

Simplification in Horizon Europe

Tour de capitales

Isabel Vergara

European Commission, DG RTD

Common Implementation Centre

Lisbon, 15 July 2026

Simplification in Horizon Europe

- Simplification is a **key principle** for this Commission's mandate
- We are reviewing processes to simplify final years of Horizon Europe and **piloting new approaches** for the next MFF, aiming for
 - Shorter **proposals**
 - Faster **selection process**; exploring novel approaches like partial randomisation and distributed peer review
 - Fewer **reporting requirements** (e.g. on policy and impact indicators)
 - Client-centric approach to make EU funding more accessible and user-friendly, including '**EU Funding & Me**' mobile application



Novelties in WP 2026-2027

- Streamlined work programme, simpler and more accessible, with a **33% reduction in length**, fewer and more concise topics
- New part "Horizontal Activities" groups horizontal calls
- €50 million for "**Choose Europe for Science**" to improve long-term fellowships and postdoctoral career stability
- Encourages **international cooperation**, but also imposes restrictions on participation in certain topics, including those related to 5G, 6G, and communication network equipment
- Simplified proposal forms, with standard **page limits reduced by 5 pages**



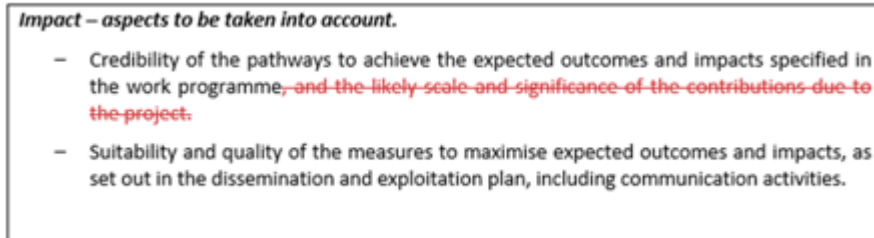
Updated criterion RIA, IA, CSA, COFUND

Criterion 2, Impact, has been updated. The assessment of the "**likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project**" is no longer part of the evaluation of impact.

The updated impact criterion reads:

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme.
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Excellence and implementation criteria are unchanged.



Updates Application form part B - Impact

Impact criterion - Section 2.1

- No longer need to explain the **general** scientific, economic and societal expected **impacts** as they are already taken into account in the topic expected impact.
- The “**Project’s pathways towards impact**” subsection was simplified and it is no longer needed to indicate the scale and significance of project contributions to the expected outcomes and impacts. We now ask only to “Provide quantified estimates when possible and relevant”

~~★ The outcomes and impacts of your project may:~~

- ~~• Scientific, e.g. contributing to specific scientific advances, across and within disciplines, creating new knowledge, reinforcing scientific equipment and instruments, computing systems (i.e. research infrastructures);~~
- ~~• Economic/technological, e.g. bringing new products, services, business processes to the market, increasing efficiency, decreasing costs, increasing profits, contributing to standards’ setting, etc.~~
- ~~• Societal, e.g. decreasing CO₂ emissions, decreasing avoidable mortality, improving policies and decision-making, raising consumer awareness.~~

~~Only include such outcomes and impacts where your project would make a significant and direct contribution. Avoid describing very tenuous links to wider impacts. However, include any potential negative environmental outcome or impact of the project including when expected results are brought at scale (such as at commercial level). Where relevant, explain how the potential harm can be managed.~~

~~(b) Give an indication of the scale and significance of the project’s contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts, should the project be successful. Provide quantified estimates where possible and meaningful.~~

~~(c) ‘Scale’ refers to how widespread the outcomes and impacts are likely to be. For example, in terms of the size of the target group, or the proportion of that group, that should benefit over time; ‘Significance’ refers to the importance, or value, of those benefits. For example, number of additional healthy life years; efficiency savings in energy supply.~~

~~★ Explain your baselines, benchmarks and assumptions used for those estimates. Wherever possible, quantify your estimation of the effects that you expect from your project. Explain assumptions that you make, referring for example to any relevant studies or statistics. Where appropriate, try to use only one methodology for calculating your estimates; not different methodologies for each partner, region or country (the extrapolation should preferably be prepared by one partner).~~

~~★ Your estimate must relate to this project only – the effect of other initiatives should not be taken into account.~~



Updates Application form part B - Implementation

Implementation criterion - Section 3.1

- **Table 3.1h** “Purchase costs” has been simplified and only major equipment costs need to be included in the proposal.
- **Tables 3.1i** “Other costs categories”, and **table 3.1j** “In kind contributions” no need to include them in the proposal.

⇒ *For actual costs grants, these tables will be required during GAP as part of the Description of Action of retained for funding proposals.*

⇒ *For lump sums, only table 3.1j is required in the grant agreement.*

Table 3.1h: ‘Purchase costs’ items (travel-and-subsistence, major equipment costs and other goods, works and services)

Please give details of the need for equipment costs, complete the table below for each participant if the purchase costs (i.e. the sum of the costs for ‘travel-and-subsistence’, ‘equipment’, and ‘other goods, works and services’) exceeds 15% of the personnel costs for that participant (according to the budget table in proposal part A). The record must list cost items in order of costs and starting with the largest cost item, up to the level that the remaining costs are below 15% of personnel costs.

Participant Number/Short Name		
	Cost (€)	Justification
Travel-and-subsistence		
Equipment		
Other goods, works and services		
Remaining purchase costs (<15% of pers. costs)		
Total		

Table 3.1i: ‘Other costs categories’ items (e.g. internally invoiced goods and services)

Please complete the table below for each participant that would like to declare costs under other costs categories (e.g. internally invoiced goods and services), irrespective of the percentage of personnel costs.

Participant Number/Short Name		
	Cost (€)	Justification
Internally-invoiced goods and services		

Table 3.1j: ‘In-kind contributions’ provided by third parties

Please complete the table below for each participant that will make use of in-kind contributions (non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties). In-kind contributions provided by third parties free of charge are declared by the participants as eligible direct costs in the corresponding cost category (e.g. personnel costs or purchase costs for equipment).

Participant Number/Short Name			
Third-party name	Category	Cost (€)	Justification
	Select between		
	Seconded personnel		
	Travel-and-subsistence		
	Equipment		
	Other goods, works and services		
	Internally-invoiced goods and services		

#5QUA-LIT-QL5# #5WRK-PLA-WP5#



Reduction in page limits

Following the simplification of sections 2 and 3, page limits for application form part B are reduced by 5 pages. The new standard page limits are

- 40 pages for actual costs RIA and IA
- 45 pages for lump sum RIA and IA
- 25 pages for actual costs CSA
- 28 pages for lump sum CSA
- 65 pages for HORIZON-COFUND
- 40 pages for PCP
- 40 pages for PPI

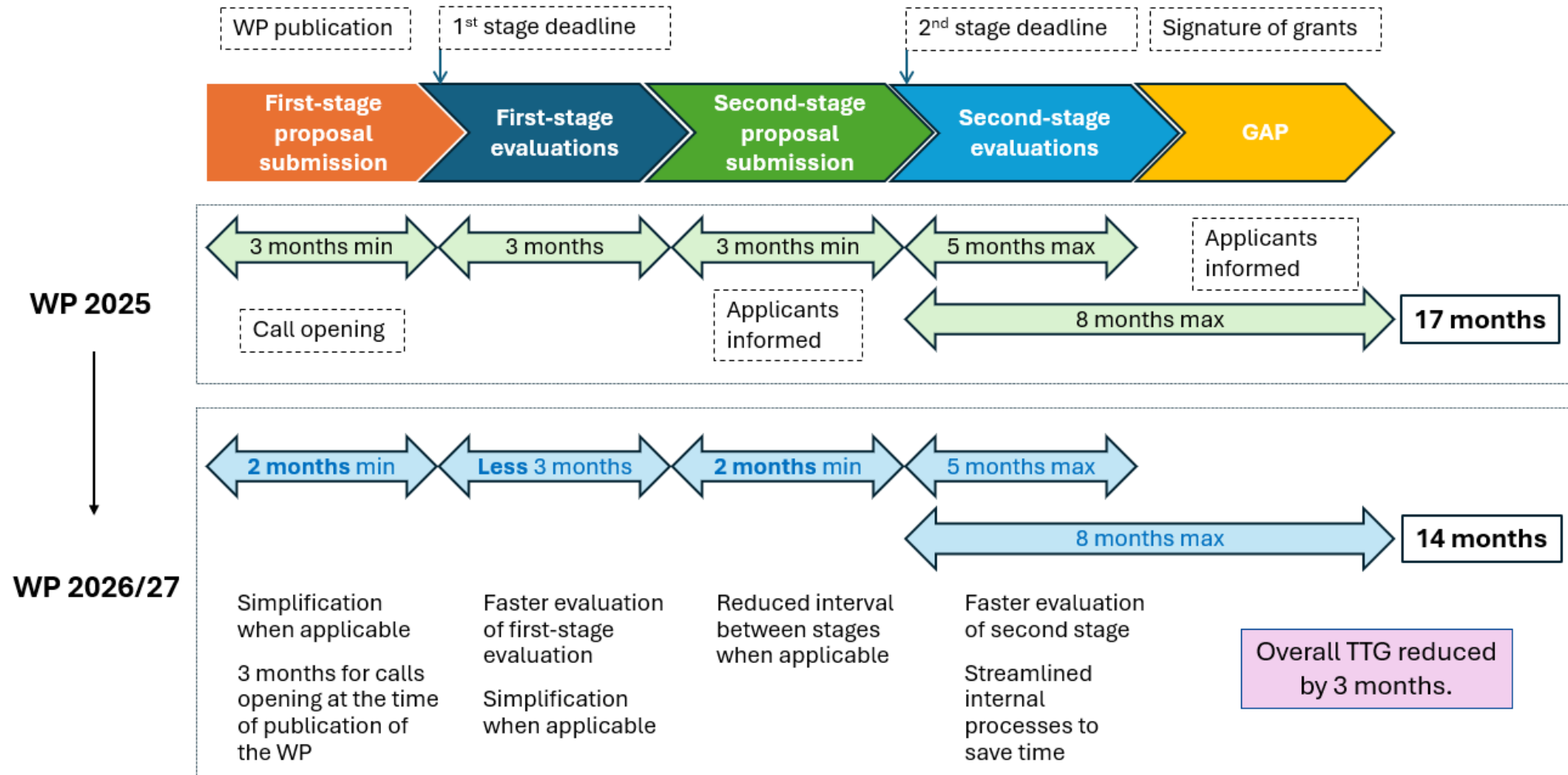
Specific calls might use different page limits when specifically mentioned in the work programme and call documents.

!! These changes apply only to calls from Work Programme 2026-2027.

Calls from Work Programme 2025 and launched in 2026 will use the 2025 templates and page limits.



Reduction of overall TTG in two-stage calls



AI in proposals submission and evaluation of Horizon Europe

Use of generative AI for preparation of proposals

- Applicants **may use** generative AI tools when preparing proposals
- A disclaimer has been included in the proposal application forms ([Part B](#)) where applicants are reminded:
 - to exercise **caution** and **careful consideration** while using generative AI tools;
 - **to review and validate** thoroughly any AI-generated content to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its **compliance** with intellectual property regulations;
 - that they **remain fully responsible** for the content of the proposal;
 - to be **transparent** in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised.
- The use of generative AI tools in drafting proposals cannot be considered by expert evaluators as a reason to penalise a proposal.



Use of generative AI for evaluation of proposals

- The Code of Conduct included in the expert model contract ([link](#)) has been updated to clarify boundary conditions for AI use; It states that:
 - “AI tools may be used only for strictly **ancillary purposes**, under their full responsibility, and that any such use **must be documented** and made available to the contracting authority upon request”
 - Evaluators are responsible for keeping the **confidentiality** of the proposal information and ensuring its adequate protection and for adopting appropriate measures to ensure the protection of **personal data**.
- **Any use** of gen AI tools by the expert evaluators **remains their own responsibility and must respect legal obligations**.
- The **HE Standard briefing slides for experts** ([link](#)) are continuously updated to inform evaluators on this evolving topic. They are informed of:
 - the risk of breaching confidentiality obligations, which may be subject to the measures outlined in their contract.
 - they should avoid over-reliance on AI tools and acknowledge its potential limitations (hallucinations and biases).



Novelties on Lump Sum Funding

Lump sums – why?

Simpler and fewer errors

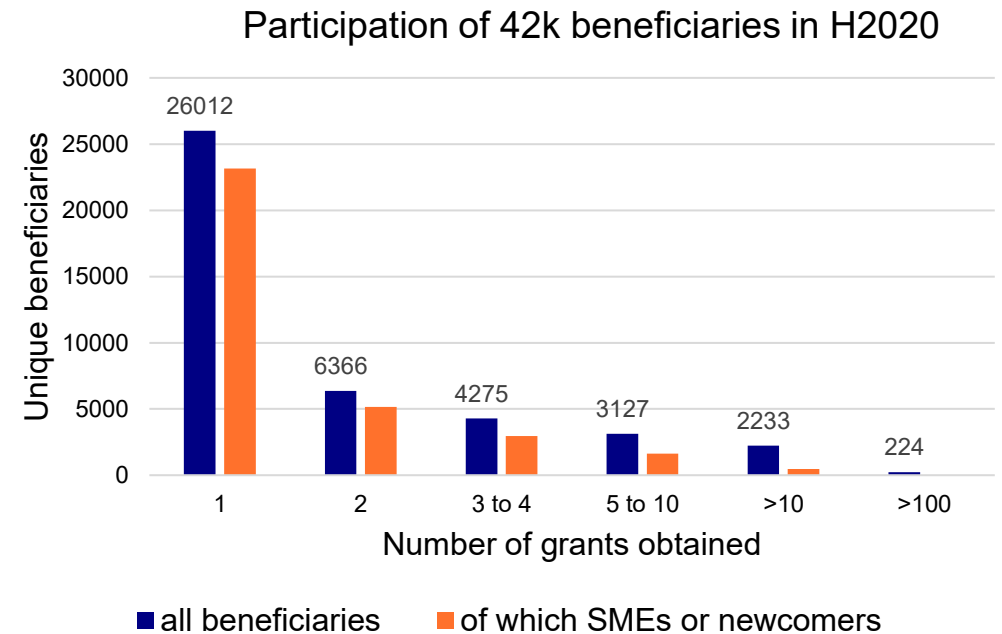
- No actual costs, no financial reporting
- Major source of complexity and errors removed

Easier access

- Lump sums require no previous experience
- Actual costs remain difficult and error-prone, especially for newcomers and SMEs
- Few organisations have substantial experience with actual costs

More focus on content

- By design: proper and complete work triggers lump sum payment



Lump sums – how?

Most processes and forms unchanged

- Standard application form
- Standard grant preparation (no negotiation principle)
- Standard processes for amendments / deviations
- Standard reporting template

No more actual costs, simpler reimbursement

- Detailed budget table to define and justify lump sum (assessed during evaluation)
- No reporting on costs and resources, no financial audits
- Payment against completed work packages
- No new, but fewer obligations in lump sum grant agreement



Lump sum statistics

Lump sum proposals, grants, payments (04/2026)

	Eligible proposals		Signed grants		Completed grants	
	Number of proposals	Requested EU contribution	Number of signed grants	Max EU grant amount awarded	Number of completed grants	% paid at final payment
H2020	1380	€1,431,204,185.00	525	€454,389,499.24	512	98.1%
HE	28323	€89,917,812,510.98	2822	€5,077,825,250.08	807	98.3%
Total	29703	€91,349,016,695.98	3347	€5,532,214,749.32	1319	98.2%

Lump sum share in work programmes

- Strong growth since 2021
- 50% share in 2026/2027
- Lump sums by default from 2028, exceptions possible (EC proposal)



Lump sum statistics

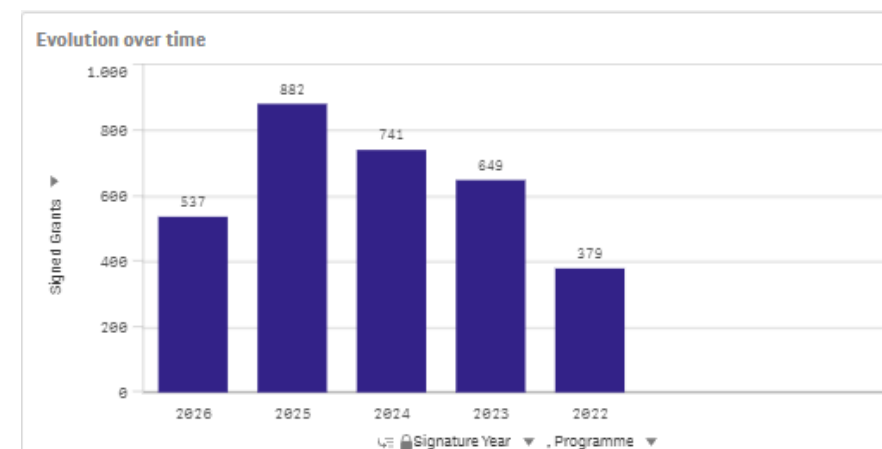
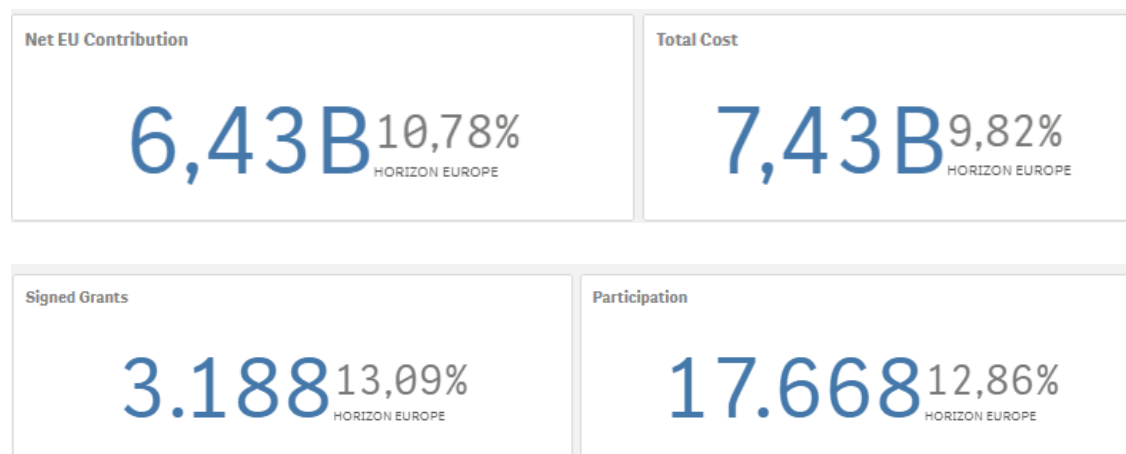
Lump sum statistics on the public Horizon Dashboard

- Filter: “H2020” and/or “Horizon Europe” + “Lump sums”



All dashboard functions available, e.g.

- Grants, funding, participants, countries, evolution*



* captured on 09/07/2026 / data refreshed on 16/06/2026



Lump sum cuts (evaluation)

Horizon Europe

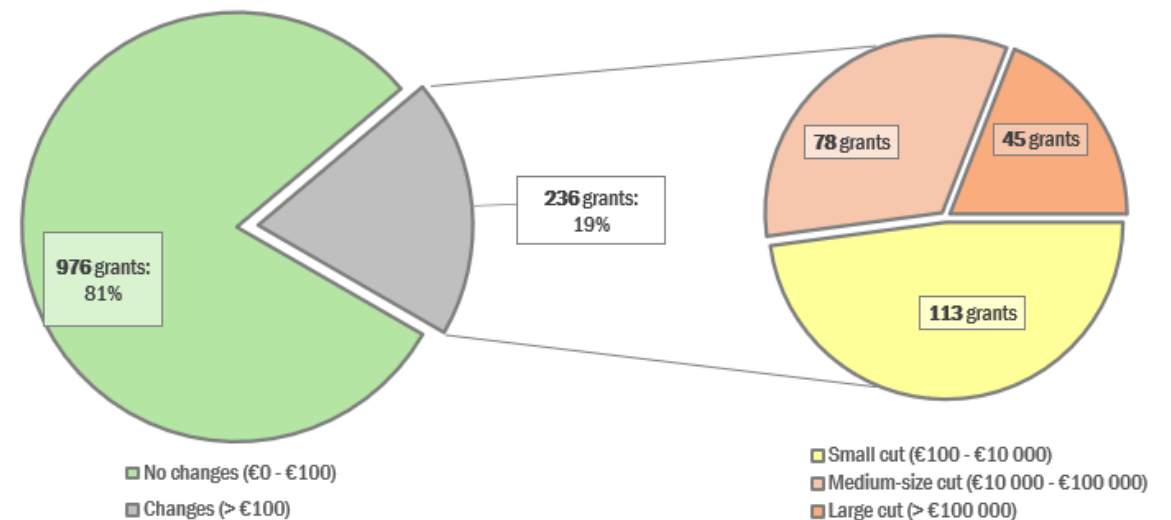
- Sample of 1 212 funded proposals analysed
- **19%** with cuts up to EUR 1 million
- **2.5%** average reduction (**0.5%** globally)

Reasons* for cuts (20 proposals analysed):

- **Cost estimates rejected**
 - Personnel costs – 8 cases
 - Purchase costs – 4 cases
 - Other direct costs – 1 case
 - Indirect costs – 1 case
- **Additional funding not justified** – 3 cases
- **Changes in the consortium** – 7 cases
- **Wrong funding rate used** – 2 cases

*More than one reason can apply to the same proposal.

Lump sum cuts following evaluation



Frequency of lump sum cuts following evaluation. The analysis is based on a sample of 1 212 HE grants that were signed by 19 February 2026. The sample was obtained by excluding ERC PoC, Financing Not Linked to Costs (FNLC) grants, and grants where organisations from Switzerland and the United Kingdom participated as Associated Partners during the period analysed.



Lump sum cuts (final payment)

Horizon 2020 + Horizon Europe

- Sample of 1 319 grants analysed
- **96%** grants paid in full; **98%** paid as declared
- **2%** grants with rejections (see below)
- **98.2%** global payment level

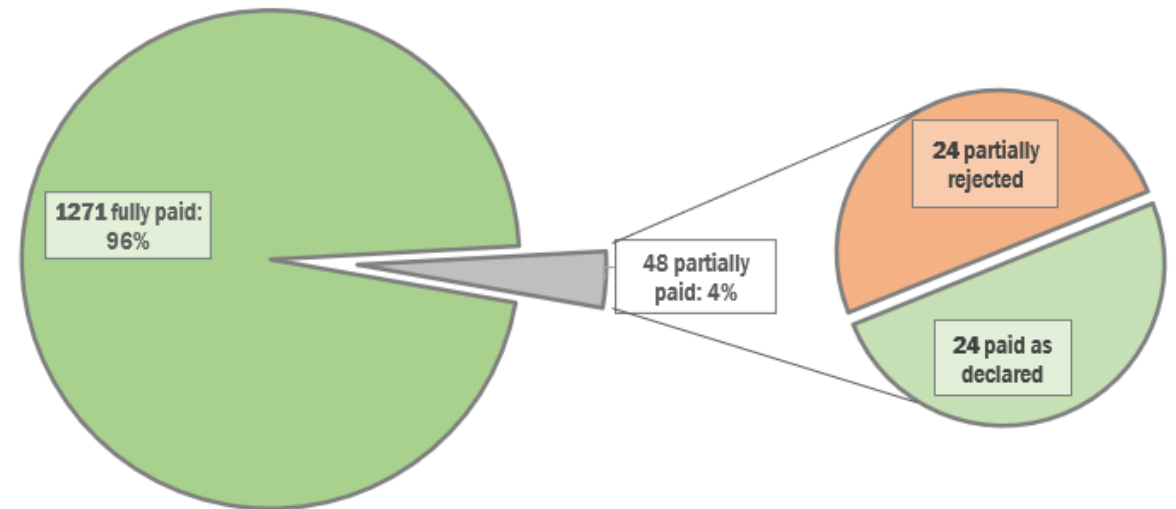
Contentious cases* (24 cases, 2%) due to:

- **Co-funding issues** (Shift2Rail) – 13 cases
- **Deviation from DoA** (e.g. incomplete work, events, dissemination and exploitation) – 13 cases
- **Other deviations** (e.g. related to subcontracting, FSTP, data management plan) – 3 cases

→ 3.6% average reduction

*More than one reason can apply to the same grant.

Lump sum cuts in final payments



Frequency of cuts in lump sum final payments. The sample analysed includes 1 319 lump sum grants that were closed by 1 April 2026 (512 grants under H2020 and 807 under HE).



Lump sum implementation - update

Lump sum budget table

- Integration in the online submission system is ongoing
 - Pilot in Cluster 5 started in 12/2025
 - Roll-out to all lump sum calls planned in 2026 (meanwhile, topics use online table or Excel tool, never both)
 - Guidance included in the form, same rules apply as for the Excel tool
 - Avoids double entry of data, issues with macros, compatibility, etc.

Corporate guidance on managing lump sum grants

- Updated in 2025 to further clarify specific aspects, e.g.
 - Requirements defining proper implementation / acceptance of work packages
 - Budget flexibility and grant amendments
 - Ex-post technical reviews



Lump sum budget table in SEP Part A

Menu

General Info

Declarations

Participants

Work packages

Budget calculation sheets

Depreciation costs

Lump sum breakdown

Person months overview

Ethics

Security

Order no.	Participant name	Role	Participant total costs	Total requested EU contribution
1	test test	Coordinator	0 €	0 €

Order no.	Participant name	Role	PIC
1	test test	Coordinator	949767935

Participant name	Work package number	Work package name	Work package total costs	Requested EU contribution
test test	WP1	-	0 €	0 €

Participant name

test test

Work package number

WP1

Work package name *

Comments

A. Direct personnel costs

A.1 Employees (or equivalent) (a1) *

0 €

Senior Scientists (or equivalent in the private sector) * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

Junior Scientists (or equivalent in the private sector) * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

Technical Personnel (or equivalent in the private sector) * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

Administrative Personnel (or equivalent in the private sector) * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

Others * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

A.2 Natural persons under direct contract (a2) *

0 €

Natural persons under direct contract * 0 person month x 0 € = 0 €

Lump sum budget table in SEP Part A

Menu

General Info

Declarations

Participants

Work packages

Budget calculation sheets

Depreciation costs

Lump sum breakdown

Person months overview

Ethics

Security

Proposal ID
SEP-211317930

Call: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05
MOBILITY

Type of action: HORIZON-CSA
HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions

Proposal acronym
dsadsad

Topic: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-13
Safety of renewable low and zero-carbon waterborne fuels in port areas: risk a...

Type of model grant agreement: HORIZON-AG-LS
HORIZON Lump Sum Grant

Lump sum breakdown

BENEFICIARIES \ WORK PACKAGES	WP1	Total	Percentage
test test	0	0	
Total	0	0	
Percentage			

Items per page: 10 Showing 1–1 of 1

Menu

General Info

Declarations

Participants

Work packages

Budget calculation sheets

Depreciation costs

Lump sum breakdown

Person months overview

Ethics

Security

Proposal ID
SEP-211317930

Call: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05
MOBILITY

Type of action: HORIZON-CSA
HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions

Proposal acronym
dsadsad

Topic: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-13
Safety of renewable low and zero-carbon waterborne fuels in port areas: risk a...

Type of model grant agreement: HORIZON-AG-LS
HORIZON Lump Sum Grant

Person months overview

BENEFICIARIES \ WORK PACKAGES	WP1	Total	Percentage
test test	0	0	
Total	0	0	
Percentage			

Items per page: 10 Showing 1–1 of 1



Ex-post technical reviews - process

Verify proper implementation of completed work packages

- Like in standard project reviews, external experts assess technical implementation
- Launched after payment, focus on one participant (like in ex post financial audits)

Analysis and consequences

- Reviewee submits (a subset of) supporting documents that prove proper implementation. NB: This documentation is needed for all grants
- Main question for the review: Has the work been completed in line with the grant agreement and as described in the project reports?
- Option to include interviews with staff and/or on-site visits
- For each work package concerned, the percentage completion is established
- If a work package was completed to a lower degree than paid, the difference is recovered



Ex-post technical reviews – first results

Horizon 2020

- Small sample completed, no findings

Horizon Europe

- Common Representative Sample 2024 completed, 1 finding
- Common Representative Sample 2026 coming soon

Initial conclusions and feedback from services

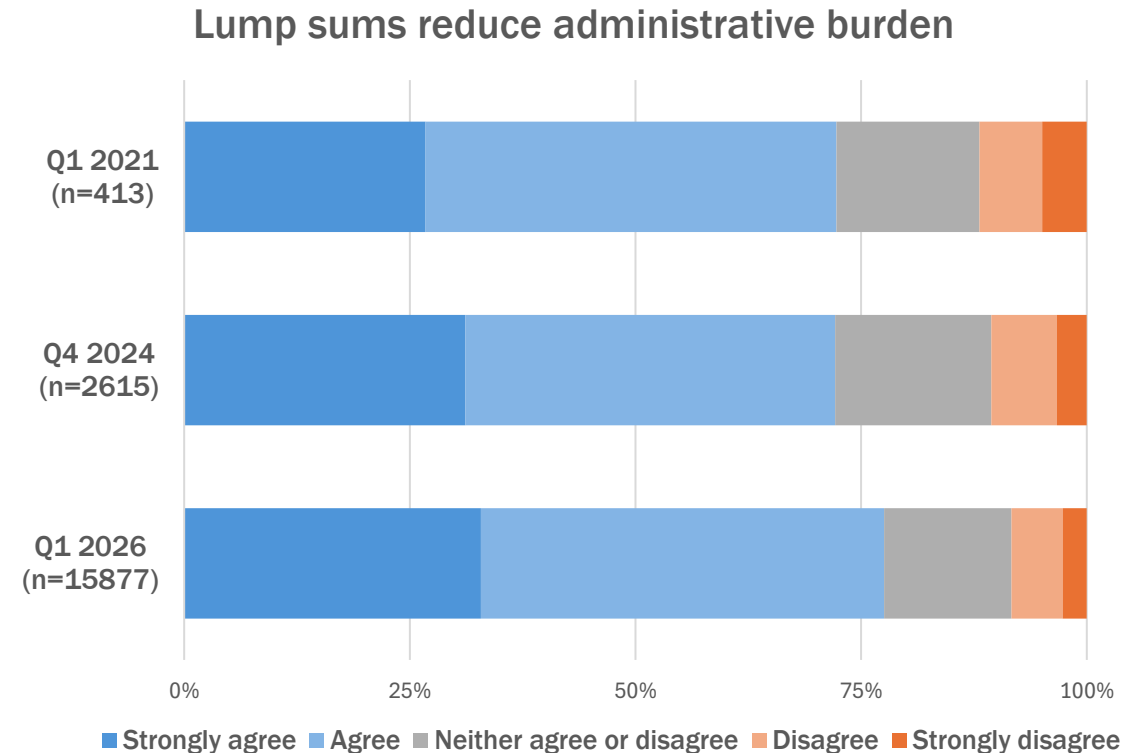
- Lump sums have the potential to lower the error rate
- Reviews went smoothly, incl. identifying and evaluating the work done
- Experience with big projects still limited – additional sample launched
- Some suggestions to improve IT support
- Lessons learned exercise to follow



Lump sum surveys 2021 - 2026

- Very **positive feedback**, with **upward trend** over time (2021 – 2026)
- In 2026, **78% agreed** that lump sums reduce burden
- **139k applicants** invited (main contacts in all Horizon lump sum proposals so far)
- **17.5k replies** (>12% response rate)
- More detailed analysis to follow
- **Previous results** available online

[Assessment of lump sum funding in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe - Publications Office of the EU](#)

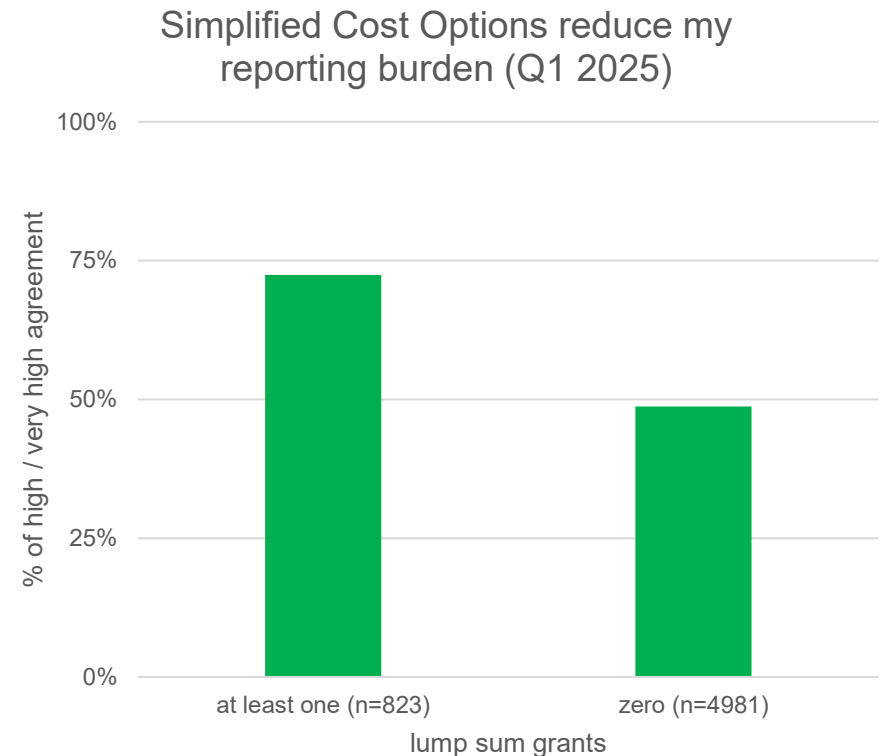


Lump sum surveys 2021 - 2026

- Survey included Horizon Europe participants **with and without lump sum grants**
- Participants **with lump sum grants** were very positive (**>72%**)
- Participants **without lump sum grants** were less positive (**≈ 50%**)

Conclusion:

- Many participants **start to see the benefits** of lump sums once they use them



Resources

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





Thank you!

HorizonEU

<http://ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe>



© European Union 2021

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.
Image credits: © ivector #235536634, #249868181, #251163013, #266009682, #273480523, #362422833, #241215668, #244690530, #245719946, #251163053, #252508849, 2020. Source: Stock.Adobe.com. Icons © Flaticon – all rights reserved.

