

# Simplification in Horizon Europe

*Tour de capitales*

Stéphane NDONG

European Commission, DG RTD

Common Implementation Centre

*Paris, 29 June 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 for RIA, IA, CSA and COFUND type of actions. The "**likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project**" is no longer part of the evaluation of impact.

The updated impact criterium 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

Where applicable, and excluding ERC, EIC and MSCA actions:

## 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 the subpoint b) asking a detailed indication of the scale and significance of project contributions was removed from the template. We now ask only to “Provide quantified estimates when possible and relevant”



# Updates Application form part B - Implementation

Where applicable, and excluding ERC and MSCA actions:

## Implementation criterion

- **Table 3.1h** “Purchase costs” has been simplified and it now only covers equipment costs.
- **Tables 3.1i** “Other costs categories”, and **table 3.1j** “In kind contributions” have been removed.

⇒ *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.*





# 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.

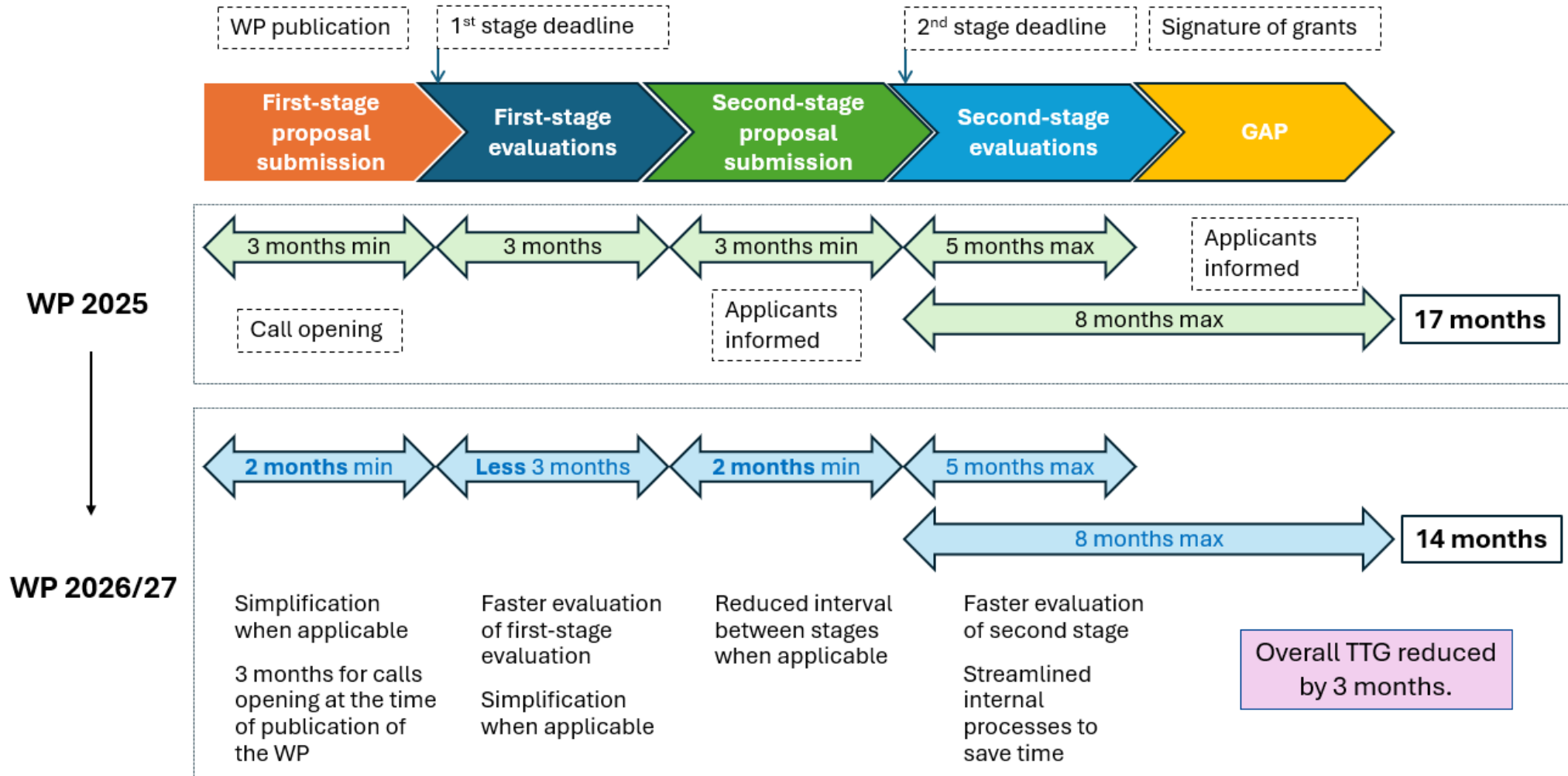
**!! These changes apply only to calls from Work Programme 2026-2027.**

**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
- Disclaimer 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

- **Any use** of gen AI tools by the expert evaluators **remains their own responsibility**
- The Code of Conduct ([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**.
- 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).



# Resources

## Implementing the Novelties

- **Horizon Implementation Day**: video recording of a dedicated session on the 2026-2027 novelties
- **General Annexes**: comprehensive legal and technical details for the new HE Work Programme
- **Standard briefing slides for HE experts** : up to date information on the evaluation process



# Use of Lump Sum in Horizon Europe

# Lump sums – why?

## Simpler and fewer errors

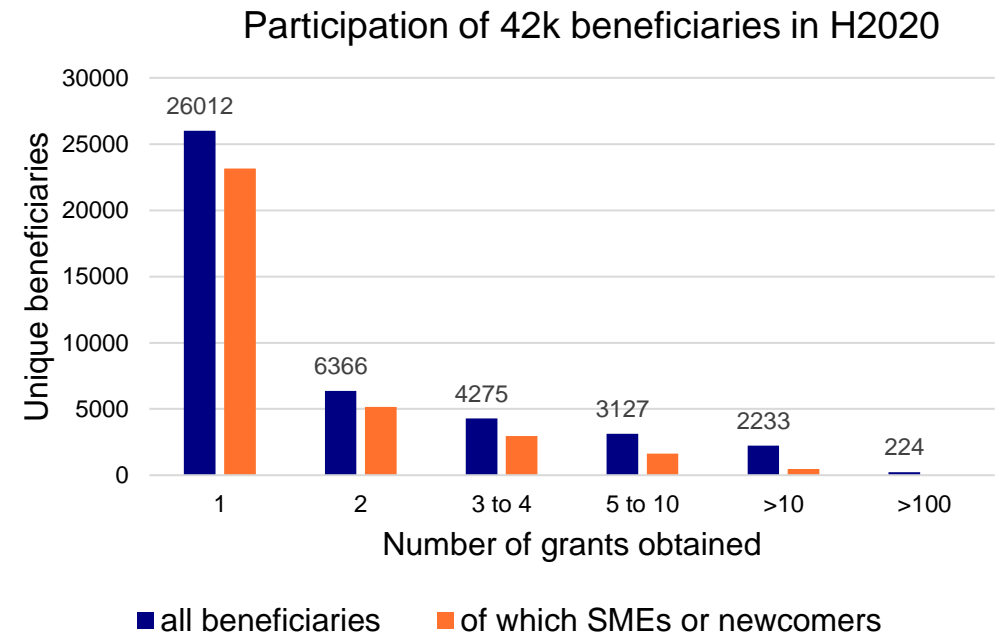
- No actual costs, no financial reporting
- Major source of complexity and errors removed

## 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
<b>H2020</b>	1380	€1,431,204,185.00	525	€454,389,499.24	512	98.1%
<b>HE</b>	28323	€89,917,812,510.98	2822	€5,077,825,250.08	807	98.3%
<b>Total</b>	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)



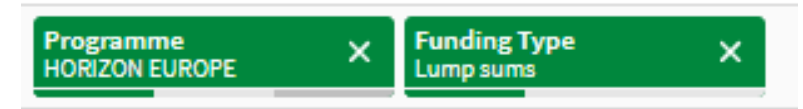
# Lump sum statistics

## Lump sum statistics on the public Horizon Dashboard

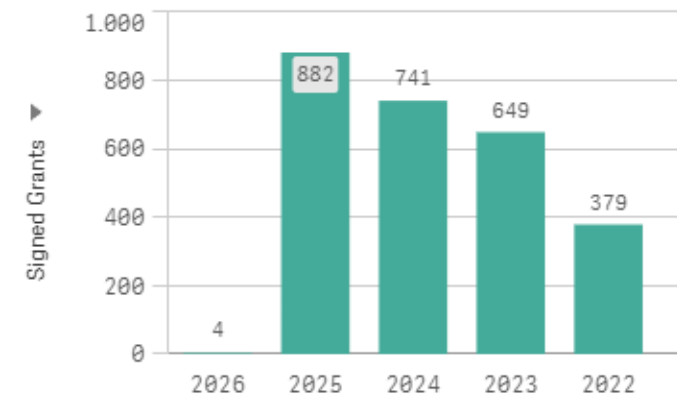
- Filter: “H2020” and/or “Horizon Europe” + “Lump sums”

## All dashboard functions available, e.g.

- Grants, funding, participants, countries, evolution\*



Evolution over time



\* captured on 13/04/2026 / data refreshed on 06/02/2026



# Lump sum cuts (evaluation)

Horizon Europe

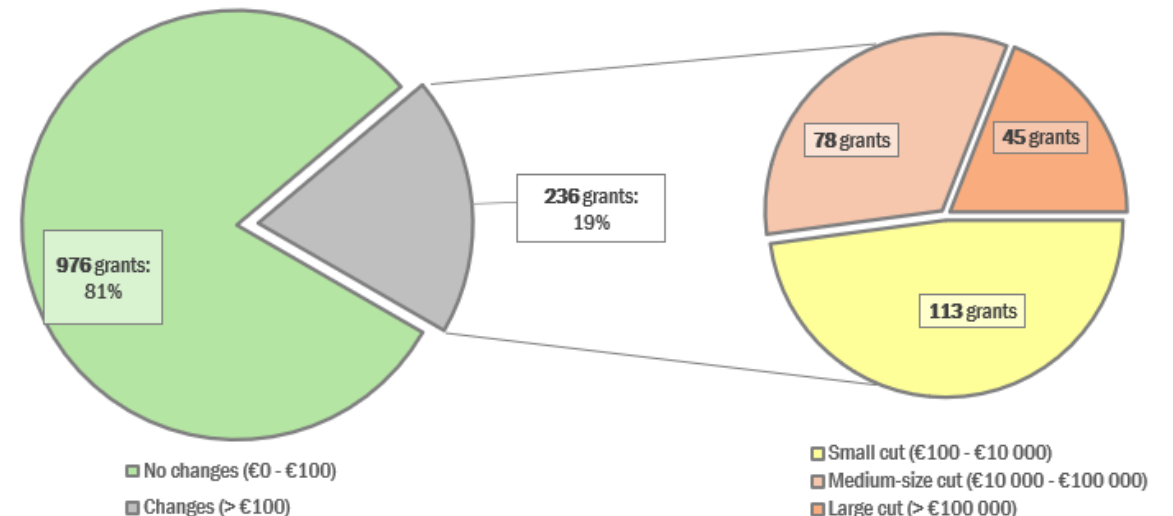
- Sample of 1 212 funded proposals analysed
- **19%** with cuts up to EUR 1 million
- **2.5%** average reduction (**0.5%** globally)

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

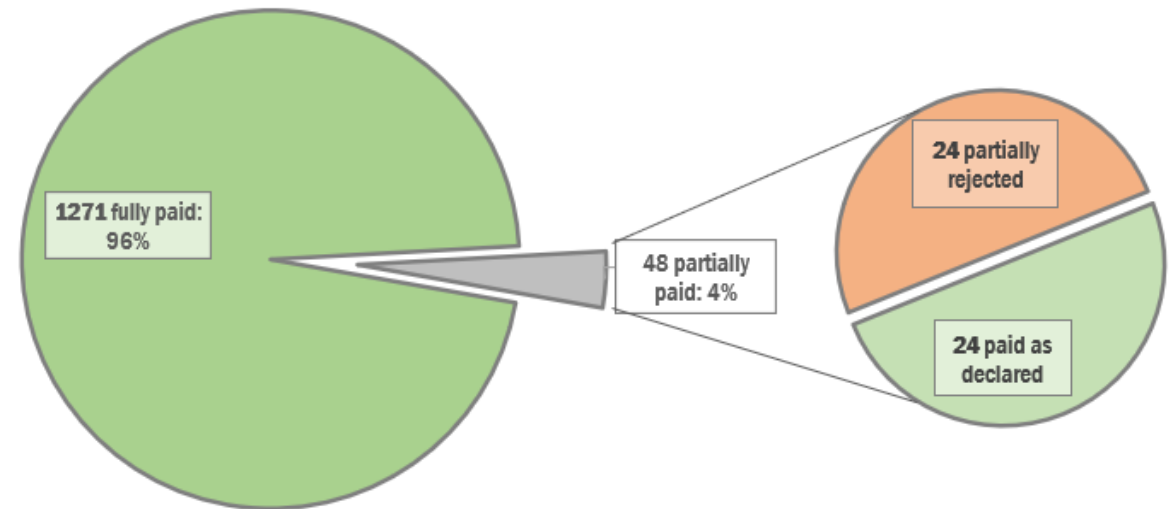
Contentious cases\* (24 cases, 2%) due to:

- **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 tool or Excel table, 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 (I)

- 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	Work package number	Work package name*
test test	WP1	

Comments 1000

### A. Direct personnel costs

**A.1 Employees (or equivalent) (a1)\*** 0 €

Senior Scientists (or equivalent in the private sector)	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€
Junior Scientists (or equivalent in the private sector)	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€
Technical Personnel (or equivalent in the private sector)	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€
Administrative Personnel (or equivalent in the private sector)	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€
Others	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€

**A.2 Natural persons under direct contract (a2)\*** 0 €

Natural persons under direct contract	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	person month	x	*	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€	=	<input type="text" value="0"/>	€
---------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	--------------	---	---	--------------------------------	---	---	--------------------------------	---



# Lump sum budget table in SEP Part A (II)

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

Proposal acronym: dsadsad  
Topic: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-13  
Type of model grant agreement: HORIZON-AG-LS  
Safety of renewable low and zero-carbon waterborne fuels in port areas: risk a...  
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  
Type of action: HORIZON-CSA  
MOBILITY  
HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions

Proposal acronym: dsadsad  
Topic: HORIZON-CL5-2026-05-D5-13  
Type of model grant agreement: HORIZON-AG-LS  
Safety of renewable low and zero-carbon waterborne fuels in port areas: risk a...  
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

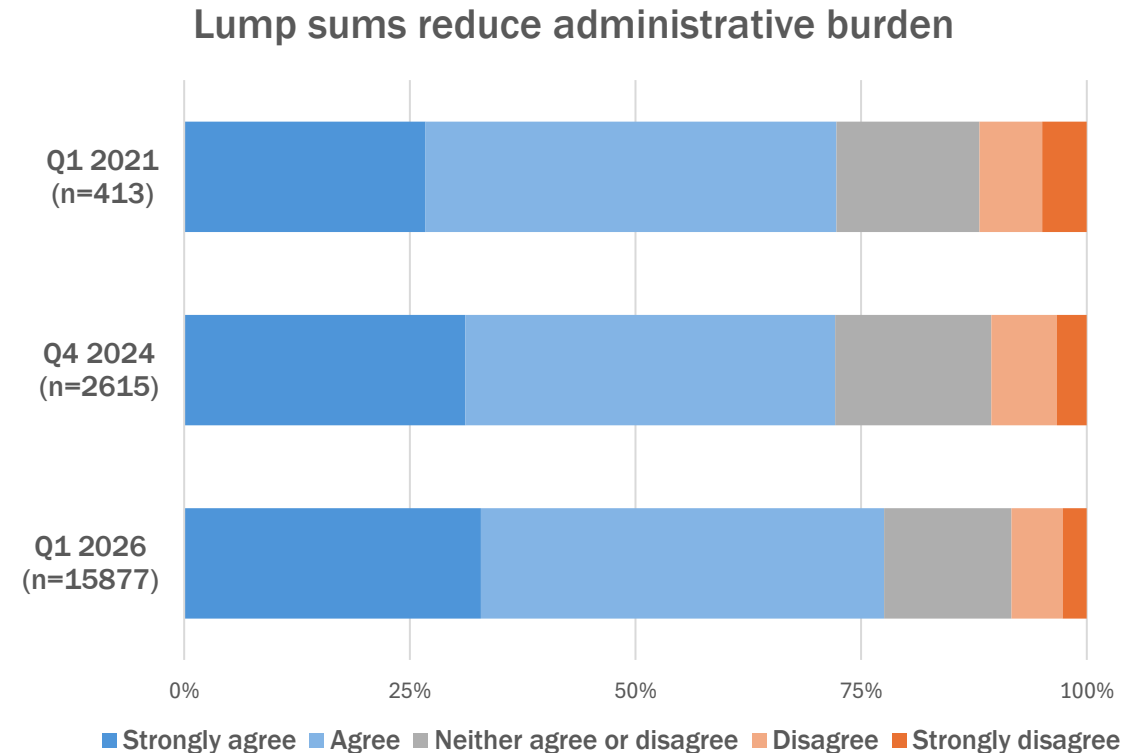
- Lump sums have the potential to lower the error rate
- Reviews went smoothly, incl. identifying and evaluating the work done
- Experience with big projects still limited – additional sample launched
- Some suggestions to improve IT support
- Lessons learned exercise to follow



# 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](#)

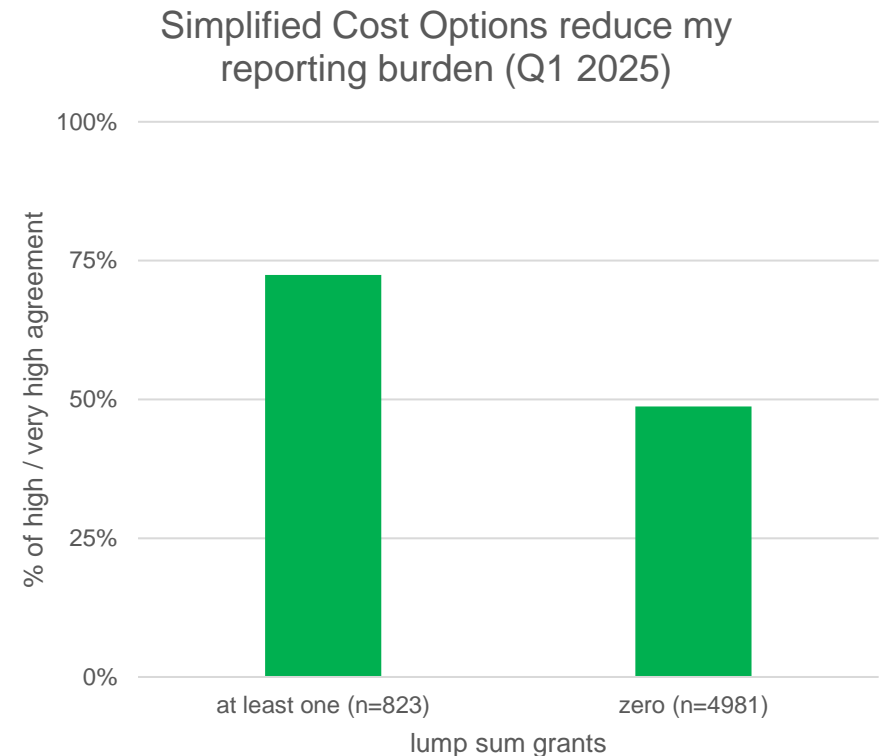


# Lump sum surveys 2021 - 2026

- 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:

## Video tutorials

- [Overview of lump sum funding](#)
- [Detailed budget table](#)
- [Horizon dashboard for lump sum evaluations](#)

## Guidance documents

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

## Reference documents

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

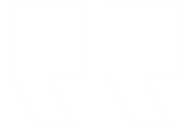
## Studies

- [European Commission assessment](#) (Sep 2024)
- [European Commission assessment](#) (Oct 2021)
- [European Parliament \(STOA\) study on lump sums in Horizon 2020](#) (May 2022)

## Events

- Future events
- Past events and recordings





# 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.