



The Seal of Excellence

A concrete example of operational synergies between Horizon 2020 and the ESIF

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Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

DG Research & Innovation



Synergies between Horizon2020 and ESIF to maximise quantity, quality and IMPACT of research and innovation investments

From theory to action:

- 2010: EU2020 and Innovation Union: commitments n. 24 & 25
- End 2013: H2020 and ESIF Regulations contain references to coordination between programmes and synergy-friendly rules
(Declaration on Seal of excellence 2013/C 373/02 20.12.2013)
- July 2014: Joint RTD – REGIO Guide on synergies
(sequential / parallel / combined/ alternative funding)
- Nov 2014: New Commissioners Moedas and Crețu – mandate from President Juncker: **maximise synergies !**
- Dec 2014: New CAB-RTD Synergy Task force + collaboration with DG REGIO
- 25 Jun 2015: **Commissioner Moedas priorities: 'Seal of excellence' under Open Innovation pillar / Maximise impact**
- 12 Oct 2015: **Official Launch of the 'seal of excellence' initiative**

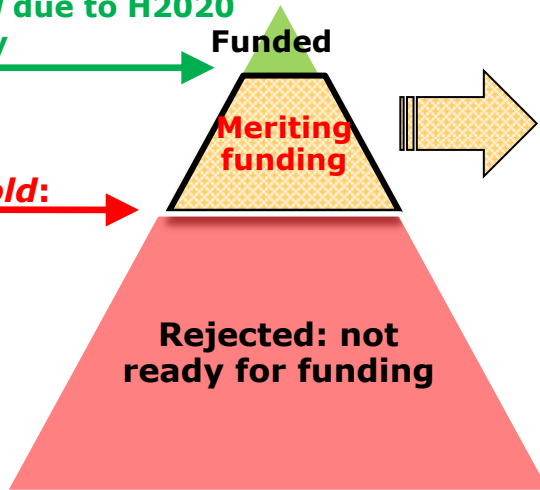




Horizon 2020 evaluation:

Funding threshold due to H2020 budget availability

Quality threshold:



Target population:

excellent projects not funded by H2020



- ✓ **'Seal of excellence'** certifies proposal of high quality, meriting funding
- ✓ **Accompanying letter** explaining how to get in touch with other funding bodies (like e.g. ESIF Managing Authorities in the Member States)
- ✓ **Certificate digitally signed against fraud**

✓ **Clear benefits for regions / Member States:**

- ✓ make the most of a unique, high quality evaluation process
- ✓ better use of resources
- ✓ potential high local impact

Pilot using the SME Instrument

- ✓ **Single company**
- ✓ **Small scale R&I actions**
- ✓ **Close to market**



*Certificate delivered by the European Commission,
as the institution managing Horizon 2020,
the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014-2020*

The project proposal [REDACTED]

Development of [REDACTED] livestock
manure [REDACTED] manure N-P-C-fertilizer

Submitted under the Horizon 2020's SME Instrument
call 2020-SMEINST-1-2014 of 15 September 2015
in the area of

[REDACTED] a sustainable supply of raw
materials
by
[REDACTED] BH
[REDACTED]
8230 HARTBERG
Austria

following evaluation by an international panel of independent experts
**WAS SUCCESSFUL IN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PROCESS*
AS AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT PROPOSAL**

This proposal is recommended for funding by other sources since Horizon 2020 resources
available for this specific Call were already allocated following a competitive ranking.

* This means passing all stringent Horizon 2020 assessment thresholds for the 3 award criteria
(excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of implementation) required to receive funding from the EU budget Horizon 2020.

Corina Crețu,
Commissioner for
Regional Policy

Carlos Moedas,
Commissioner for Research,
Science and Innovation

Brussels, 11 March 2014



- For all types of **innovative SMEs** (EU-28 + H2020 AC) showing a strong ambition to develop, grow and internationalise
- **Single company** support possible
- From idea to market through **three phases of continuous support**
- **No obligation** for applicants to sequentially cover all three phases
- **70% funding** (as a general rule)
- **Mature ideas** with a clear **European dimension**
- **Four cut-offs every year for both phases**

2015 Intermediary Call Deadlines or "Cut-Off" Dates	
Phase 1	Phase 2
18/03/2015	18/03/2015
17/06/2015	17/06/2015
17/09/2015	17/09/2015
25/11/2015	25/11/2015

The SME Instrument : Business Innovation Support from Mature Idea to Market



1. Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the objectives; Credibility of the proposed approach;
- Soundness of the concept, including trans-disciplinary considerations;
- Extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches).

2. Impact

- Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge;
- Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets, by delivering such innovations to the markets;
- Any other environmental and socially important impacts;
- Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project,.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources;
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, risk and innovation mgnt.

Thresholds

Phase 1: Threshold for each individual criteria = 4 out of 5. **Overall quality threshold = 13.**

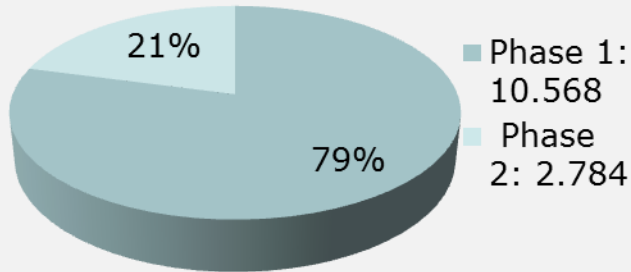
Phase 2: Threshold for criterion Impact= 4. **Overall threshold = 12.**

Impact evaluated first, then Excellence and Implementation.

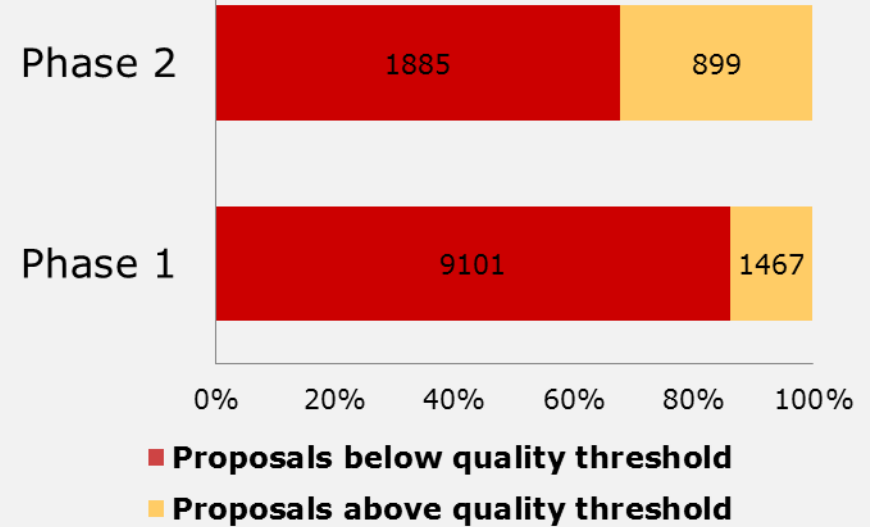
SME instrument KEY FIGURES



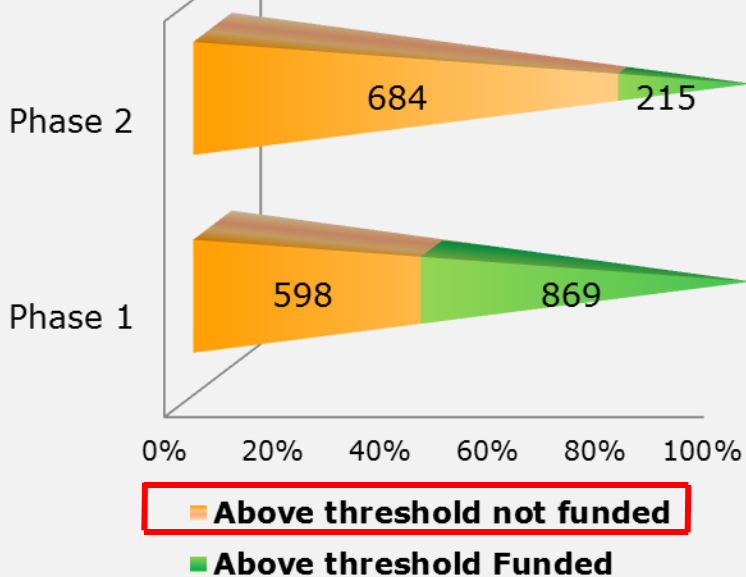
Proposals submitted



Competitive Evaluation



The 'seal' population

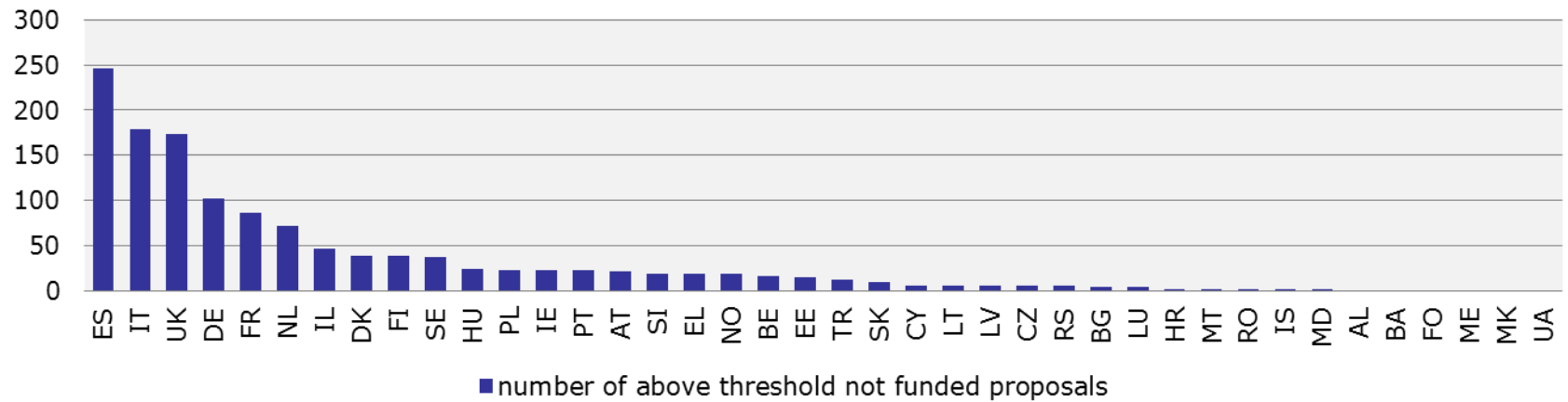


13,352 proposals submitted
1,084 proposals funded
61,6 M€ EU contribution allocated

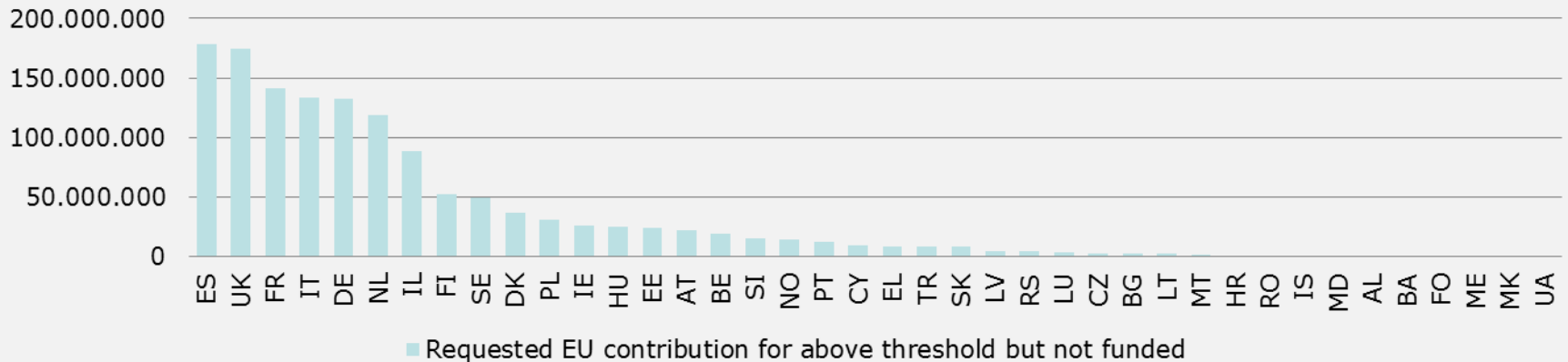
Between 41% and 76% of proposals above threshold NOT funded out of the all above threshold



number of above threshold not funded proposals



Requested EU contribution for above threshold but not funded



SEAL OF EXCELLENCE: KEY TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

For SMEs:

> **SECOND CHANCE** but now starting phase: *be patient and not expect automatism!*

For Regions/Member States (or any other funding body)

> **EXCELLENT PROJECTS**, NOT LEFT-OVERS from Horizon 2020

> **GREAT OPPORTUNITY** to exploit H2020's complete evaluation system: leading to GAIN TIME, use RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY IN A PERIOD OF SCARCE RESOURCES and INCREASE R&I PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT at local level

> **KEEP THE PROCESS AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE: AVOID RE-EVALUATING QUALITY**

> **THE SME INSTRUMENT IS AT ITS 2ND YEAR... STILL LEARNING CURVE FOR SOME MS**

> **THE COMMISSION SERVICES WILL SUPPORT YOU, ALSO TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH ESIF AND NATIONAL/EU RULES**

The Community of Practice

Purpose: exchanges of know-how on the best ways to implement the 'seal of excellence' approach through ESIF (ensuring conformity with Cohesion Policy rules, state aid thresholds and the relevant Smart Specialisation priorities) or other sources

Membership: National or Regional authorities that have a funding power for research and innovation actions. It is also open to other Funding Agencies for Innovating SMEs (including private banks and investors) committing to a swift implementation

If your country/region(s) is interested to be part of this Community of Practice studying best ways to implement funding schemes (e.g. selection mechanisms) that could support SME instrument type of high-quality projects through ESIF, **and committing to have these schemes swiftly in place?**

Send to : RTD-SEAL-OF-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu

Currently: 17 countries (at national or regional level) have expressed an interest

1st Meeting (by invitation only) 13/10 pm : 28 participants from 13 M/regions participating
Countries represented: 13 = **CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HU, IT, SE, SK, UK, FR, DE, PL**

> Mapping: some countries and regions already recognising the value of Horizon2020 evaluation and having funding schemes with their own national/regional resources



Q1: Is your country/ region(s) already supporting funding schemes specifically dedicated to this type of projects (Horizon 2020 above threshold-not funded?). IF YES, what is the source of the funding provided (which of the ESI Funds or own funds)?

- **6 countries** have already applied or are currently elaborating such schemes financed mainly by own funds [**CZ, HU, CY, ES, SE, and IT** (the region of Lombardy)].
- **5 countries** plus **2 Italian regions** do not have such funding schemes [**BE, UK, LT, LV, EE** and **IT** (the regions of Abruzzo and Umbria)].
- **2 countries** replied that they will have such schemes in the programming period 2014-2020 [**EL, SK**].
- **1 country**, will provide data at a later stage [**FI**].



Q2: Is your country/ region(s) intending to use ESIF for this type of schemes in the future (SME instrument type of projects, but possibly also other types of projects, such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships, European Research Council "proof of concept" projects, Teaming, ERA Chair or twinning types of projects etc.?

- **10 countries** replied positively [EL, HU, CY, LT, CZ, SK, LV, EE, ES and IT with 6 Italian regions ready to engage for the SME instrument and in particular Lombardy, Abruzzo and Umbria].
- **Belgium** replied positively for Wallonia, but not for Flanders & Brussels Capital. However, for the negative answers received a pre-condition was mentioned, namely that 'individual projects can be supported when they meet the objectives of the respective OPs and RIS3' which is in fact a pre-condition common for all.
- No current intention from **the UK** at central level.
- **1 country**, will provide data at a later stage [FI].



Q3: Would your country/region be interested to be part of a Community of Practice studying best ways to implement funding schemes (e.g. selection mechanisms to ensure conformity with Cohesion Policy rules, state aid thresholds and conformity with the relevant Smart Specialisation priorities) that could support SME instrument type of high-quality projects through ESIF, by committing to have them swiftly in place?

Almost all countries replied positively:

- **Yes** [*IT, EL, HU, CY, LT, CZ, SK, LV* , *ES and BE (Wallonia & Brussels Capital)*];
- **To be confirmed for:**
 - *UK, given that it is up to the Managing Authorities to decide upon their participation;*
 - *EE, not ready yet to answer with a 'yes' or a 'no' but interested in the outcome of the discussions and willing to provide input. EE is registered for the 1st CoP;*
 - *FI, will reply at a later stage.*
- **No**, from *Flanders (BE)*.



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Synergies with Structural funds

SEAL OF EXCELLENCE WEBSITE



Seal of Excellence

In a period of scarce resources, the impact of our investments in Research and Innovation needs to be maximised: creating synergies between Horizon 2020 and other funding sources (such as, but not exclusively, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)) is a way to achieve it.

This was also a clear mandate from President Juncker to Commissioners Moedas and Crețu.

«We fully support the 'Seal of Excellence' as an important first step in a longer term process of building synergies between Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds. It will help innovative companies to access and enhance the knowledge economy in their regions, contributing therefore to the implementation of smart specialisation strategies»

Seal of Excellence



What it is

Who can benefit

How to use it

Highlights

12 October 2015

Seal of Excellence



This quality label is awarded to project proposals submitted for funding under **Horizon 2020**, which succeeded in passing all of the stringent selection and award criteria but could not be funded under the available Call budget. The 'Seal' identifies project proposals which merit funding from alternative sources **public or private, national, regional, European or international**.

[Know more](#)

Why?

Not all the good proposals get funded in Horizon2020. The SEAL will benefit:

- **SMEs:** get a 2nd chance to get funding
- **Regions:** identify and support high quality proposals with a clear territorial impact

[Know more](#)

How?

The action concerns, for this initial 'pilot' phase, only proposals applying for the SME instrument and in particular all those SME instrument proposals evaluated above the quality threshold.

[Know more](#)

9 October 2015

Commissioner Moedas to announce the 'Seal of Excellence' initiative

The Commissioner will announce, jointly with Commissioner Crețu, the launch of the 'Seal of Excellence' for proposals under the 'SME Instrument', at the opening session of the 13th edition of the OPEN DAYS - European Week of Regions and Cities.

Commissioner Moedas will also announce the establishment of a 'Knowledge Exchange Platform' (KEP), jointly set by DG Research and Innovation and the Committee of the Regions. The objectives of the KEP are to set up learning mechanism for regions and cities on research and innovation activities, valorise new knowledge created through Horizon 2020 projects and maximise synergies between Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Social Corner

Tweets

- Alicia O'Rourke** @aor_4
Interested in the Seal of Excellence? Check out Q&A europa.eu/1JQ49XU #sealofexcellence #h2020 #EUOpenDays pic.twitter.com/8A26knDRJm 2h
- F. Hacque-Cosson** @FHacque
#EUFunds synergies up thx to New #SealOfExcellence btw #H2020 #ESIF @CorinaCrețuEU @Moedas ow.ly/TktzE Pilot: phase #H2020SME 3h
- Annamaria Zonno** @ZonnoA
#sealofexcellence: 100 proposals submitted to H 2020 SMEs Instrument funded with national funds 3h
- Karin Aase** @IKarinAase
#sealofexcellence in a Swedish context: ec.europa.eu/easme/en/news/... #EUOpenDays @H2020SME @vinnovase 4h
- Annamaria Zonno** @ZonnoA
#sealofexcellence presented at Open Days: funding innovative SMEs for competitive territories 4h

More tweets Tweet about this topic

Why a 'Seal of Excellence' ?

Every year, thousands of organisations in Europe apply to the Horizon 2020 Programme investing precious resources and time. The European Commission runs one of the most complete evaluation systems in the world, using international independent experts. The evaluation screens against three defined criteria (excellence, impact and quality & efficiency of implementation) and identifies those proposals not mature enough to receive funding (below quality threshold) and those that are considered as meriting funding (above threshold). Only some of the above threshold proposals receive funding depending on the available Horizon 2020 budget.

The 'Seal of Excellence' certificate will be awarded to the applicants of above threshold not funded proposals: a holder of the certificate can then approach alternative funding sources (regional, national, private or public) and present the certificate as a label of a high-quality project proposal. Thanks to the 'Seal', high quality proposals from **innovative Small and Medium Enterprises** will have additional chances to be funded. The precious time and effort SMEs invested in the proposal and idea development will thus not be wasted.

The 'Seal of Excellence' offers at the same time a unique opportunity for **regions and Member States** (and any other interested actor) to fully exploit the high-quality Horizon 2020 evaluation process: to easily identify and possibly support high-impact proposals coming from promising innovative companies, with an ambition to grow and compete internationally.

Links and documents

- **Guide for authorities on synergies between ESIF and Horizon2020 and other EU programmes:**
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/other/index.html>
- **Horizon 2020 regulations & rules for participation,**
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html
- **Evaluation procedure of the SME Instrument**
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/sme_participation.html
- MORE INFO: seal-of-excellence@ec.europa.eu
- **SEAL OF EXCELLENCE WEBSITE:** <http://ec.europa.eu/research/regions/>



Thank you for your attention!

Magda.De-Carli@ec.europa.eu

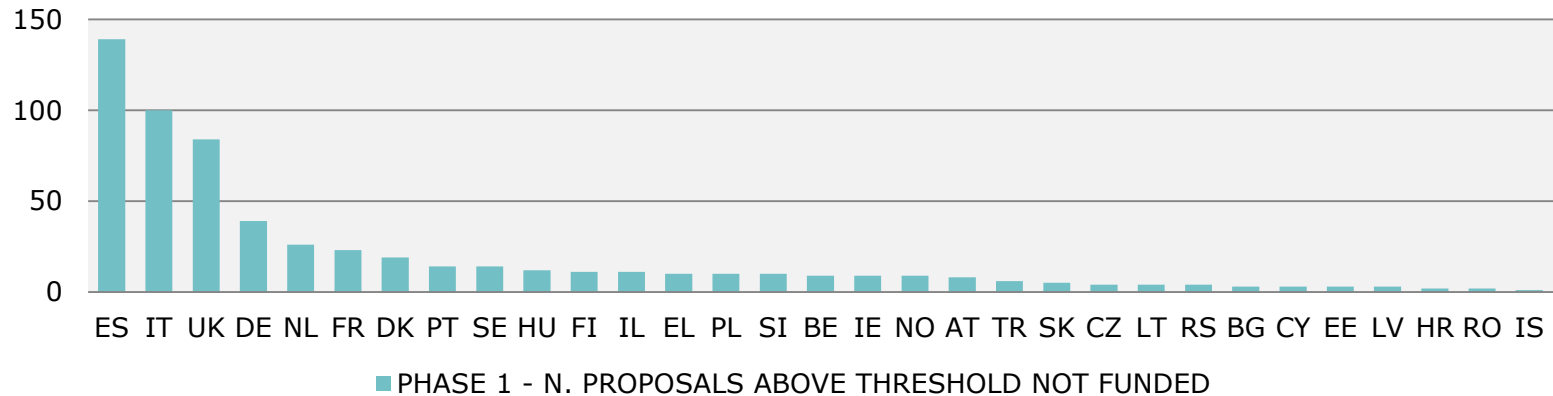
Credits to Mersia PANAGIOTAKOU

DG Research & Innovation

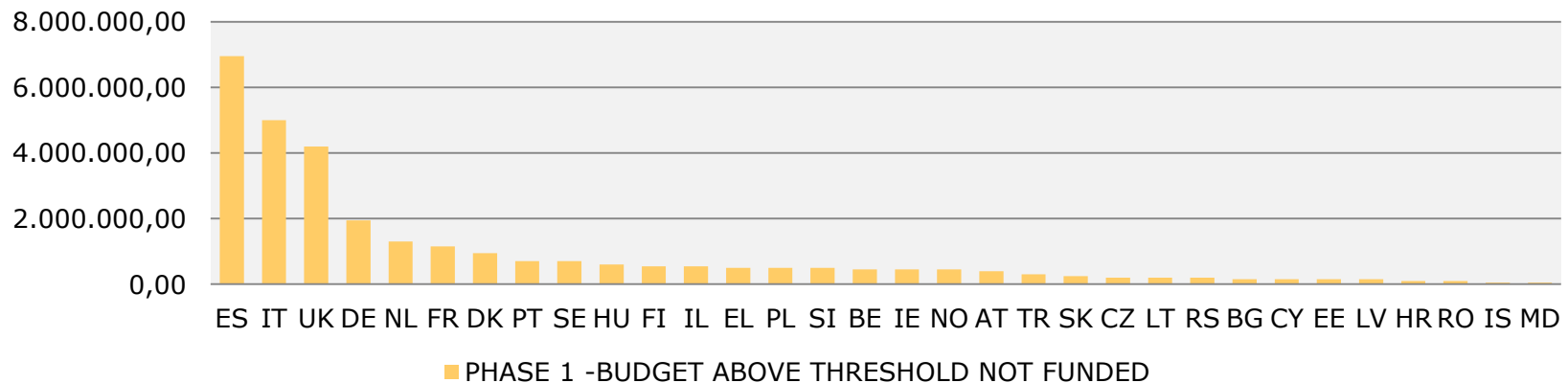
HORIZON 2020

The Horizon 2020 logo, featuring the word "HORIZON" in large white capital letters, with a globe of the Earth in the center of the letter "O". The word "2020" follows in the same style. The background is a blue gradient with light rays emanating from behind the globe.

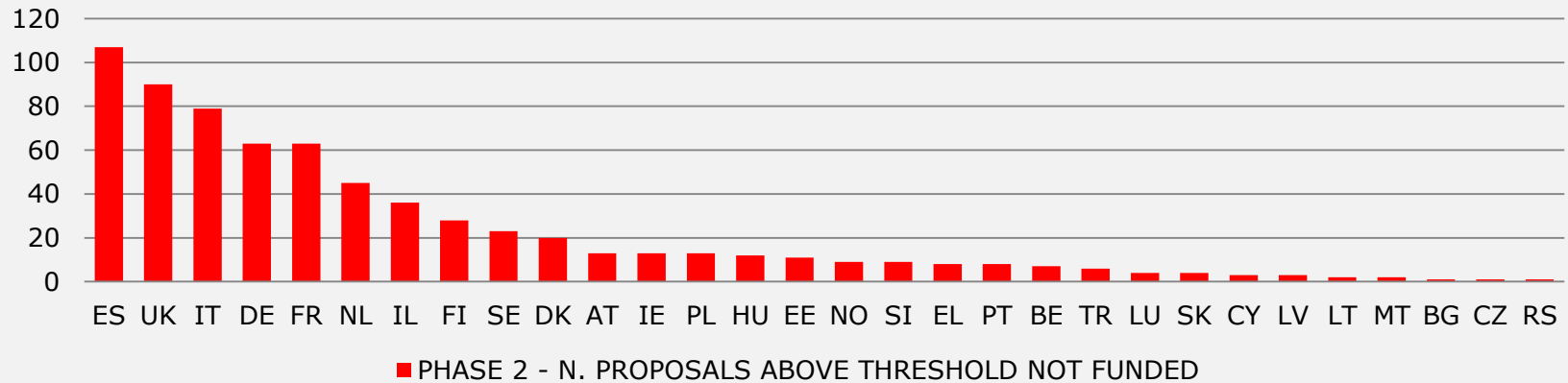
PHASE 1 - N. PROPOSALS ABOVE THRESHOLD NOT FUNDED



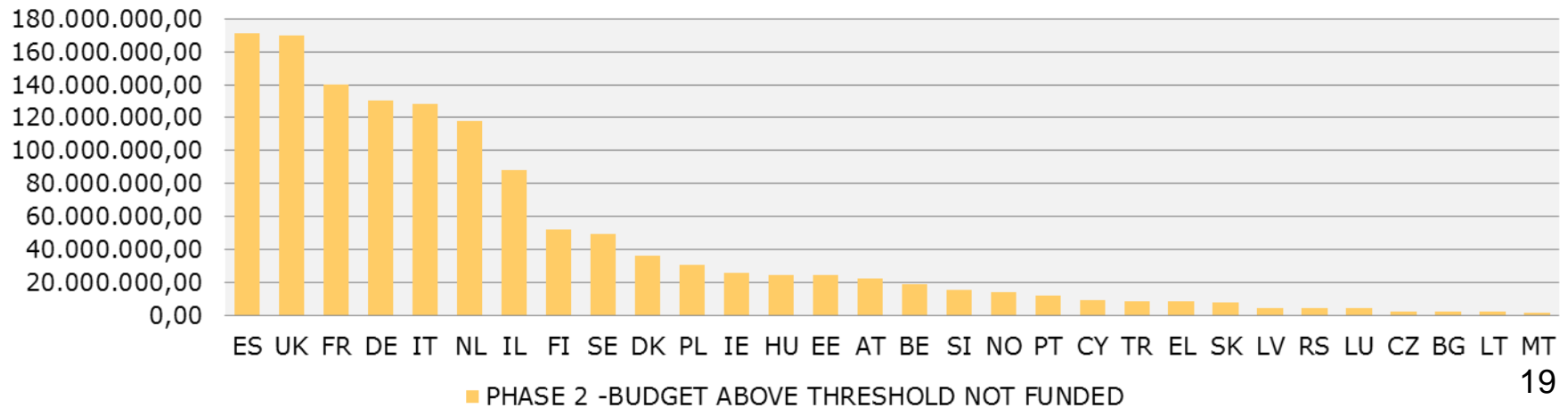
PHASE 1 -BUDGET ABOVE THRESHOLD NOT FUNDED



PHASE 2 - N. PROPOSALS ABOVE THRESHOLD NOT FUNDED



PHASE 2 -BUDGET ABOVE THRESHOLD NOT FUNDED





The SME instrument: The scoring

Interpretation of the scores

- 0** — The **proposal fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1 — Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 — Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 — Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4 — Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5 — Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Thresholds

Phase 1: Threshold for individual criteria = 4.

Overall threshold (for sum of three individual scores) = 13.

Phase 2: Threshold for criterion Impact= 4.

Overall threshold (for sum of three individual scores)=12.

Impact evaluated first, then Excellence and Implementation.

		Total submitted	Above threshold	% of submitted	Funded	Funded as % of above threshold	Above threshold not funded	above threshold - not funded % above threshold	Success rate
Phase 1	18/06/2014	2662	317	12%	155	49%	162	51%	6%
Phase 1	24/09/2014	1944	237	12%	178	75%	59	25%	9%
Phase 1	17/12/2014	2363	320	14%	259	81%	61	19%	11%
Phase 1	18/03/2015	1569	251	16%	149	59%	102	41%	9%
Phase 1	17/06/2015	2030	342	17%	128	37%	214	63%	6%
	Overall Phase 1	10568	1467	14%	869	60%	598	41%	8%
Phase 2	9/10/2014	580	132	23%	60	45%	72	55%	10%
Phase 2	17/12/2014	629	180	29%	74	41%	106	59%	12%
Phase 2	18/03/2015	614	230	37%	37	16%	193	84%	6%
Phase 2	17/06/2015	961	357	37%	44	12%	313	88%	5%
	Overall Phase 2	2784	899	31%	215	29%	684	76%	8%
	Total	13353	2366	29%	1084	28%	1282	54%	8%

KEY FIGURES	Horizon 2020 (until call deadline 1/02/2015)*	SME instrument Phase 1 (until call deadline 15/06/2015)	SME instrument Phase 2 (until call deadline 15/06/2015)
Total number of submitted proposal	35.786	10.568	2.784
Total number of above threshold proposals	15.377 =43% of all submitted	1.467 =14% of all submitted	899
Total number of funded proposals	4.543 =30% of all above threshold = 13% of all submitted	869 = 60% of all above threshold = 8% of all submitted	215 == 29% of all above threshold =8% of all submitted
Total number of above threshold/not funded proposals	10.834 = 70% of all above threshold	598 = 41% of all above threshold	684 = 76% of all above threshold