of **audits and control**, respondents would like to be allowed to use more widely their own accounting practices and request a more transparent audit process and a stronger link of CFS to 2nd level audit.

On **outreach**, there is a general call for more guidance on all issues. Several comments also underline the importance of the support from NCPs.

Enhancing **synergies** between different EU funding programmes and the need for rules of the different EU programmes to be more aligned, is a domain of high importance for beneficiaries. Several respondents consider the Seal of Excellence, as it stands today, is not tapping its full potential enabling access to other funding opportunities.

Other non- structured ideas collected include the following:

- Allowing allocation keys;
- Allowing subcontracting of management;
- Having more flexible IPR rules (industry-friendly);
- Reinforcing human contact and guidance;
- Discouraging consultants in proposal writing;
- Developing further awards for best projects;
- There is a strong call for simplified rules to enable the participation of different type of organisations and of newcomers, especially SMEs;
- Geographical balance (some respondents support the introduction of measures to support the geographical diversity of consortiums, whereas other express some doubts);
- Societal impact of projects (How to measure them? How to report them?);
- More EC support/tools for Open Science / Open Access implementation;
- Taking gender dimension into account, beyond the share of involved female researchers in projects;
- Encouraging and reinforcing citizen involvement;

- International cooperation (ensuring that the implementation rules are adapted to the participation of third countries).

Are there any interesting new ideas coming though?

An interesting idea, worth to consider is making projects greener, through less air travel and reimbursement of CO2 offsetting fees.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMGA	Annotated Model Grant Agreement
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
CSA	Coordination and Support Action
CFS	Certificate of Financial Statement
D&E	Dissemination & Exploitation
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIT	European Institute of Innovation & Technology
ERC	European Research Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme for Research
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IA	Innovation Action
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
MGA	Model Grant Agreement
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions
NCP	National Contact Point
R&I	Research and Innovation
RES	Research Enquiry Service
RIA	Research and Innovation Action
RTOS	Research & Technology Organisations
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SoE	Seal of Excellence
SPA	Systems and Processes Audits
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TRL	Technology Readiness Level