Report on the H2020 Simplification Survey

24.09.2015 – 23.10.2015

The online survey was part of a major feedback exercise conducted after the first 20 months of Horizon 2020 implementation. The survey was addressed to actual participants in on-going H2020 projects. It aimed to collect feedback on the impact of simplification measures already in place and to gather ideas for further simplification measures which could be applied in the future.

Research and Innovation

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Introduction

Simplification is one of the major features of Horizon 2020, which brings a radically new, user-focused approach to the EU's research and innovation funding policies. The programme's simpler design and rules have been supplemented by improved implementing procedures, in an effort to make the funding programme more attractive and easier to navigate.

To obtain feedback on the impact of the simplification measures after the first 20 months of Horizon 2020, a survey was held. The survey also aimed at gathering ideas for future simplification measures.

Addressed to all contact persons in on-going H2020 projects, there was a very good participation rate of roughly 10%. Survey participants were distributed across 41 countries, including EU Member States and Associated Countries. With regard to the profile of respondents, the majority (36%) came from higher or secondary education establishments. Over one quarter of respondents came from industry (the vast majority of which were SMEs – 91%). Many of the respondents (30%) were newcomers to the programme.

The overall picture is very positive. The broad outcome of feedback from participants indicates that **a significant proportion of users are satisfied with the simplification measures introduced in H2020**. Of those respondents with experience in FP7 and Horizon 2020 who expressed an opinion, 75% confirmed that, overall, the processes in H2020 are much simpler than in FP7. Only 20% indicated that they know other funding programmes that are simpler than Horizon 2020.

As regards suggestions **for further simplification, only a minority plead for changing the rules** on reimbursement in general (15%) or the indirect cost flat rate (8%). Similarly, in giving their opinion on potential scenarios for future EU funding rules, less than 10% of participants wanted to see increased use of lump sums, unit costs or flat rates as an alternative to real-cost funding.

Survey responses confirm the assumption that in multi-partner projects the major burden lies with the coordinator. In addition, for all organisational roles and across all types of projects, proposal preparation and submission was shown to require a higher administrative effort than the grant preparation and signature phase.

An overall finding is that **the effectiveness and efficiency of H2020 processes are generally well received** by beneficiaries. The opinions on the shortening of time-to-grant to 8 months (85% considered it beneficial) and the no-negotiation approach (70% considered it beneficial) were overwhelmingly positive.

The vast majority of respondents (77%) used at least one of the online support features, with no marked differences between experienced participants and newcomers. While 90% of repondents considered the Portal overall to be a valuable simplification, 29% considered that the **Participant Portal online support features could be further improved**.

A wide range of suggestions were received for respondents' top priority for future simplification in Horizon 2020. The most popular included **further improvements to the IT sytems, documentation and helpdesk; more and better defined 2-stage calls; and shorter proposals, simpler timesheets and easier project reporting**.

Nearly half of the respondents consider **two-stage calls as a potential remedy for oversubscription**.

Robert-Jan Smits
Director-General Research & Innovation
European Commission

1. Information on respondents

The survey was opened on 24 September 2015 and closed on 23 October 2015. Two variants of the survey were made available: one version was addressed to actual participants in on-going H2020 projects (invitations were sent to 44,000 project contacts; another version was open to everybody.

For the variant addressed to Horizon 2020 participants, 4185 replies were received (9.5% response rate). For the public variant the number of replies was 595.

The following statistical overview is based on the 4185 replies to the survey addressed to actual participants in H2020 projects. The report is structured according to the sequence of questions in the survey.

1.1. Categories of employer organisations

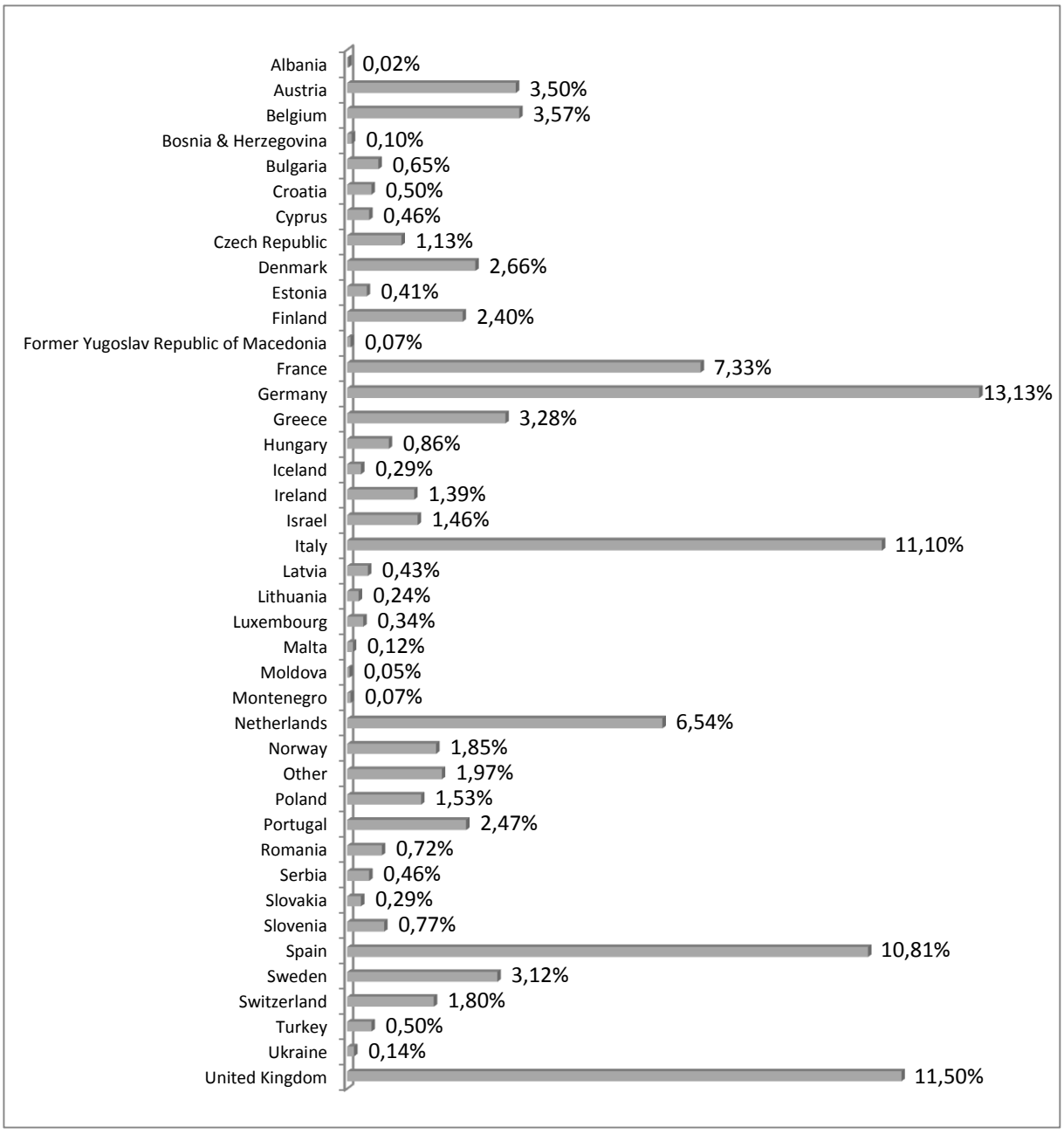
The largest number of replies - over one third (35.7%) - came from higher or secondary education establishments, followed by industry (26.4%) and non-profit research organisations (21.6%). Other minor categories included 7.6% from other public bodies, 2.9% from NGOs and 2.5% from international organisations (see figure 2.1).

Almost one quarter of replies (24.3%) came from SMEs.

1.2. Country participation

Not surprisingly, the vast majority (91%) of replies came from the 28 Member States of the EU; comprising 83% from EU-15[1] and 8% from EU-13[2]. In addition, 7% of replies came from the 12 countries associated[3] to H2020, while 2% came from third countries.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of survey participants by country (question 1.3)



[1] The EU-15 Member States comprise the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

[2] The EU-13 Member States comprise the following 13 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

[3] H2020 Associated countries include: Iceland, Norway, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Israel, Moldova, Switzerland (partial association), Faroe Islands and Ukraine.

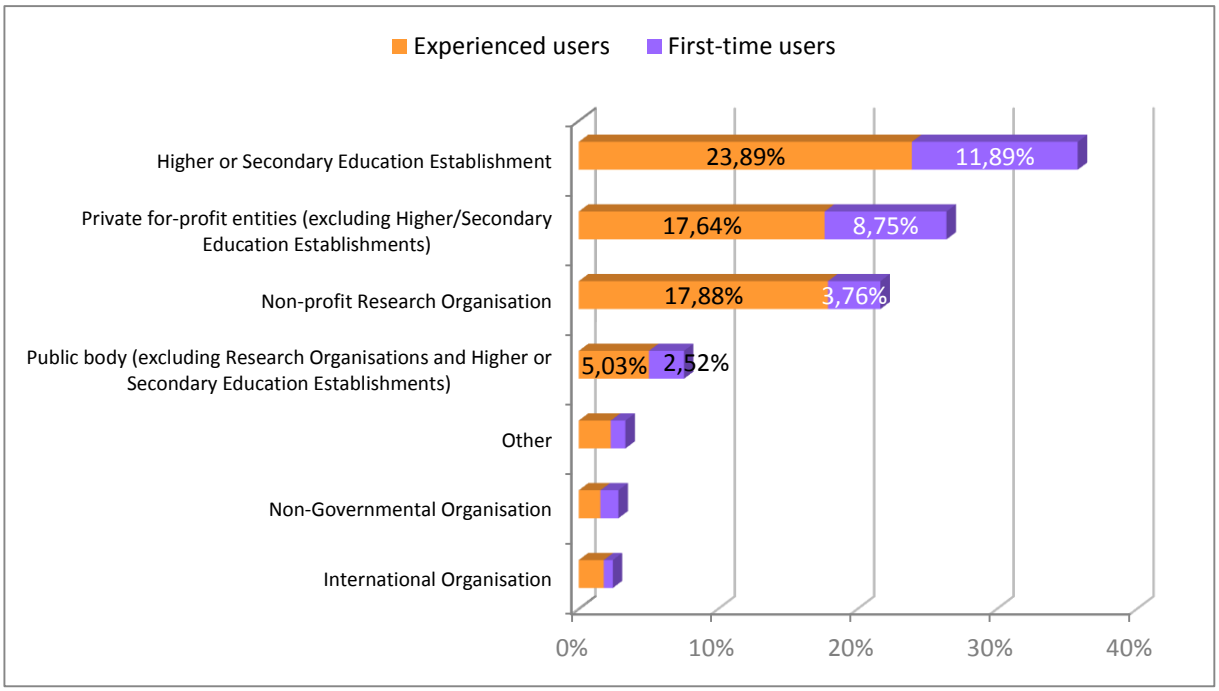
1.3. Newcomer participation

A newcomer is defined as a successful first-time applicant to Horizon 2020 who did not apply to the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), or to previous Framework Programmes.

An analysis of all 4185 respondents shows that 30% participated for the first time in an EU-research funded project. This high rate of newcomers may in part be attributed to the simplification efforts already in place, which make Horizon 2020 more accessible and attractive in comparison to FP7.

The distribution of experienced and first-time users, by category of employer organisation, is shown in the chart below.

Figure 2.1: Distribution of experienced and first-time users by category of employer organisation (question 1.1)



Within the newcomer population the vast majority came from higher or secondary education establishments (40%), from private industry (29%) and from non-profit research organisations (13%). A total of 28% of newcomer respondents came from SMEs.

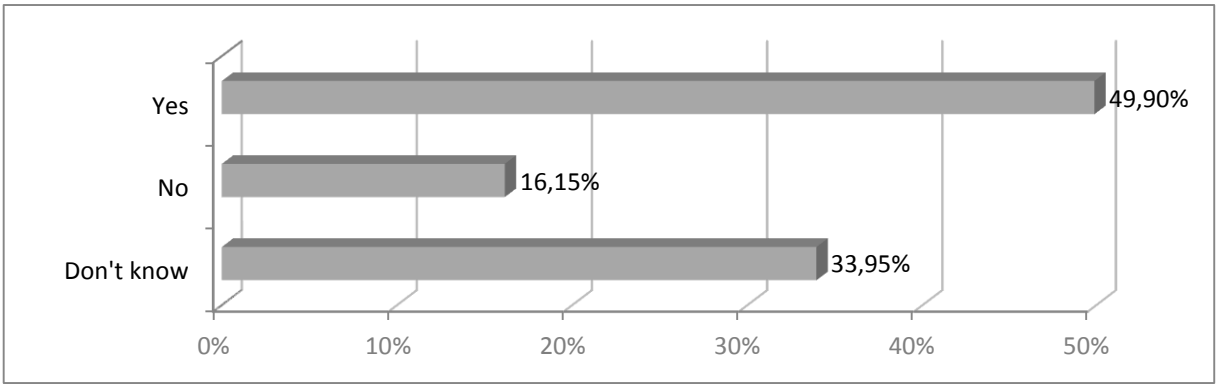
Of the total SME respondents (which count for 24.3% of the total, as mentioned above), 34% were participating for the first time in an EU-research funded project.

2. Perception of existing H2020 simplification measures

2.1. Proposal preparation & submission and grant preparation

When asked *"In your opinion, are the processes of proposal preparation & submission and of grant preparation in Horizon 2020 simpler than those in FP7?",* 50% of the experienced[4] participants considered the processes to be simpler than in FP7, while only 16% were not of that opinion.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of opinions on whether the processes of proposal preparation & submission and of grant preparation in Horizon 2020 are simpler than those in FP7 (question 2.1)



All respondents (whether they replied positively or negatively) were asked to specify in what way the process of proposal submission and grant preparation in Horizon 2020 was, or was not, simpler (free text reply). 3109 remarks were sorted in a list of categories, the most frequently occurring of which (more than 10 occurrences) were the following:

[4] Participated more than once in EU-research funded projects (Horizon 2020, FP7…)

Table 3.1: Main free-text comments concerning the processes of proposal submission and grant preparation in Horizon 2020 (question 2.1.1)

Category	Appreciation of proposal submission & grant preparation processes	Count	Percentage
Proposal preparation and submission	Submission process is easier: on-line proposal form more understandable, user-friendly, page limit is better	320	10.3%
	Proposal preparation: requires enormous effort/ too long/ too many points/ complexity increased	199	6.4%
	Main burden is over-subscription to calls. Efforts in proposal preparation are not in line with the low success rates.	37	1.2%
	2-stage preparation is welcomed	37	1.2%
	2-stage procedure takes longer: 1st stage requires enormous effort and has to compete with too many proposals to be successful/ too short time left for the 2nd phase	34	1.1%
	eSubmission IT tool: frequent technical problems, depending on browser used, with part A of the proposal/Acrobat is not supported	32	1.0%
Grant preparation	Much improved grant preparation process: faster and paperless/ eSignature is a major simplification	274	8.8%
	No negotiation and shorter time-to-grant appreciated	139	4.5%
	Grant Preparation IT tool is appreciated as simplification: all project data in 1 place, at all times, visible to all partners	54	1.7%
	Grant preparation: IT tool, more complicated, heavy and not user-friendly enough/ IT tool did not work correctly causing difficulties & delay in signing grant	44	1.4%
	No negotiation creates too much pressure/makes proposal preparation more stressful and time-consuming	25	0.8%
	Role management difficulties with LEARs (re)appointment (LSIGNs->PLSIGNs), for newcomers to introduce it - time-consuming process	24	0.8%
General comments	Participant Portal is more user friendly, simplifies processes, facilitates communication	570	18.3%
	Simpler, less complicated rules/ straightforward, shorter, faster, clearer procedures/ less bureaucracy and lighter administration	303	9.8%
	Budget calculation & financial rules are simpler (funding rates, one flat rate, indirect cost model)	283	9.1%
	Overall process simpler, but some specific aspects more difficult (e.g. complicated ethical review introduced)/ still too bureaucratic/ administrative obligations huge limitation for SMEs/ difficult for newcomers & SMEs/complicated to get partners familiar with the process	201	6.5%
	Guidelines & background information difficult to find/calls hard to understand/ PIC number registration/validation hard and difficult	88	2.8%
	Easier to find useful guidance/ information is clear, complete and explained	52	1.7%
	Problems with budget calculation (e.g. 25% flat rate of indirect costs is quite low)	20	0.6%
	Grant preparation: need automatic connection between proposals & grants, copying WPs, deliverables, etc. is time-consuming	10	0.3%

2.2. Perceived benefit of simplification measures introduced with Horizon 2020

For eight specific simplification measures introduced with Horizon 2020, experienced participants were asked to indicate to what extent they felt the benefit of each simplification.

For those experienced participants from SMEs, 77% felt the benefit of the introduction of the 'self-assessment' of SME status, as compared with a formal validation process based on supporting financial documents. Only 3% felt that this was not beneficial, the remainder replying 'don't know'.

For the remaining seven simplification measures, experienced participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that they were beneficial. Specifically:

- 91% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the electronic-only signature of grant agreements,
- 89% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the Participant Portal as the one-stop shop for all interactions with the Commission in managing proposals and grants,
- 78% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the single reimbursement rate in a project (no differentiation by type of activity or organisation),
- 75% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the reduced number of certificates on financial statements,
- 74% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the single flat rate for indirect costs,
- 64% of experienced participants felt the benefit of the reduced requirements for work-time recording,
- 50% of experienced participants felt the benefit of fewer ex-ante financial viability capacity checks.

The percentage of experienced participants who did not consider these simplification measures to be beneficial remained consistently low across all 7 measures (ranging from 2% to 12% : electronic-only signature of grant agreements and single flat rate for indirect costs respectively). Thus, the main variation in the percentage of positive replies was due to the number of participants replying 'neutral/don't know'.

Figure 3.1: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the single reimbursement rate in a project (question 2.2)

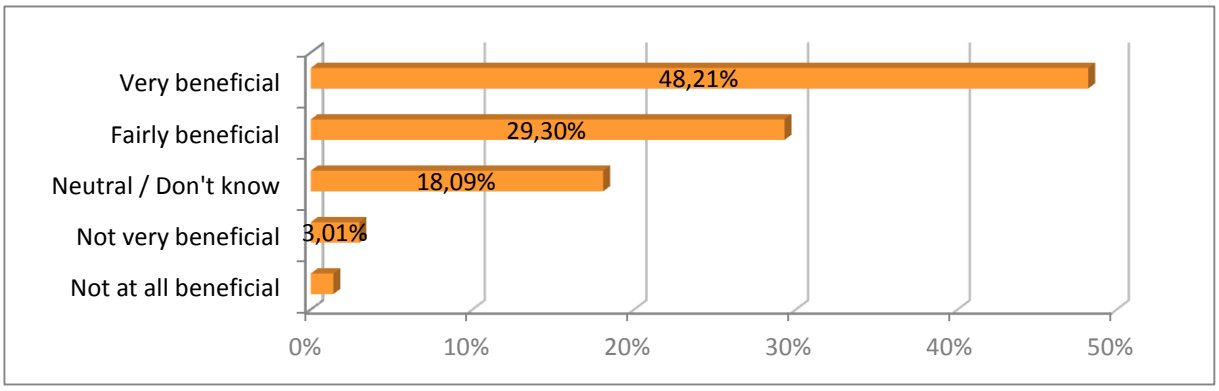


Figure 3.2: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the single flat rate for indirect costs (question 2.3)

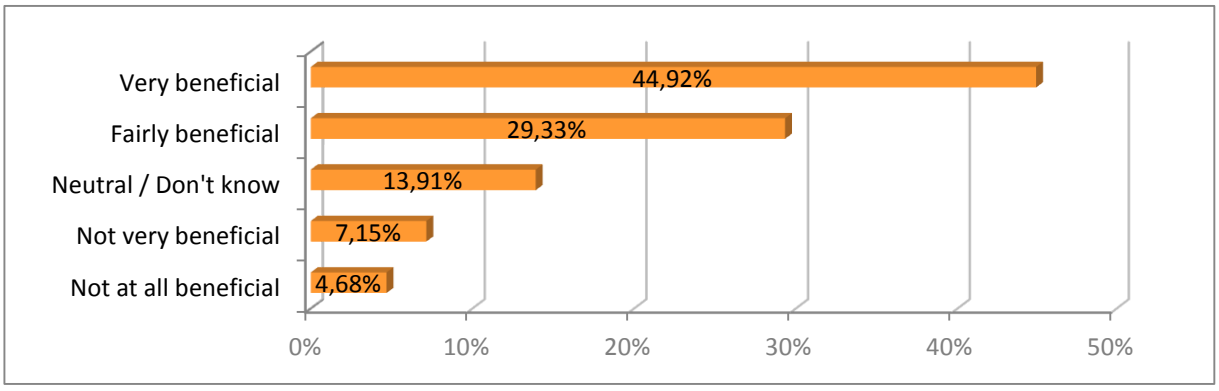


Figure 3.3: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the reduced requirements for work-time recording (question 2.4)

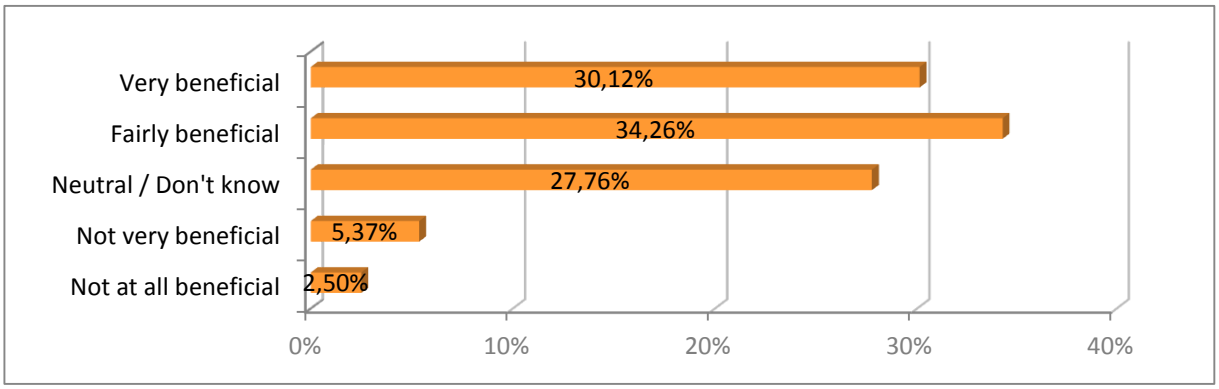


Figure 3.4: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of fewer ex-ante financial viability capacity checks (question 2.5)

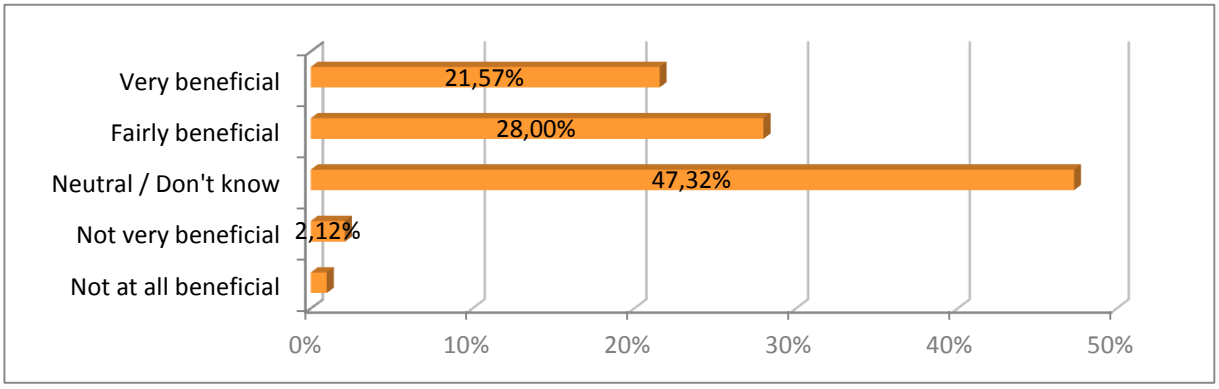


Figure 3.5: Replies from SME participants concerning the benefit of the introduction of the 'self-assessment' of SME status (question 2.6)

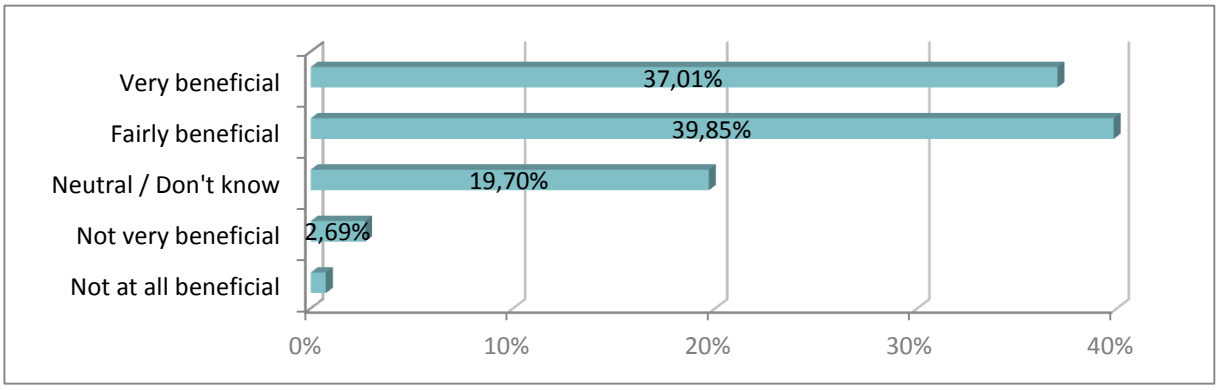


Figure 3.6: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the reduced number of certificates on financial statements (question 2.7)

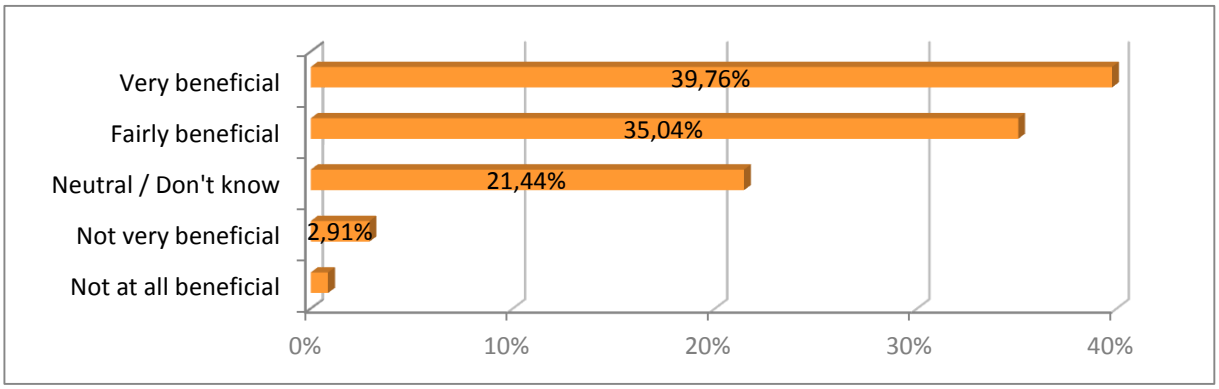


Figure 3.7: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the electronic-only signature of grant agreements (question 2.8)

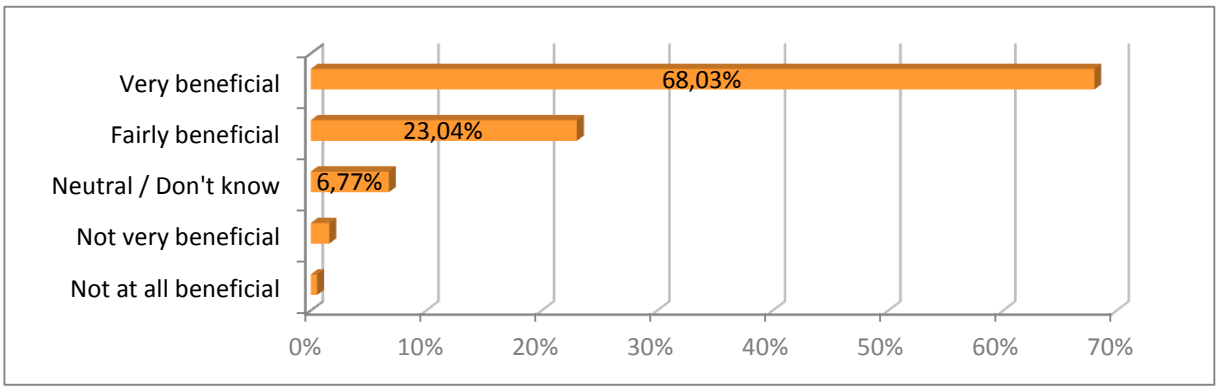
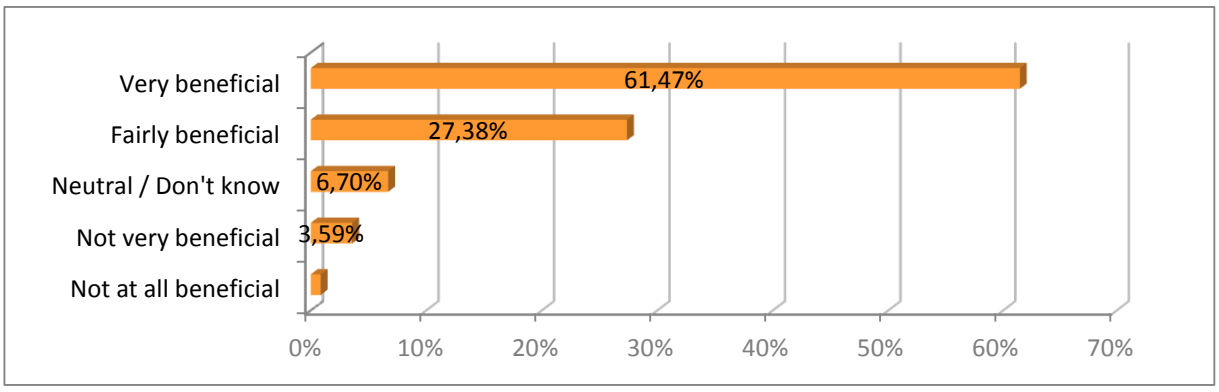


Figure 3.8: Experienced participants replies concerning the benefit of the Participant Portal as the one-stop shop for all interactions with the Commission in managing proposals and grants (question 2.9)



3. Potential for further simplification of specific aspects.

Participants were asked if, in their opinion, it was possible to further simplify five specific aspects related to the introduced simplification measures.

The percentage of respondents who replied that no further simplification was possible was in the order of 25%-40% for all questions in this category. The highest percentage of "Yes" (i.e. further simplification possible) was for work-time recording, with 24%. For the four remaining simplification measures, only a minority (between 5% and 15%) considered that further simplification was possible:

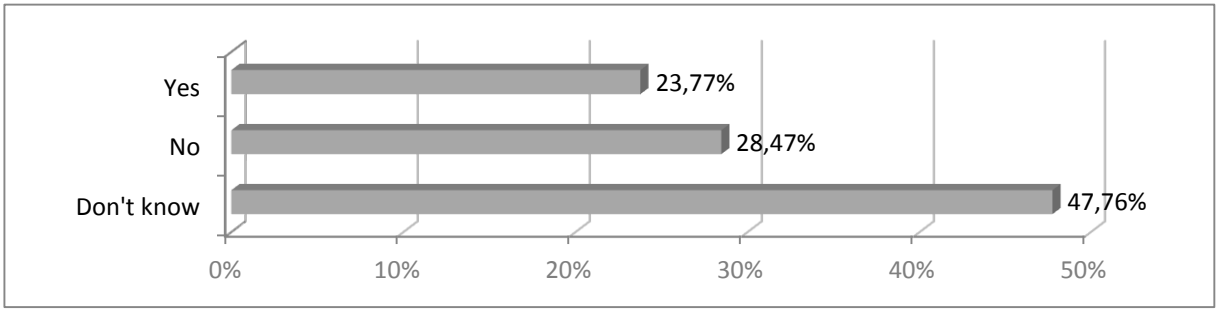
a) the requirements for work-time recording (24%),
b) the rules on reimbursement (15%),
c) the reimbursement of indirect costs (8%),
d) the ex-ante financial viability checks (5%),
e) the process establishing that an organisation is an SME (5%) –
if only SME respondents are considered, the latter figure doubles to 10%.

Responses to each of the five simplification measures are analysed individually below:

3.1. Work-time recording

When asked, "*is it possible to further simplify the requirements for work-time recording?*", 23.8% (993 participants) replied affirmatively. A similar number, 28.5% (1188 participants) considered it was not possible, and 47.7% - almost half - (1993 participants) did not express an opinion.

Figure 4.1: Participants opinions on whether it is possible to further simplify the requirements for work-time recording (question 2.12)



Respondents who replied positively were offered an additional question: "*Please specify how you think requirements for work-time recording could be simplified further*" (free text reply). The replies were sorted in a list of categories and the most frequently occurring[5] ones are the following:

[5] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

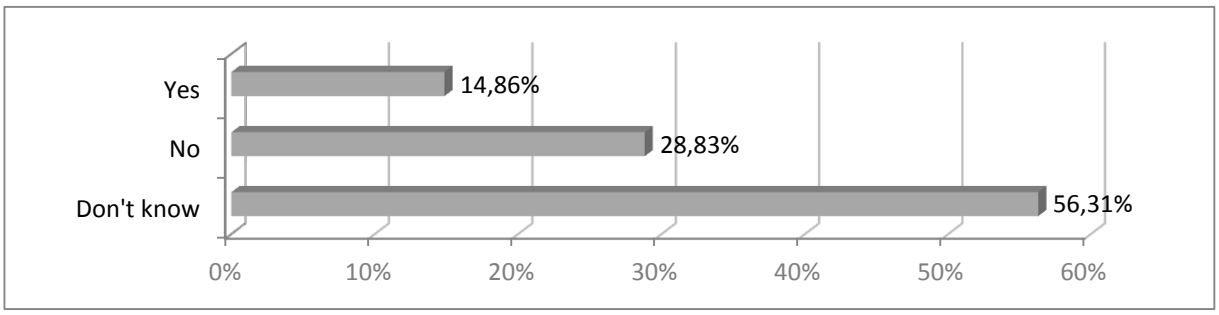
Table 4.1: Main free-text comments on how the requirements for work-time recording could be simplified further (question 2.12.1)

Category	Suggestion for simplification	Count	Percentage
Abolishing timesheets	Trust, outputs, flat-rates/lump sums	113	12.6%
	Abolishment	81	9.0%
	Different alternative of evidence to be used	44	4.9%
Modification of processes	Different periodicity of time recording (weekly, monthly...)	113	12.6%
	Request less detail (WPs, work done…)	78	8.7%
	IT-based improvements (via the PP, the cloud…)	73	8.1%
	Better guidance needed (including avoidance of contradictory messages between EU services)	70	7.8%
	Recording based on organisation's accounting practices and national standards	49	5.5%
	Single/simpler template for time-recording for all	38	4.2%
	Exclusive work on the project waiver under too rigid rules	27	3.0%
	Calculation of the hourly rates using closed accounts	23	2.6%
	Report activities to be removed	14	1.6%
	Project efforts as average of one's total professional efforts	11	1.2%

3.2. Reimbursement rules

When asked *"is it possible to further simplify the rules on reimbursement",* 15% (623 participants) answered 'yes'. Double this number, 30%, (1206 participants) replied 'no', while 56%, just over half of respondents, (2356) answered 'don't know'.

Figure 4.2: Participants opinions on whether it is possible to further simplify the rules on reimbursement (question 2.10)



Respondents who replied positively were asked to specify *"how the rules on reimbursement could be simplified further"* (free text reply). A variety of suggestions were received, which were sorted into a list of categories. The most frequently occurring categories[6] are the following:

[6] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

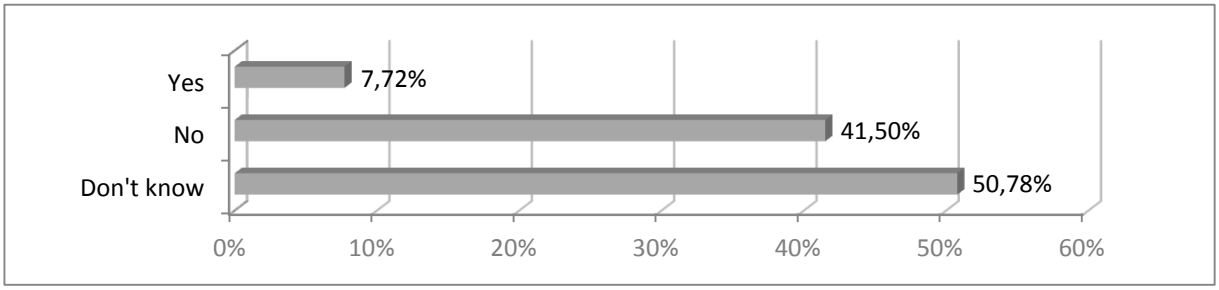
Table 4.2: Main free-text comments on how the rules on reimbursement could be simplified further (question 2.10.1)

Category	Count	Percentage
Clearer explanations and simpler, faster procedures	100	20.0%
Simpler timesheets/simpler rules for personnel costs/last closed financial year	85	17.0%
More use of unit costs/flat rates/lump sums	84	16.8%
Eligible costs: too many options/request fewer cost categories with clearer rules within categories	33	6.6%
Simpler method for travel costs	31	6.2%
More pre-financing/ clearer, more front-loaded payment schedules	30	6.0%
Clearer rules for sub-contracting	26	5.2%
Clinical trials and equipment	23	4.6%
Increased budget flexibility	22	4.4%
VAT/Exchange rate	15	3.0%
Simplify rules related to audit requirements	12	2.4%
Simpler reporting rules	10	2.0%
Harmonisation of interpretation	10	2.0%

3.3. Indirect costs

On the question *"is it possible to further simplify reimbursement of indirect costs",* a minority of 8% (323 participants) replied 'yes'. Half (51%) of the participants (2124) answered 'don't know', while the remaining 42% (1738 participants) answered 'no' (no further simplification possible).

Figure 4.3: Participants opinions on whether it is possible to further simplify reimbursement of indirect costs (question 2.11)



Respondents who replied positively were asked to specify *"how the reimbursement of indirect costs could be simplified further"* (free text reply). The replies were sorted into a list of categories of which the most frequently occurring[7] are the following:

Table 4.3: Main free-text comments on how the reimbursement of indirect costs could be simplified further (question 2.11.1)

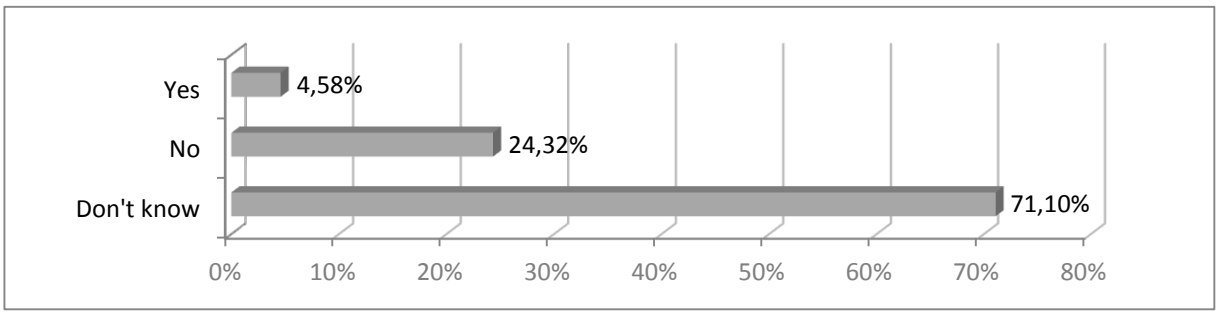
Category	Count	Percentage
Apply higher rate than 25%	59	35.0%
Real indirect costs/full cost reimbursement based on invoices	34	20.1%
Clearer definition what constitutes indirect costs- all inclusive/broader categories	24	14.2%
Single flat rate for all Instruments/more use of lump sums/unit costs	21	12.4%
Simpler/no verification procedures (trust)	13	7.7%
Simpler interface: electronic uploads and registration of indirect costs	10	5.9%

[7] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

3.4. Ex-ante financial viability check

When asked, "*According to you, is it possible to further simplify the ex-ante financial viability checks?*", only 4.6% (191 participants) considered there was further room for simplification, while 24.3% (1016 participants) did not believe this was possible. The vast majority, 71.1% (2967) did not have an opinion.

Figure 4.4: Participants opinions on whether it is possible to further simplify the ex-ante financial viability checks (question 2.13)



Those who considered that the process could be simplified further were asked to specify how. Their free text replies were grouped into categories. An analysis showed that 15% were not relevant, as they referred to other processes, while a further 9% were generic comments.

An additional 17% misunderstood the current practices/rules. These respondents pleaded for establishment of an on-line process (already in place); or for a waiver for public bodies (also in force); or for a check of private coordinators only (also the current rule).

The remaining most frequently occurring categories[8] of suggestions for further simplification are listed below:

Table 4.4: Main free-text comments on how the ex-ante financial viability checks could be simplified further (question 2.13.1)

Category	Count	Percentage
Modify process (including: use of profitability dimension for non-profit entities; inadequacy of the process in order to detect bankruptcy cases; need of faster processing)	23	19,6%
Abolishment (including the self-reporting option)	18	15,4%
Improve guidance/communication/transparency on the process (also including enhanced IT implementation via the Beneficiary Register)	17	14,5%
Access national databases	12	10,3%

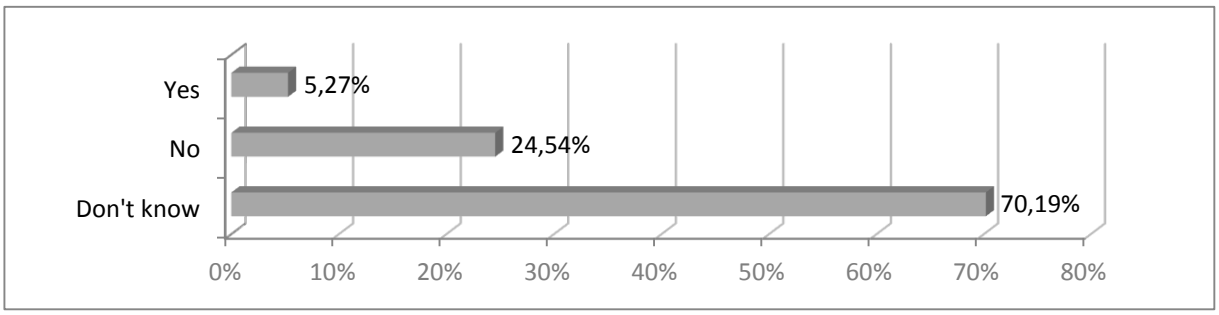
Given that 17% of respondents misunderstood the process for ex-ante financial viability checks, it could be argued that the need to improve guidance/communication/transparency should be increased to 31.5% in the above table.

[8] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

3.5. SME status

When taking into account all respondents, a mere 5.3% (220 replies) considered that it is possible to further simplify the process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME. Although this figure doubles when *only* replies from SME participants are examined, at 10% it remains, nevertheless, relatively low.

Figure 4.5: Participants opinions on whether it is possible to further simplify the process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME (question 2.14)



A quarter of all respondents (24.5%) (1024 replies) and half of respondents from SMEs (48%) (106 replies) did not believe it was possible to further simplify the process. The remaining respondents (70% and 41% respectively), did not have an opinion.

Those who considered the process could be simplified further were asked to specify how (free text reply). These free text replies were sorted in a list of categories and analysed. Following removal of irrelevant replies (28%) which exhibited a misunderstanding of current practices and rules (respondents pleaded for a self-declaration or self-assessment option, which is already in place; or to perform the process on-line, idem; or introduced requests against the SME recommendation); the remaining most frequently occurring categories[9] for suggestions for future improvement are as follows:

Table 4.5: Main free-text comments on how the process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME could be simplified further (question 2.14.1)

Category	Count	Percentage
Better guidance for self-assessment (including also the IT implementation of the self-assessment wizard in the Beneficiary Register)	54	32.7%
Access national databases (have the SME status based on national labels or qualifications)	25	15.1%
Simplify further - process too complex	16	9.7%
Modify process (including changes to the SME Recommendation)	14	8.5%

The main suggestion for improvement was to improve the documentation and guidance, including making the online IT system more intuitive and improving the online tooltips, and to use the national registers to confirm SME status.

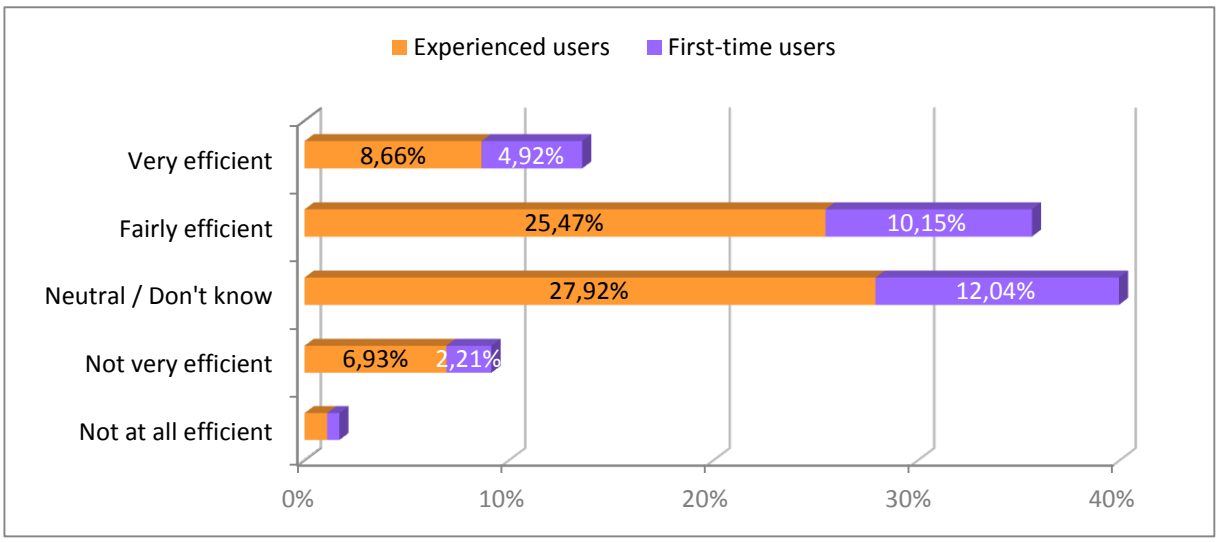
[9] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

4. Efficiency of process for validation of organisations

When asked *"how efficient is the overall process for validation of organisations?"*, 49% of participants to the survey (2051 replies) considered it very or fairly efficient, 11% (452 replies) as not very/not at all efficient, and 40% (1667 replies) remained neutral or had no clear opinion.

The following chart shows the breakdown of these figures by experienced or first-time users.

Figure 5.1: Participant responses on the efficiency of the overall process for validation of organisations (question 2.15)



Those respondents who replied either positively or negatively were asked to provide comments and 1092 specific remarks on the efficiency of the process of validation, of organisations were collected. After removal of comments which were not relevant (because they referred to other processes), these free text replies were sorted into a list of categories, of which the most frequently occurring[10] were:

[10] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

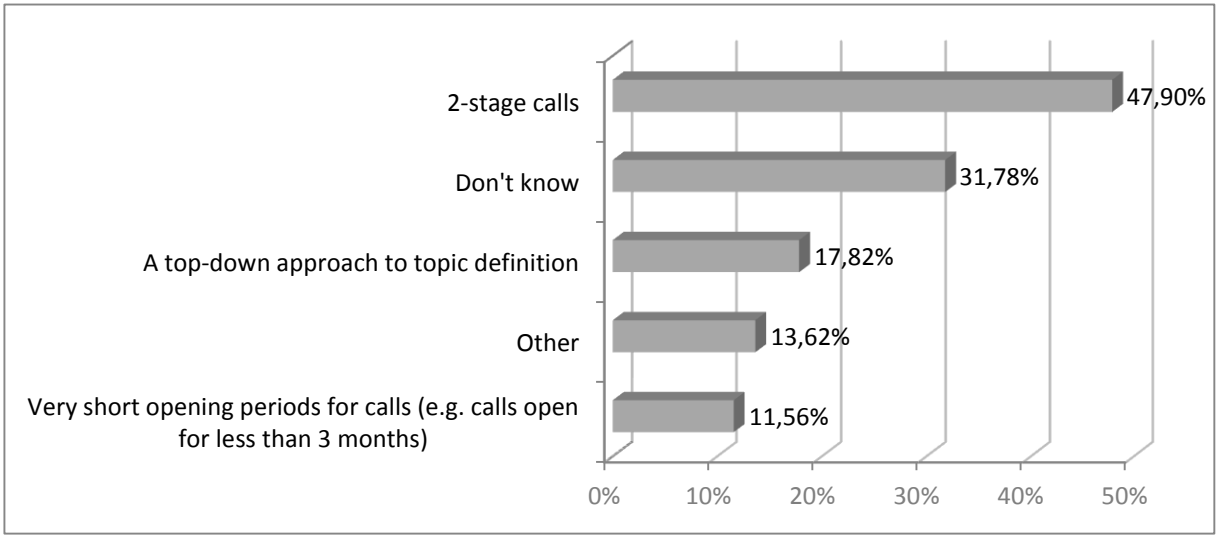
Table 5.1: Main free-text comments on the efficiency of the overall process for validation of organisations (question 2.15.1)

Category	Count	Percentage
Efficient process (the very concept of a unique identifier and the Register/PP, the work of the REA VS…)	343	31,4%
Lengthy/complex process (paperwork, technical difficulties, specific comments on REA validation service…)	215	19,7%
LEAR nomination under H2020 (complaints on the need to send paper documents and original signatures)	145	13,3%
Need to improve guidance/communication/transparency of the process (including references to the level of unresponsiveness of REA VS and the impersonal process)	130	11,9%
Difficult for small entities/newcomers (linked to the comments on complexity and lengthiness but with specific reference to newcomers or small players)	61	5,6%
Not IT user-friendly (apart from the Beneficiary Register interface, users commented here on the design of roles for the electronic management of GAs)	45	4,1%
Changes to validated data (LEAR, address) not smoothly processed (linked to complexity and lengthiness, but specific reference to re-validation)	37	3,4%
PIC search function and duplicates (respondents complained about the too easy way to generate duplicate PICs in the Register)	31	2,8%
SME aspects (either lack of clarity on the self-declaration/self-assessment or the time required for the SME validation)	16	1,6%
Anticipate validation process (have entities validated as from proposal, without waiting till granting, a time-lapse generating a lot of confusion)	13	1,2%
National databases to be used	10	0,9%

5. Reducing oversubscription

Approximately half of the respondents consider two-stage calls as a measure for reducing oversubscription. Only a minority were in favour of stricter top-down definition of topics (18%) or shorter call opening periods (12%).

Figure 6.1: Participant responses on measures to help reduce oversubscription (question 2.16)

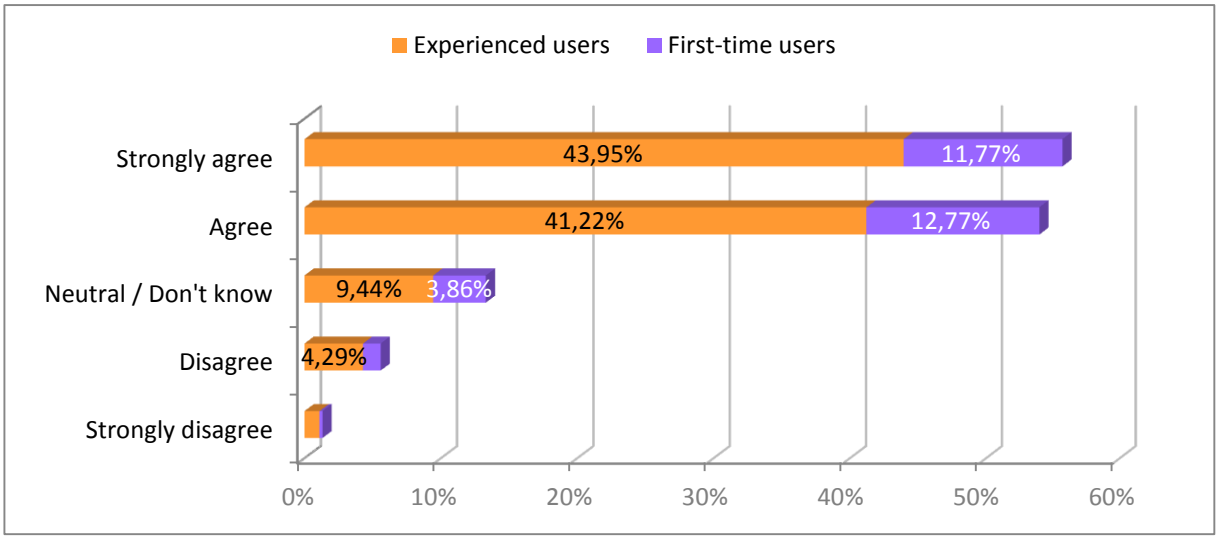


6. Time to grant

'Time to grant' is the elapsed time between the close of a call and the signing of the grant agreement, which marks the official start of the project.

On the question *"is the shortening of the time to grant, to a maximum of 8 months, between the closure of the call and signature of a grant agreement a positive step*", the vast majority of respondents - 85% - were in agreement (3554 answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree'). Only 5% (227 respondents) did not agree with this statement; while 10% (393 respondents) selected the response 'neutral/don't know'.

Figure 7.1: Participant responses on whether the shortening of the time to grant, to a maximum of 8 months, between the closure of the call and signature of a grant agreement is a positive step (question 2.17)



Those respondents who replied either positively or negatively were asked to provide comments. These free text replies were sorted in a list of categories and analysed. Following removal of general or irrelevant comments (12.6%) the remaining most frequently occurring categories[11] for suggestions for future improvement were as follows:

Table 7.1: Main free-text comments on the shortening of the time to grant, to a maximum of 8 months, between the closure of the call and signature of a grant agreement (question 2.18)

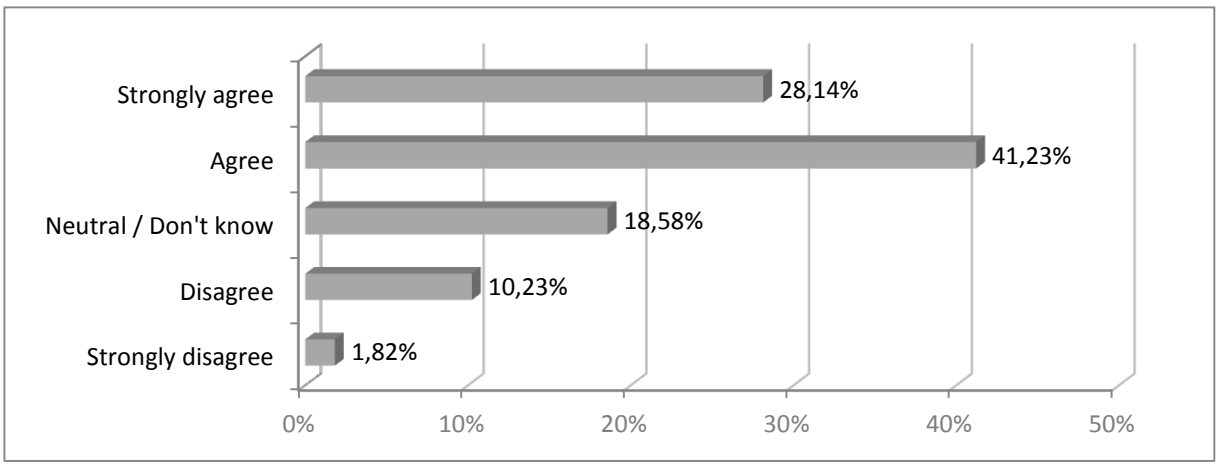
Category	Count	Percentage
Asked for further reduction in the time to grant: 8 months still too long especially for SMEs/ICT/innovative projects	453	54.3%
Request for more balanced approach overall and increased flexibility with 5+3 months division, which is seen as too artificial	113	13.5%
Specific issues with timing: problem when deadlines fall during holiday periods/requests from POs with unacceptably short deadline for response/strict deadlines place undue pressure on inexperienced coordinators and complex consortia/ESR should be delivered earlier/ rush to sign GA creates subsequent need for early amendments	73	9.2%
Helps with planning: beneficial for SMEs and large consortia	60	7.2%
More flexible project start date: would be beneficial to many consortia and SMEs/ possibility to synchronise with university year would assist hiring of PhD students	31	3.7%

[11] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

7. No-negotiation approach

On the question *"in Horizon 2020, proposals selected for funding are turned into grants as they were submitted – without requesting changes to the technical content (the 'no negotiation' approach). Is this a simplification*", the majority (70%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (2896 replies). Only 12% (503 respondents) disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement; while 18% (776 respondents) selected the response 'neutral/don't know'.

Figure 8.1: Participant responses on whether the 'no negotiation' approach is a simplification (question 2.19)



When asked to comment (free text reply), respondents, whether they replied positively or negatively, provided a variety of observations which were sorted into a list of categories. The most frequently occurring categories[12] were the following:

Table 8.1: Main free-text comments on the 'no negotiation' approach (question 2.20)

Category	Count	Percentage
Query real benefits of no negotiation- at cost of losing quality proposals/ negotiation merely substituted by early amendments	301	39.6%
Positive step – enhances transparency/fairness- creates level playing field/approval on content rather than perceived potential/reduces evaluator subjectivity/ speeds up process/ mark of trust toward scientists	184	24.2%
Positive step - but still a need for flexibility to enable fine-tuning of proposals	157	20.6%
In practice modifications to proposals are still requested	83	10.9%
Query adequacy of evaluation procedures	20	2.6%

[12] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

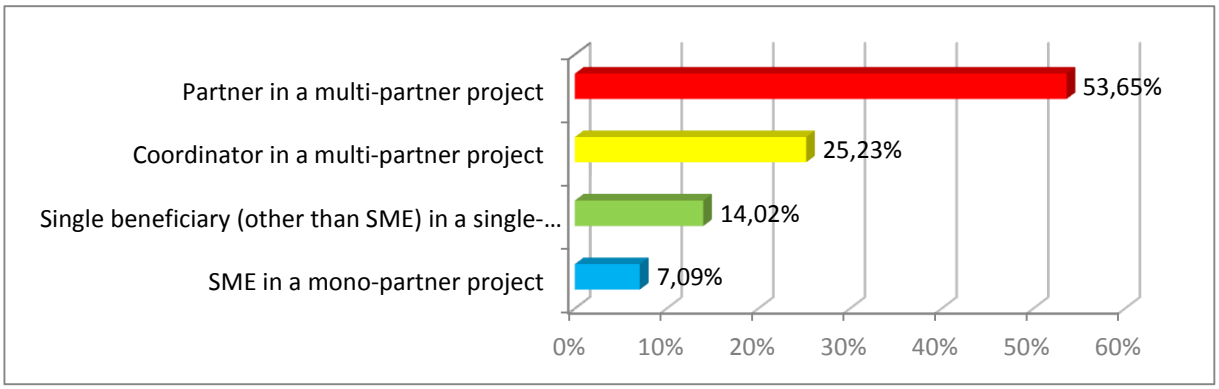
8. Estimation of effort needed for proposal preparation and grant signature

8.1. Project information

In this section, survey respondents were asked to base their replies on a single project which was submitted as a proposal and for which a grant agreement was signed. If involved in multiple projects, respondents were asked to select the project they were most familiar with.

With regard to the role of their organisation in the project, the majority (54%) were partners in a multi-partner project, 25% were coordinators in a multi-partner project, 14% were single beneficiaries in a single-partner project and 7% were SMEs in a mono-partner project.

Figure 9.1: Distribution of survey participants by role of organisation in project (question 3.5)



For each of the above four categories of respondents an overview of the type of action referred to in responding to the survey, is shown in the following three charts:

Figure 9.2: Multi-partner projects - distribution of type of action for which participants reponded to the survey (question 3.5.3)

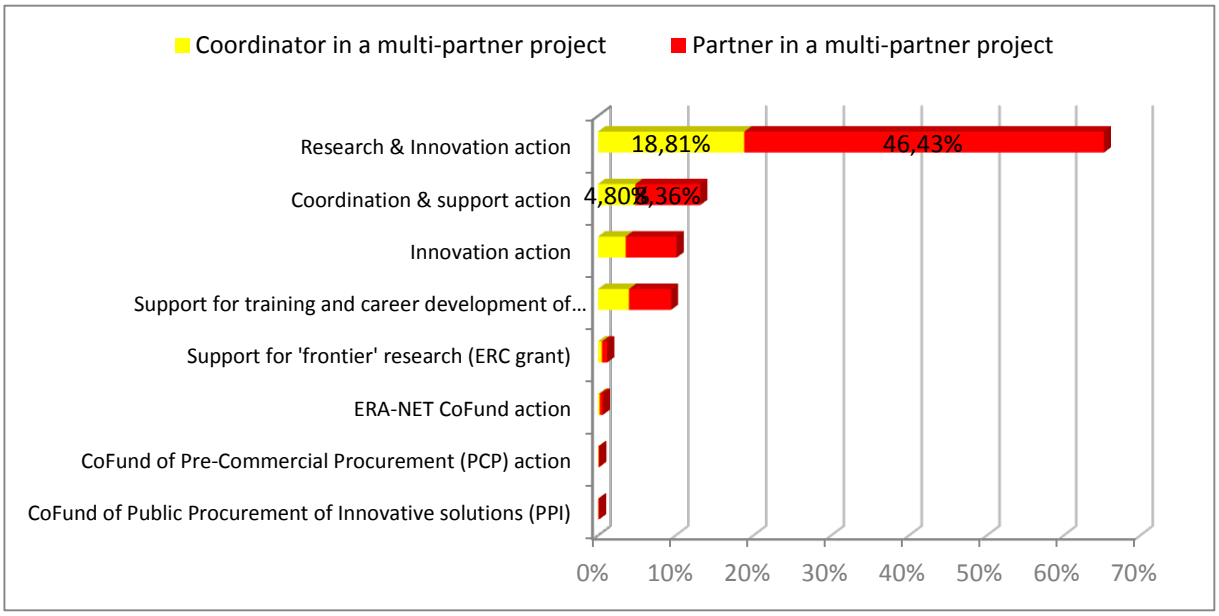


Figure 9.3: Single beneficiaries - distribution of type of action for which participants reponded to the survey (question 3.5.2)

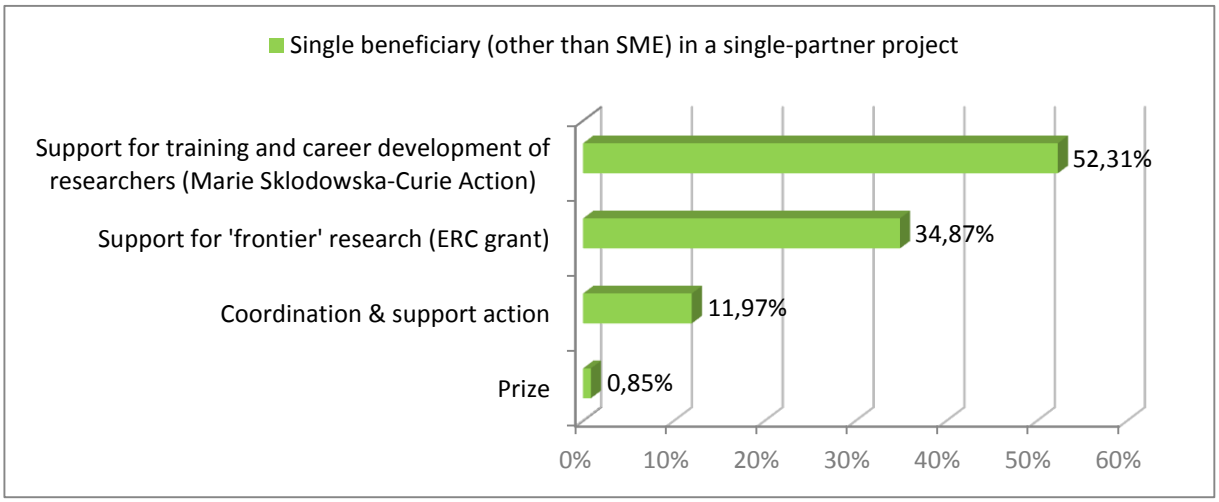
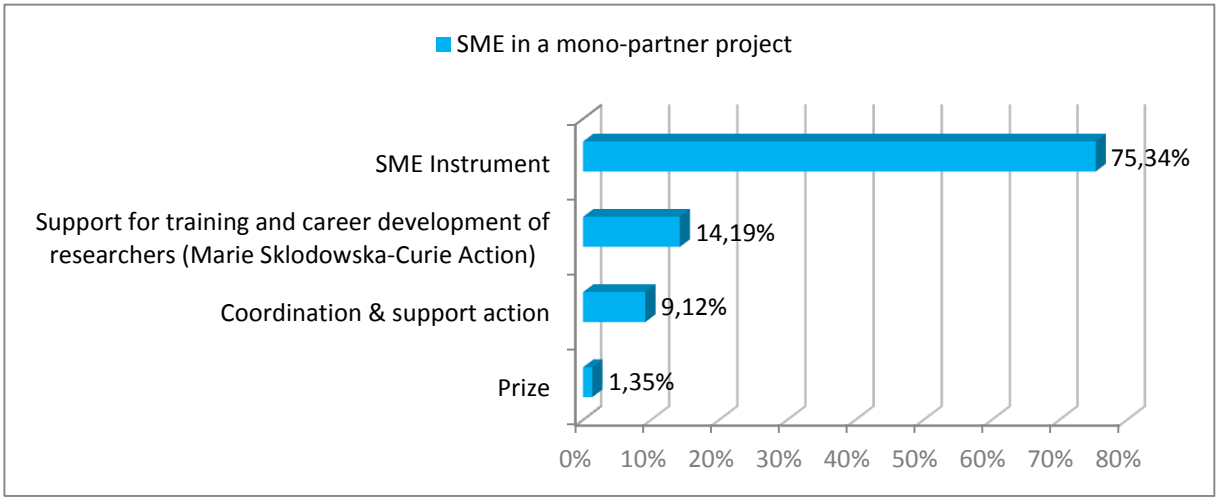


Figure 9.4: SME in mono-partner project - distribution of type of action for which participants reponded to the survey (question 3.5.1)



By far the majority of multi-partner projects were research and innovation actions (65%), while SMEs projects, unsurprisingly, were mainly represented by the SME Instrument (75%). Projects of single beneficiaries (other than SMEs) fell mainly under Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions (52%) and ERC frontier research projects (35%).

25% of coordinators and partners (8% and 17% respectively) in multi-partner projects submitted their proposal in a 2-stage call.

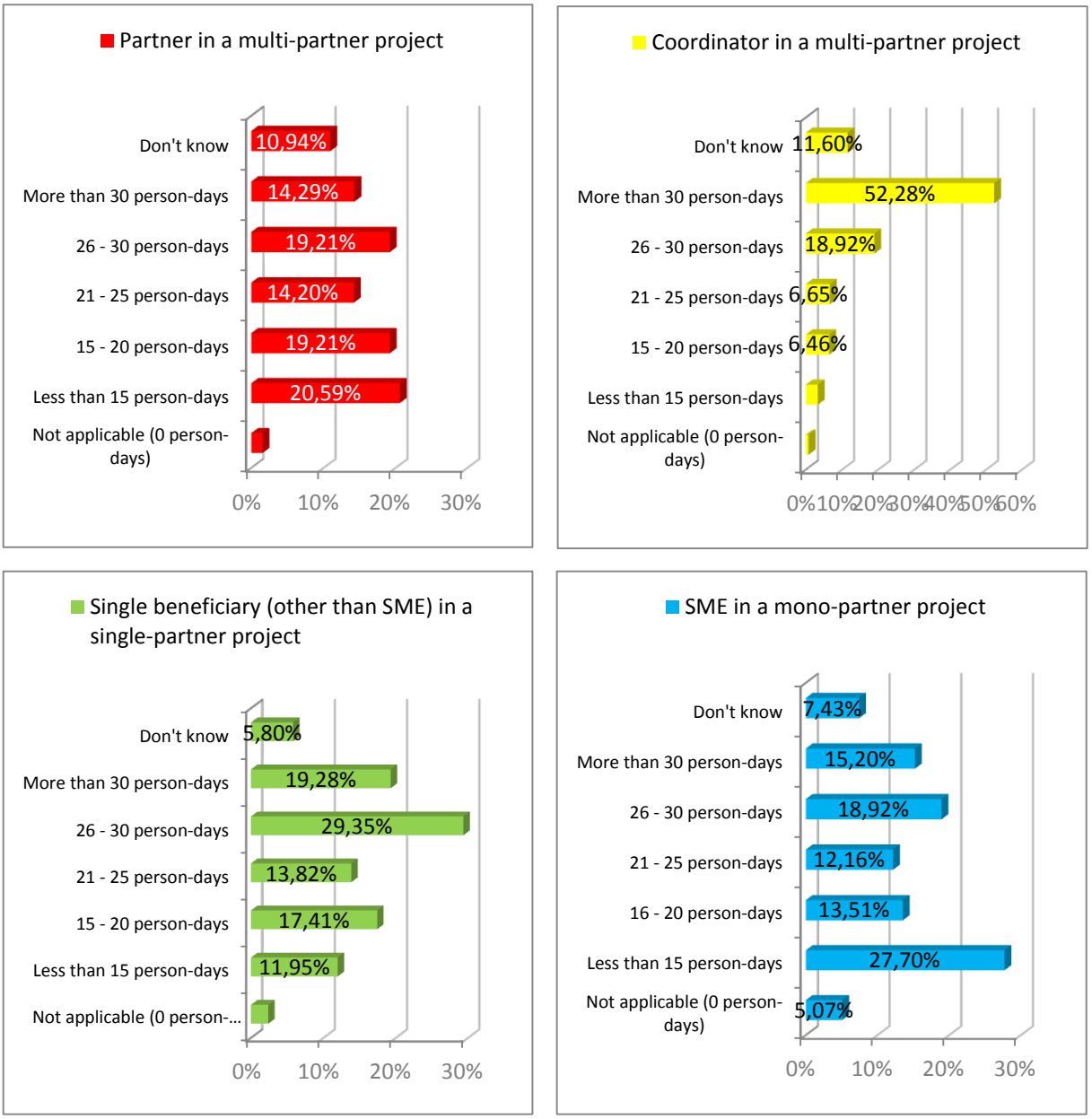
The minimum number of consortia members in the projects referred to in the survey was 10, and the vast majority (91%) had 10 - 19 members. Only 1% of consortia had 40 or more members.

8.2. Estimation of effort - proposal preparation and submission

Survey responses show that in multi-partner projects the major burden lies with the coordinator, whether this be for proposal preparation and submission, or for grant preparation and signature.

52% of coordinators spending more than 30 days on proposal preparation, as opposed to 14% of participants. For mono-beneficiaries, the administrative effort spent on this phase is less for SMEs (the majority -28% - spending less than 15 person days) than other types of single beneficiary (the majority of whom 29% -spend 26-30 person days).

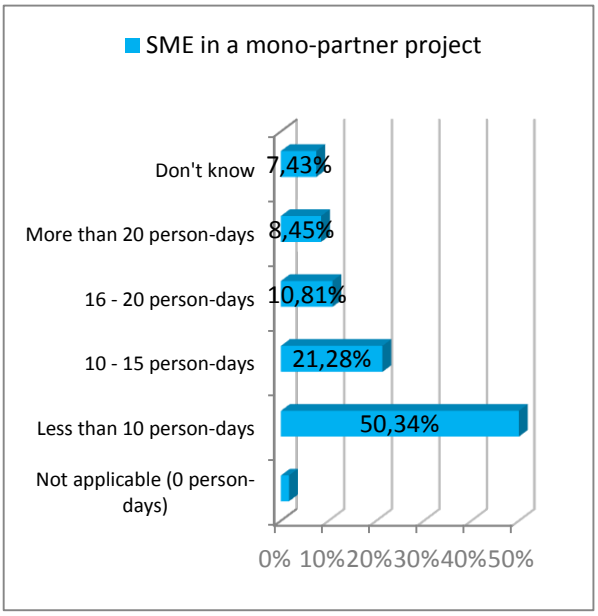
Figure 9.5: Estimation of working time spent on proposal preparation and submission (questions 3.5.4, 3.5.7, 3.5.10, 3.5.13)

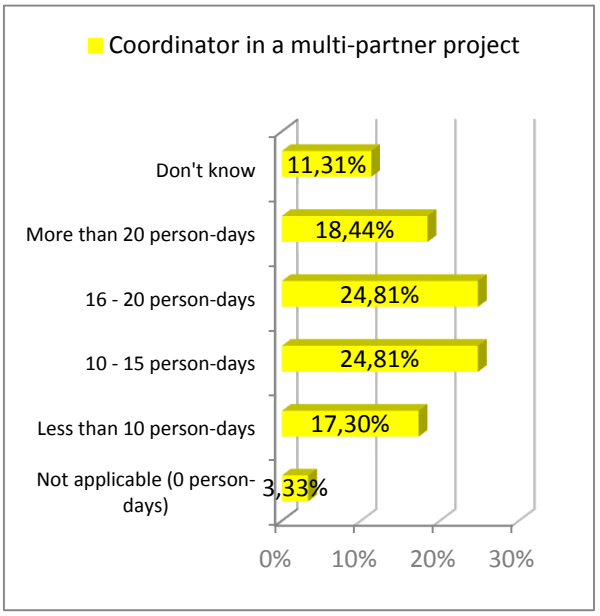


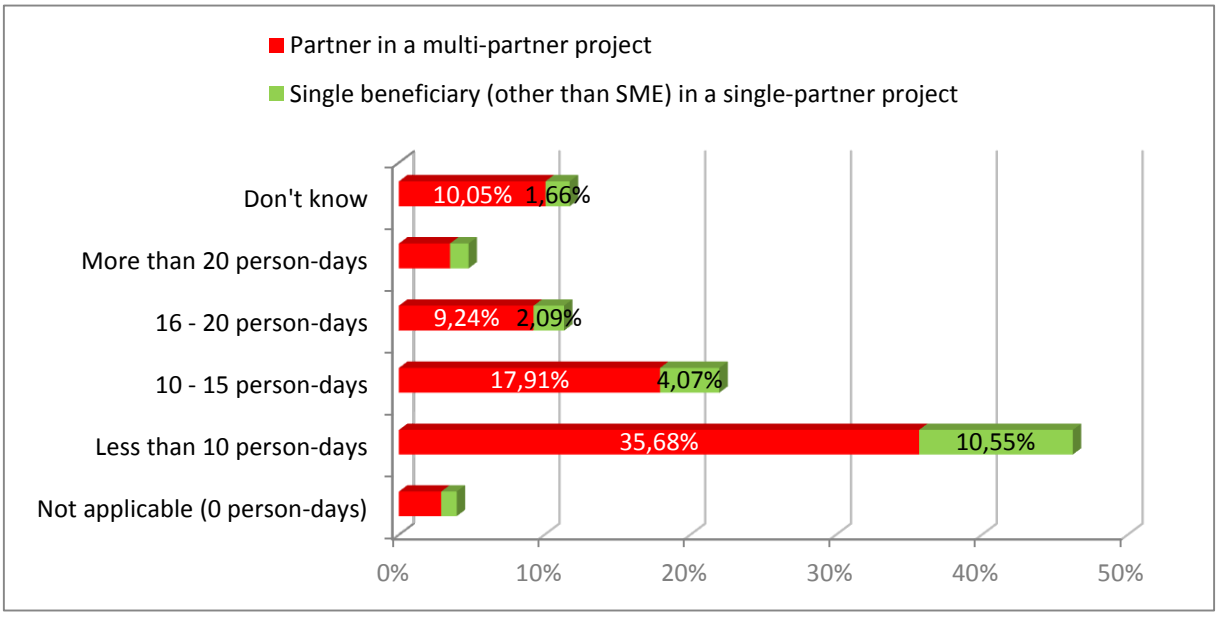
8.3. Estimation of effort - grant preparation and signature

Grant preparation and signature requires a lower administrative effort than the proposal preparation and submission phase. With the exception of the coordinator in a multi-partner project, the majority of respondents report spending less than 10 working days on this phase.

Figure 9.6: Estimation of working time spent on grant preparation and signature (question 3.5.16, 3.5.19, 3.5.22)







8.4. Centralising financial transactions via the coordinator

With regard to participants' assessment of the impact of centralising financial transactions via the coordinator, 41% participants (1728 replies) agreed that this had a positive effect, while 5% (202 respondents) disagreed. A further 33% (1,362 replies) remained neutral, while 21% (882 respondents) left this question unanswered.

Respondents who either agreed or disagreed were asked to provide additional comments. 1,608 participants did so and the free text replies were sorted in a list of categories with the most frequently occurring[13] as follows:

Table 9.1: Main free-text comments concerning the impact of centralising financial transactions via the coordinator (question 3.6.1)

Category	Count	Percentage
Better management (it is a sensible way of increasing the monitoring capacities of the coordinator and enhancing its managing position)	537	33.4%
General and basic agreement (generic references to increased efficiency and enhanced communication)	234	14.6%
Simpler for other partners (comments insisted on the fact that this feature simplifies the participation of standard partners)	220	13.7%
Good for financial management (these comments, in clear connection with the first category, underlined the beneficial effect from the perspective of the financial management)	144	9.0%
Experience and behaviour matters (respondents put the focus on the fact that the coordinator role requires a certain experience or at least some specific characteristics, as well as a sound financial capacity of the organisation behind)	123	7.6%
Burden for the coordinator (comments underlined the fact that the centralised financial transactions end up representing an extra burden for the entity in charge)	82	5.1%
Risk/experience of delays (respondents highlighted that in some cases delays in the processing of the transfers by the coordinators were experienced)	77	4.8%
Direct to partners (this group of comments expressed their preference for bilateral arrangements between the EU services and each individual beneficiary)	37	2.3%
No real novelty (respondents preferred to comment on the fact that this was already the case in previous programmes)	31	1.9%
General and basic disagreement (generic references to potential inefficiencies and delays in this approach)	28	1.7%
Specific problems (several issues are collected under this group: the fees and exchange rates costs that coordinators are confronted with; transfers to certain countries may be forbidden at a certain point in time; cases of companies in liquidation and the risk coordinators are made liable for the amounts that cannot be recovered; consultancy companies being in charge of the financial management and that may be looking for their own benefit and not the one of the research; variety of legislations and national rules coordinators have to deal with)	28	1.7%
Need to clarify its powers (the central role of the coordinator would make it necessary, according to this comments, clarifying further its powers and capacities)	25	1.6%
Other less frequent replies (increased transparency, importance of consortium agreement, possibility to focus on research)	21	1.3%

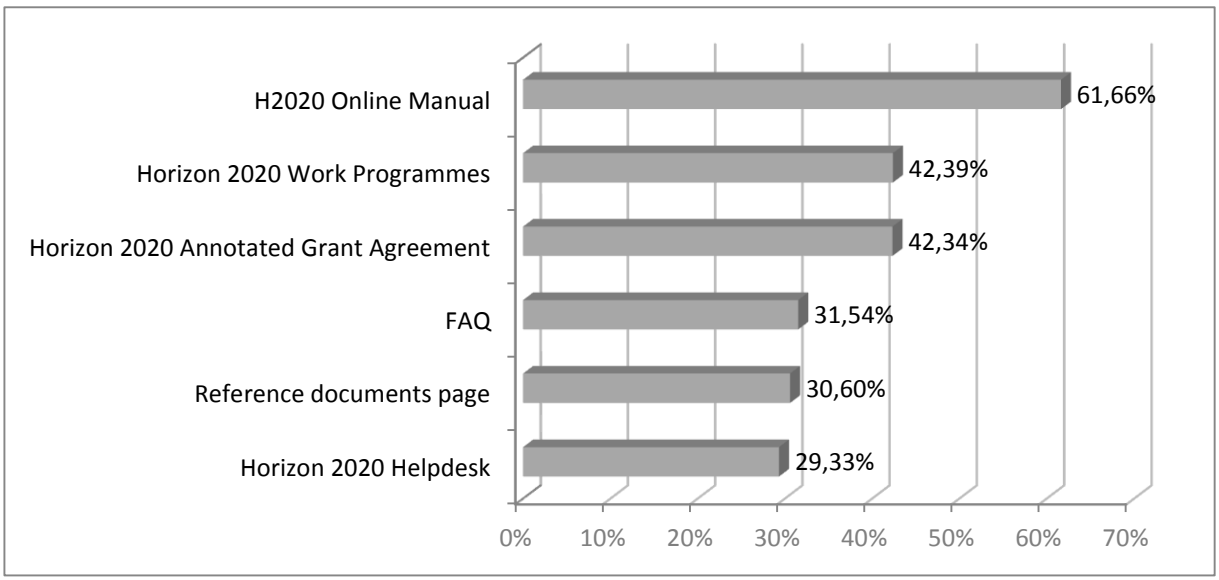
[13] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

9. Support documents and services

9.1. Participant Portal online support features

The vast majority of respondents (77%) used at least one of the online support features, with the H2020 online manual as the most used (62%) and the H2020 helpdesk least used (29%). The H2020 annotated grant agreement and the H2020 work programmes were jointly the second most frequently consulted online support features at 42% each.

Figure 10.1: Participant Portal online support features used by survey particpants (question 4.1.1)



Both experienced users and newcomers used the Participant Portal's support features and information to the same extent (78% and 75% respectively); and (with the exception of the H2020 work programmes), the responses on the perceived usefulness of all support features were also very similar.

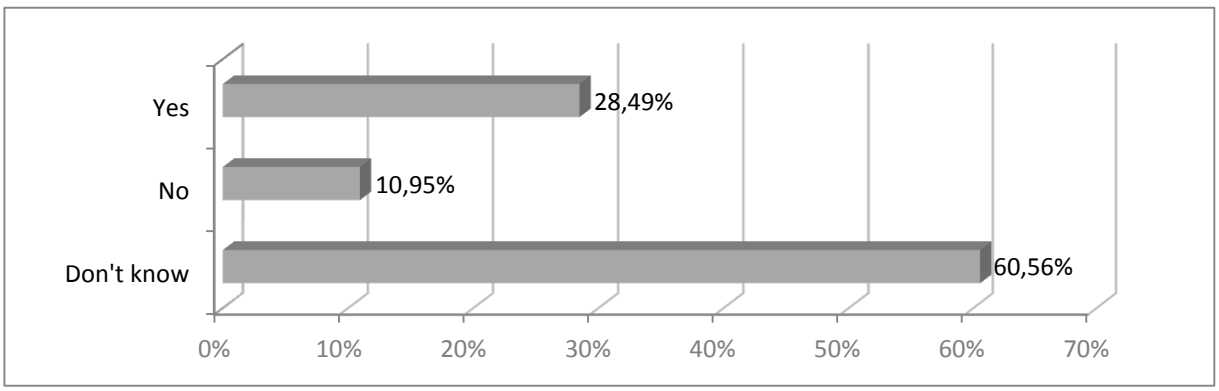
At the top end, for both groups, 54% found the H2020 online manual to be very/fairly useful, while only 23% of each group (experienced users and newcomers) found the Horizon 2020 helpdesk to be very/fairly useful.

However, responses showed that experienced users were much more likely to consult the H2020 Work Programmes than newcomers (48% as compared with 29%). This difference was also reflected in how useful the H2020 Work Programmes were perceived by each group (44% versus 25% respectively).

In addition, 32% of respondents found it easy to use the National Contact Point search facility on the Participant Portal; only 6% finding it 'not very', or 'not at all', easy.

Overall, 29% of participants considered that the Participant Portal online support features could be improved.

Figure 10.2: Participant opinions on whether the online support features can be improved (question 4.2)



9.2. Horizon 2020 Information Days

H2020 information days were attended by 42% of the respondents.

Almost half of experienced users had attended information days, while only just over one quarter of newcomers had done so. The level of satisfaction was also higher among experienced users (35% found the information days to be useful as compared to 22% of newcomers).

When asked to comment on the usefulness of Horizon 2020 Information Days and other information sessions organised in Member States (free text reply), 900 participants answered. The replies were sorted into a list of categories, the most frequently occurring[14] of which were the following:

Table 10.1: Main free-text comments concerning the usefulness of Horizon 2020 Information Days (question 4.6)

Category	Count	Percentage
Positive experience: informative and useful/ cleared many concerns/ detailed information provided on timing, reporting etc./ 'tips & tricks' appreciated.	200	22.2%
Information (though useful) was limited and mostly already available online/in official documents – -expected to have insights on how to prepare a proposal, funding rates, eligibility, amendments and operational aspects, etc. -expected more call and topic specific information -expected call representatives to comment on ideas presented and to answer operational aspects of calls.	183	20.3%
Positive knock-on effect: after attending Information Days, stakeholders spread information at local-regional level, giving seminars at NCP/University/Institute premises to inform researchers	89	9.9%
Provides useful networking opportunity - one of the main value of these events; it facilitates meeting potential partners.	84	9.3%
Information too general/ provides limited new & relevant info: As a result not useful for experienced users, although may be useful for newcomers.	73	8.1%
Streaming of event and recorded webinars that can be viewed when convenient are appreciated (reduces time and resources)	56	6.2%
Need to deliver more effective presentations/improve content of presentations/ give adequate training to speakers/provide answers to questions asked	55	6.1%
Appreciate possibility to address questions directly, and to meet & discuss with PO	41	4.6%
More targeted brokerage events needed- to increase the quality of proposals by providing help in finding the right partners	32	3.6%
Regional and local language information & discussion appreciated	29	3.2%
Events usually held too late:when consortia are already established/ proposal submitted/ after kick-off meeting/ or was announced too late and only via the Portal	20	2.2%
Over-crowded venues: lack of real networking opportunity/impossible to ask questions	13	1.4%

The table shows that comments on the usefulness of the H2020 Information Days were equally divided, with approximately half of respondees indicating issues where improvements could be made.

In line with the comments received, Information Days could be enhanced by splitting the day into separate sessions (or running parallel sessions) – such that newcomers are provided more general information, while more targeted information is directed specifically at experienced applicants who know the topics, the calls and the general procedures and who want to gather specific information.

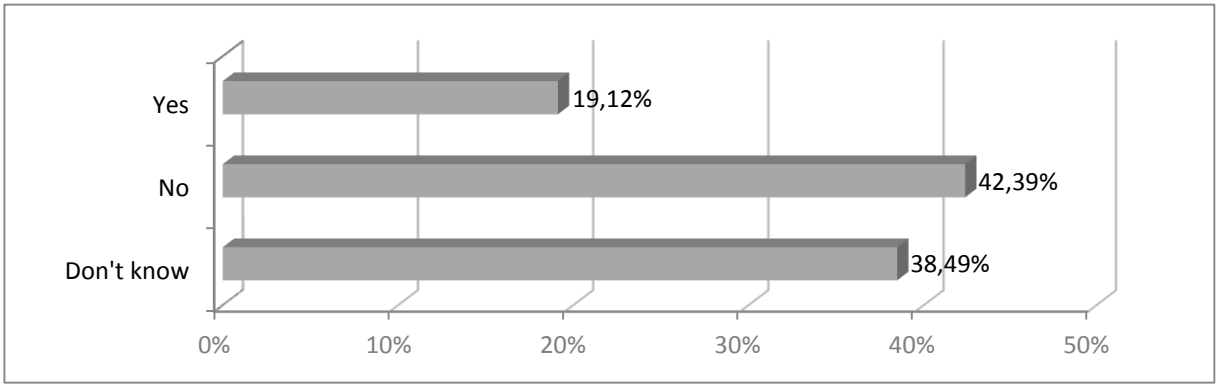
[14] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

It is also apparent that there is a need to increase awareness of web-streaming of H2020 Information Days, events and webinars, as well as the possibility to view the web-streaming after closure of the event.

10. Alternative funding models

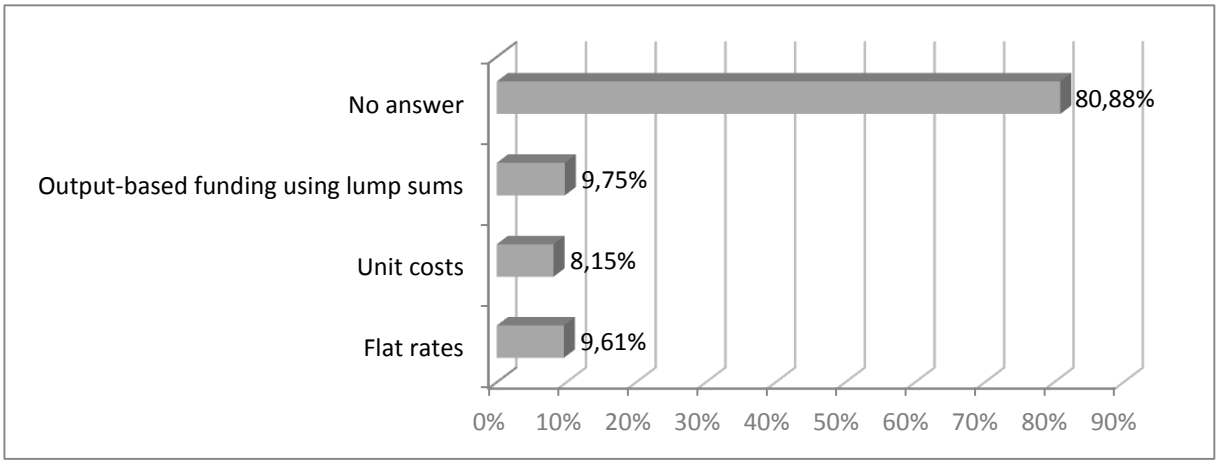
As concerns the basic funding model, a minority of 19.2% were in favour of replacing actual costs with, or extending the use of, lump sums, unit costs or flat rates. Double this number (42.1%) were not in favour of the use of alternative funding models; while 38.9% replied 'don't know'.

Figure 11.1: Distribution of opinions on whether other funding models should be used to replace real-cost funding (question 5.1)



Participants were then asked which alternatives to real-cost funding should be used more often in Horizon 2020. Although participants could select more than one option, affirmative replies for each of the three alternatives were under 10%. Only 9.8% of participants wanted more output-based funding using lump sums, 8.2% wanted more use of unit costs; and 9.7% wanted more use of flat rates.

Figure 11.2: Participant responses in favour of three potential scenarios for replacing real-cost funding (question 5.1.1)



11. Comparison with other funding programmes

Only 20% of respondents indicated that they participated in other European, national or regional research funding programmes that are simpler or more user-friendly than Horizon 2020. Of the remainder, 40% (1679 replies) considered there was no simpler programme, and 40% (1683 replies) did not know.

Those who considered that there was a simpler research funding programme were invited to indicate the name of the funding organisation(s). A total of 795 relevant replies were given. Amongst the several programmes or clusters of programmes identified, only those mentioned at least 10 times are listed below:

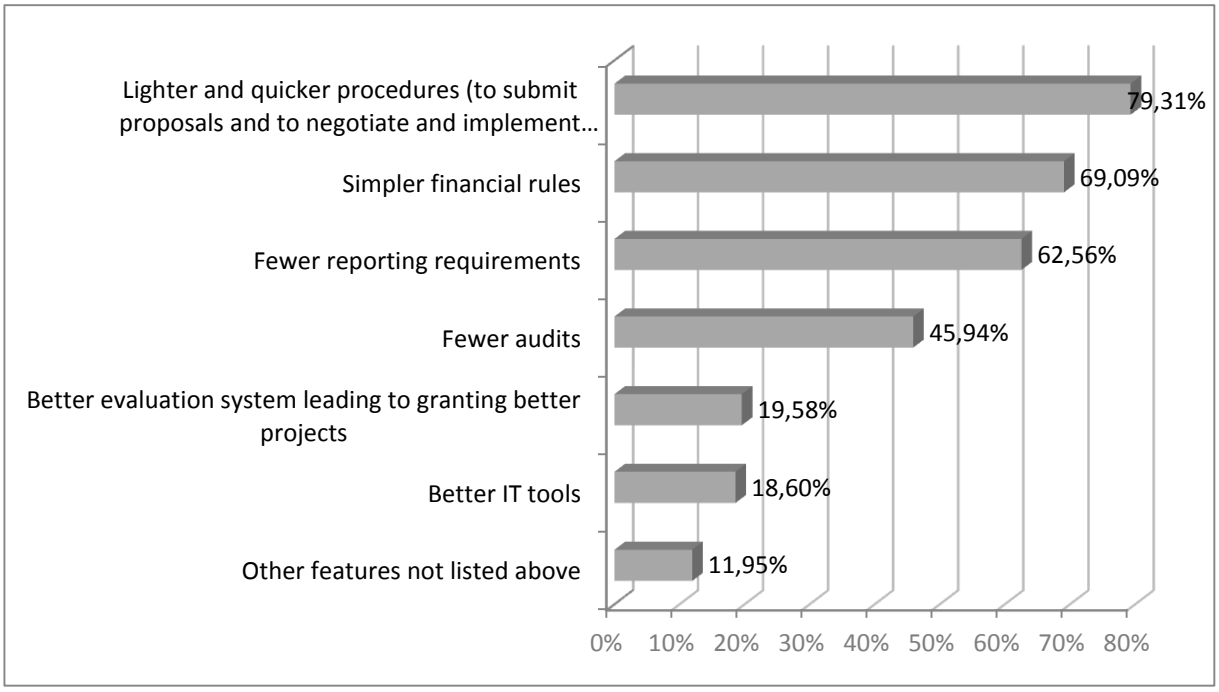
Table 12.1: Funding programmes considered to be simpler or more user-friendly than Horizon 2020 (question 5.2.1)

Country	Name of funding organisation
Austria	Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, FWF
Belgium	Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen, FWO
Belgium	Agentschap voor Innovatie door Wetenschap en Technologie, IWT
Finland	Innovaatiorahoituskeskus Tekes
France	Agence Nationale de la Recherche, ANR
Germany	Deutsche Forschung Gemeinschaft, DFG
Germany	Several ministerial federal programmes (from BMBF, BMWi, BMEL)
Netherlands	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO
Spain	Programmes from the Spanish Ministry of Economy (MINECO)
Sweden	Vinnova, Verket för Innovationssystem
Sweden	Vetenskapsrådet, Swedish Research Council
United Kingdom	UK Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, STFC)
United Kingdom	Innovate UK
United Kingdom	Wellcome Trust
Norway	Forskingsrådet, Norwegian Research Council
USA	National Science Foundation, NSF
Switzerland	Swiss National Science Foundation

Respondents could select from a series of pre-defined options that would explain the advantages of the preferred programme, or specify other features not listed. When listing features of these simpler research funding programmes, participants emphasised these recurrent topics:

- General user-friendliness (concerning aspects such as: IT tools, quality of the guidelines and possibility of direct human contact for project follow-up)
- A two-stage call implementation approach that simplified and shortened the application process
- Flexible implementation built on a trust-based relationship with scientists, allowing researchers to concentrate more on science and less on administrative tasks. Two main expressions of this flexibility were: increased focus on achievements and lighter reporting requirements, together with the possibility to adjust work-plan and budget.
- In relation to the previous point, but listed separately due to the frequency of its occurrence: fewer requirements on time-recording and control
- Several replies also acknowledged that the comparison was in any case somehow unfair: regional or national programmes, or those from fundraising organisations, can cater for more flexible and faster implementation procedures because they are intrinsically less complex: lack of European collaborative dimension, smaller consortia, lower budgets…

Figure 12.1: Features of the research funding programmes which make them simpler than Horizon 2020 (question 5.2.2)



12. Number one simplification idea

On the question *"What would be your number 1 priority for a single concrete simplification measure in Horizon 2020"* (free text reply), 2290 replies were received (2015 for the survey by invitation and 275 for the open survey). These covered a wide range of suggestions which were sorted in a list of categories. The most frequently occurring categories[15] are the following:

Table 13.1: Number 1 priority for a single concrete simplification measure in Horizon 2020 (question 5.3)

Category	Count	Percentage
Further improvements to the IT	275	10.7%
More and better defined 2-stage calls	176	6.9%
Improved documentation/helpdesk	158	6.2%
Simpler timesheets	149	5.8%
Shorter proposal, focused on essentials	134	5.2%
Simpler project reporting	128	5.0%
Output-based funding	89	3.5%
Simpler work programme	78	3.0%
More use of unit costs	63	2.5%
Change rule on last closed financial year - hourly rate	62	2.4%
Improved proposal evaluation	58	2.3%
Legal entity validation/LEAR appointment	55	2.1%
Stronger involvement of COM project officers	46	1.8%
Harmonised implementation	38	1.5%
Smaller projects	21	0.8%
Change of rules on costs for internal invoicing	19	0.7%
More trust – less control	15	0.6%
Ethics processes and requirements	14	0.6%

[15] Following grouping of free-text replies into categories, the most frequently occurring categories were those with a count of 10 or more

13. Conclusions

Simplification is one of the major features of Horizon 2020, bringing a radically new, user-focused approach to the EU's research and innovation funding policies. Simplification means, for example, reduction of administrative burden, improved guidance, quicker procedures, etc., and the programme's simpler design and rules have been supplemented by improved implementing procedures.

After the first 20 months of Horizon 2020, this survey aimed to collect feedback on the impact of the simplification measures already in place, and to gather ideas for further simplification to be applied in the future.

The survey shows that the achieved simplification in the design and implementation of Horizon 2020 is welcomed by participants, with the vast majority satisfied with the basic funding model, the paperless grant management via the Participant Portal, the no-negotiation approach and the quicker time to grant of eight months. At the same time, increased interest from potential applicants in the new programme is demonstrated by the fact that 30% of respondents were newcomers.

Of those respondents who expressed an opinion, 75% confirmed that, overall, the processes in H2020 are simpler than in FP7. There was general agreement across all the individual simplification measures, with the Participant Portal and e-signature as the front runners (about 90% consider these as very or fairly beneficial). The figures for the single flat rate for indirect costs were also overwhelmingly positive (74% consider it beneficial), as were those on the 8 months time-to-grant (85% in favour) and the no-negotiation approach (70% in favour).

While 85% of repondents are in favour of the 8 months time-to- grant, a resounding 54% of comments received asked for *further* reduction in the time to grant: 8 months being considered still too long, especially for SMEs, and ICT and innovative projects.

When it comes to suggestions for further simplification, only a minority plead for changing the rules on reimbursement in general (15%) or the indirect cost flat rate (8%). Similarly, only 5% call for improvements in the process for ex-ante viability checks, or the process for establishing that an organisation is an SME. Furthermore, in giving their opinion on three potential scenarios for future EU funding rules, less than 10% of participants wanted to see increased use of extended use of lump sums, unit costs or flat rates as an alternative to real-cost funding.

Although, in most cases, respondents viewed the simplification measures positively; the survey results also indicate that many respondents deemed it possible to further simplify the details of H2020 processes, rules, documentation and IT systems in one way or another.

In particular, 24% of respondents considered the requirements for work-time recording could be further simplified, mainly by abolishing timesheets or modifying existing rules.

With just under half of respondents (49%) expressing satisfaction with the efficiency of the process of validation of organisations, this could also be enhanced. The main issues centred around the length and complexity of the process, difficulties with LEAR nomination, and the need to improve guidance and communication on the process.

As regards the estimation of effort for proposal preparation and submission and for grant signature, responses were received from all organisational roles and across all types of projects - although the vast majority were from coordinators or partners in multi-partner projects, by far the majority of which were research and innovation actions.

As the success rate in the H2020 research programme is relatively low (only about one in six proposals is selected for funding) the administrative effort in proposal preparation and submission are of particular importance. The survey data gathered on this part of the process indicate that time spent on preparing proposals for submission varied depending on the type of project and the role of the organisation in the project. Coordinators in multi-partner projects required the greatest effort, the majority (52%) requiring more than 30 person-days. Indeed, survey responses confirm the assumption that in multi-partner projects the major burden lies with the coordinator. In addition, for all organisational roles and across all types of projects, proposal preparation and submission was shown to require a higher administrative effort than the grant preparation and signature phase.

Two-stage calls were viewed by nearly half of the respondents as a potential remedy for oversubscription. Only a minority were in favour of stricter top-down definition of topics (18%) or shorter call opening periods (12%). The data gathered in the survey from participants in two-stage calls indicates that on average 30% of the working time for both stages is spent on the first stage, i.e. applicants failing in the first stage save on average 70% of the administrative burden for proposal preparation. As such, two-stage calls may be a valuable means of reducing the cost for proposal preparation and submission, in particular for applicants failing after the first stage.

Responses on the perceived usefulness of H2020 support features indicate that improvements on details are considered necessary. Overall, 29% of respondents considered that the Participant Portal online support features could be improved. While this does not indicate major structural problems, there is a need to further enhance the usability and usefulness of the online support systems. Similarly, the level of satisfaction with Information Days was not high. The main issue centred around the general nature of the information, and the failure to target specific information at experienced applicants who know the topics, calls and general procedures, while directing more general information to newcomers.

Only 20% of respondents indicated that they participated in other European, national or regional research funding programmes that are simpler or more user-friendly than Horizon 2020. All but one of the funding programmes most frequently mentioned were European. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that the comparison was somehow unfair, as regional or national programmes, or those from fundraising organisations, can cater for more flexible and faster implementation procedures because they are intrinsically less complex.

A wide range of suggestions were received for respondents 'number 1 priority' for a single concrete simplification measure in Horizon 2020. The most popular included further improvements to the IT sytems, documentation and helpdesk; more and better defined 2-stage calls; and shorter proposals, simpler timesheets and easier project reporting.

The survey findings will be taken into consideration alongside the results of other feedback measures for implementing future simplification measures. The Commission will continue to monitor the impact of simplification in Horizon 2020 very carefully, and adapt implementing procedures as necessary.

H2020 Simplification Survey

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

PLEASE READ BEFORE STARTING

You'll need about 20-30 minutes for this survey.

Horizon 2020's design and rules have been simplified to make them more user-friendly. The implementing procedures are also simpler now. 18 months into the programme, this survey is designed to:

- find out what you think about the impact of the existing simplification measures
- gather any ideas you may have for further simplification.

Save your answers as you go so you can complete the survey at more than one sitting if necessary.

Deadline - 23 October 2015

Simplification includes:

- less administrative burden
- better guidelines
- faster procedures.

Please bear this in mind when answering the questions.

Any data you submit to this survey will be uploaded and held securely in line with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals' personal data. For full details, see the Specific Privacy Statement.

Most questions are mandatory. You can make further comments and suggestions if you wish. If you don't know the answer to a question, or it doesn't apply to you, please select 'Don't know'.

Any questions?
Please email: RTD-SURVEY-H2020-SIMPLIFICATION@ec.europa.eu

Many thanks for your contribution,
The survey team

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1. Information on your organisation

* **1.1.** Your organisation type is:

- ○ Higher or Secondary Education Establishment
- ○ Non-profit Research Organisation
- ○ Public body (excluding Research Organisations and Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)
- ○ Private for-profit entities (excluding Higher/Secondary Education Establishments)
- ○ Non-Governmental Organisation
- ○ International Organisation
- ○ Other

* **1.1.1.** Please specify:

300 character(s) maximum

* **1.2.** Is your organisation a Small or Medium-sized Enterprise (SME)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

* **1.3.** Country where your organisation is established:

- Albania
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Faroe Islands
- Finland
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom
- Other

* **1.3.1.** Please specify:

25 character(s) maximum

* **1.3.2.** Have you experienced any problems related to the fact that you are neither in one of the EU Member States, nor in one of the countries Associated to Horizon 2020?

- Yes
- No

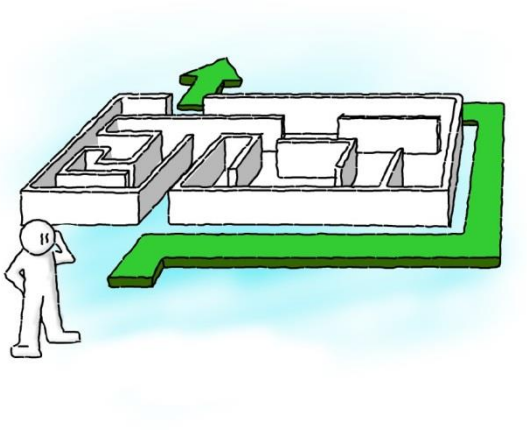
* **1.3.2.1.** Please specify:

* **1.4.** Your experience with EU funded research:

- This is your first time participating in an EU research funded project (Horizon 2020)
- You have participated more than once in EU research funded projects (Horizon 2020, FP7...)

2. Horizon 2020 simplification measures

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements about the main Horizon 2020 simplification measures. Comments fields allow you to develop your answers further and offer suggestions for improvement.



* **2.1.** In your opinion, are the processes of proposal preparation & submission and of grant preparation in Horizon 2020 simpler than those in FP7?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

* **2.1.1.** Please specify:

For each of the following simplification measures, please indicate to what extent you have felt the benefit of the simplification.

	Very beneficial	Fairly beneficial	Neutral / Don't know	Not very beneficial	Not at all beneficial
* **2.2.** The single reimbursement rate in a project *(no differentiation by type of activity or category of organisation)*	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.3.** The single flat rate (25%) for indirect costs	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.4.** The reduced requirements for work-time recording *(for details see pp 156-157 of the Annotated Grant Agreement)*	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.5.** Fewer ex-ante financial viability checks *(only private coordinating organisations are checked)*	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.6.** The self-assessment of SME status *(as compared to a formal validation process based on supporting financial documents)*	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.7.** The reduced number of certificates on financial statements (only at the time of the final reporting)	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.8.** Electronic-only signature of grant agreements	○	○	○	○	○
* **2.9.** The Participant Portal as a one-stop shop for all interactions with the Commission in managing proposals and grants	○	○	○	○	○

According to you, is it possible to further simplify the following:

	Yes	No	Don't know
* **2.10.** The rules on reimbursement	○	○	○
* **2.11.** Reimbursement of indirect costs	○	○	○
* **2.12.** Requirements for work-time recording	○	○	○
* **2.13.** Ex-ante financial viability checks	○	○	○
* **2.14.** The process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME	○	○	○

* **2.10.1.** Please specify how you think the **rules on reimbursement** could be simplified further:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.11.1.** Please specify how you think the **reimbursement of indirect costs** could be simplified further:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.12.1.** Please specify how you think **requirements for work-time recording** could be simplified further:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.13.1.** Please indicate how you think **ex-ante financial viability checks** could be simplified further:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.14.1.** Please specify how you think the **process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME** could be simplified further:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.15.** According to you, how efficient is the overall process for validation of organisations?

This process comprises all aspects related to: organisation registration and obtaining a Participant Identification Code (PIC), validation of legal entities, LEAR appointment, updating organisational data, etc.

- ( ) Very efficient
- ( ) Fairly efficient
- ( ) Neutral / Don't know
- ( ) Not very efficient
- ( ) Not at all efficient

2.15.1. Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.16.** According to you, which of the following would help reduce oversubscription?

at most 4 choice(s)

- [ ] Very short opening periods for calls (*e.g. calls open for less than 3 months*)
- [ ] 2-stage calls
- [ ] A top-down approach to topic definition
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Don't know

2.16.1. Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.17.** According to you, is **the shortening of the time**, to a maximum of 8 months, **between the closure of a call and signature of a grant agreement** a positive step?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral / Don't know
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2.18. Comments:

500 character(s) maximum

* **2.19.** In H2020, proposals selected for funding are turned into grants as they were submitted- without requesting changes to the technical content (the 'no-negotiation' approach). Is this a simplification?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral / Don't know
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2.20. Comments:

500 character(s) maximum

3. Estimation of the effort needed for proposal preparation and grant signature

*Please give below the estimation for a **single project**, that you submitted as a proposal and for which a grant agreement was signed. If you are involved in multiple projects, please choose the one you are most familiar with.*

*When estimating the working time for the questions below, please consider the **working time actually spent** by your organisation in fulfilling the administrative requirements (not the overall duration of the process; and also excluding the time spent by the EU).*

* **3.1.** Maximum EU contribution (in euros) allocated to the project you refer to in this survey:

Provide figure with no decimal place (e.g. 3000000).

€

* **3.2.** EU contribution (in euros) allocated to your organisation for the project you refer to in this survey:

Provide figure with no decimal place (e.g. 3000000).

€

* **3.3.** The number of consortium members in the project you refer to in this survey:

Include your own organisation in the number provided.

partners

* **3.4**. Was the call to which you submitted a proposal a two-stage call?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

* **3.4.1.** What percentage of the overall working time spent preparing the overall proposal (stage 1 and 2) went to stage 1 only?

- less than 10%
- between 10% and 30%
- between 30% and 50%
- more than 50%
- Don't know

* **3.5.** Role of your organisation in the project for which you respond to this survey:

- SME in a mono-partner project *[SME]*
- Single beneficiary (other than SME) in a single-partner project *[MONO]*
- Coordinator in a multi-partner project *[COO]*
- Partner in a multi-partner project *[PART]*

* **3.5.1.** Type of project for which you respond to this survey *[SME]*

- Coordination & support action
- SME Instrument
- Prize
- Support for training and career development of researchers (Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action)

* **3.5.2.** Type of project for which you respond to this survey *[MONO]*

- Coordination & support action
- Support for 'frontier' research (ERC grant)
- Support for training and career development of researchers (Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action)
- Prize

* **3.5.3.** Type of project for which you respond to this survey: *[COO] + [PART]*

- ○ Research & Innovation action
- ○ Innovation action
- ○ Coordination & support action
- ○ Support for 'frontier' research (ERC grant)
- ○ Support for training and career development of researchers (Marie Sklodowska-Curie) action
- ○ ERA-NET CoFund action
- ○ CoFund of Public Procurement of Innovative solutions (PPI)
- ○ CoFund of Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP) action

* **3.5.4.** How much working time did your organisation spend on the **proposal? -** (from finding a suitable topic, setting up the consortium to submitting the proposal to the Commission). *[COO]*

- ○ Not applicable (0 person-days)
- ○ Less than 15 person-days
- ○ 15 - 20 person-days
- ○ 21 - 25 person-days
- ○ 26 - 30 person-days
- ○ More than 30 person-days
- ○ Don't know

* **3.5.5.** Please indicate the number of person-days: *[COO]*

person-days

3.5.6. Comments: *[COO]*

500 character(s) maximum

*3.5.7. How much working time did you spend on preparing and submitting your **proposal**, including the arrangements with your host institution? *[MONO]*

- Not applicable (0 person-days)
- Less than 15 person-days
- 15 - 20 person-days
- 21 - 25 person-days
- 26 - 30 person-days
- More than 30 person-days
- Don't know

*3.5.8. Please indicate the number of person-days: *[MONO]*

person-days

3.5.9. Comments: *[MONO]*

500 character(s) maximum

*3.5.10. How much working time did your organisation spend on finding a suitable topic on the Participant Portal, preparing the proposal and submitting it to the Commission? *[SME]*

- Not applicable (0 person-days)
- Less than 15 person-days
- 16 - 20 person-days
- 21 - 25 person-days
- 26 - 30 person-days
- More than 30 person-days
- Don't know

*3.5.11. Please indicate the number of person-days: *[SME]*

person-days

3.5.12. Comments: *[SME]*

500 character(s) maximum

***3.5.13.** How much working time did your organisation spend on the **proposal** starting from finding a suitable topic and consortium and preparing your part of the proposal? *[PART]*

- Not applicable (0 person-days)
- Less than 15 person-days
- 15 - 20 person-days
- 21 - 25 person-days
- 26 - 30 person-days
- More than 30 person-days
- Don't know

***3.5.14.** Please indicate the number of person-days: *[PART]*

person-days

3.5.15. Comments: *[PART]*

500 character(s) maximum

***3.5.16.** How much working time did your organisation spend on **grant preparation and signature**, including interaction with your consortium partners for development of the Consortium Agreement? *[COO]*

- Not applicable (0 person-days)
- Less than 10 person-days
- 10 - 15 person-days
- 16 - 20 person-days
- More than 20 person-days
- Don't know

*3.5.17. Please indicate the number of person-days: *[COO]*

person days

3.5.18. Comments: *[COO]*
500 character(s) maximum

*3.5.19. How much working time did you spend on grant preparation and signature, including preparing the Description of Action (Annex I of the Grant Agreement) based on the technical part (part B) of the proposal? *[MONO] + [PART]*

- Not applicable (0 person-days)
- Less than 10 person-days
- 10 - 15 person-days
- 16 - 20 person-days
- More than 20 person-days
- Don't know

*3.5.20. Please indicate the number of person-days: *[MONO] + [PART]*

person-days

3.5.21. Comments: *[MONO] + [PART]*
500 character(s) maximum

*3.5.22. How much working time did your organisation spend on **grant preparation and signature**?

- ○ Not applicable (0 person-days) *[SME]*
- ○ Less than 10 person-days
- ○ 10 - 15 person-days
- ○ 16 - 20 person-days
- ○ More than 20 person-days
- ○ Don't know

*3.5.23. Please indicate the number of person-days: *[SME]*

_____ person-days

*3.5.24. Comments: *[SME]*

500 character(s) maximum

*3.6. In your opinion, transiting all financial transactions via the coordinator has had a positive effect?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neutral / Don't know
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

*3.6.1. Comments:

500 character(s) maximum

4. Use of support documents and services

Did you ever use any of the online support features or information available on the Participant Portal?

Y
e
s

N
o

* **4.1.**

* **4.1.1.** Please indicate which ones:

at most 6 choice(s)

- [ ] H2020 Online Manual
- [ ] Reference documents page
- [ ] Horizon 2020 Annotated Grant Agreement
- [ ] Horizon 2020 Work Programmes
- [ ] Horizon 2020 Helpdesk
- [ ] FAQ

How useful was this support feature?

at most 6 answered row(s)

	Very useful	Fairly useful	Neutral / Don't know	Not very useful	Not at all useful
4.1.1.1. Horizon 2020 Online Manual	○	○	○	○	○
4.1.1.2. Reference documents page	○	○	○	○	○
4.1.1.3. Horizon 2020 Annotated Grant Agreement	○	○	○	○	○
4.1.1.4. Horizon 2020 Work Programmes	○	○	○	○	○

4.1.1.5. Horizon 2020 Helpdesk					
4.1.1.6. FAQ					

* **4.2.** According to you, can any of these support documents or services be improved?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

* **4.2.1.** Please describe how:

500 character(s) maximum

* **4.3.** How easy to use was the National Contact Point (NCP) search facility on the Participant Portal?

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neutral / Don't know
- Not very easy
- Not at all easy

* **4.4.** According to you, how could it be improved?
500 character(s) maximum

* **4.5.** Have you attended any of the Horizon 2020 Information Days, or any other information session(s) organised by the Commission in Member States?

- Yes
- No

* **4.5.1.** How useful did you find these Information Days/Information sessions

- Very useful
- Fairly useful
- Neutral / Don't know
- Not very useful
- Not at all useful

4.6. Comment:

5. Future simplification options for Horizon 2020

* **5.1.** The basic funding model in Horizon 2020 is based on **real-cost reimbursement for direct costs** and a **25% flat-rate for indirect costs**. Do you see any simplification potential in replacing real-cost funding with/extending the use of, **alternative funding models** (e.g. lump sums, unit costs, flat rates)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

* **5.1.1.** Please indicate which of the following alternatives to real-cost funding you would like to see used more often in Horizon 2020. You may select more than one option.

between 1 and 3 choices

Output-based funding using lump sums *means fixing, in the grant agreement, lump sum amounts for concrete, precisely defined deliverables. The lump sums are paid against provision of the deliverables without the need to report any costs incurred - but with the additional requirement that the proposal must precisely specify and justify each deliverable and the lump sums linked to them. Failure to produce an agreed deliverable will result in no payment being made.*

Unit costs *are based on the definition of a unit and an amount per unit. Only the number of units used has to be reported and justified, not the actual costs incurred. Example: Funding in Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions: The unit is the researcher month, the pre-defined amount per unit is the monthly allowance.*

Flat rates *are percentages applied to cost items for covering other cost items. For these other cost items to be covered by the flat rate, no cost reporting or justification is needed. Example: the flat rate of 25%, applied to the project's direct cost, for covering indirect costs.*

- ☐ Output-based funding using lump sums
- ☐ Unit costs
- ☐ Flat rates

* **5.1.1.1.** Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum

* **5.2.** Do you consider another European, national or regional research funding programme to be simpler and more user-friendly than Horizon 2020?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

* **5.2.1.** Please indicate the name of this programme(s) and, if possible, the funding organisation(s).

500 character(s) maximum

* **5.2.2.** When compared with Horizon 2020, that programme has (tick all options that apply):

at most 7 choice(s)

- ☐ Simpler financial rules
- ☐ Better IT tools
- ☐ Lighter and quicker procedures (to submit proposals and to negotiate and implement projects)
- ☐ Fewer reporting requirements
- ☐ Fewer audits
- ☐ Better evaluation system leading to granting better projects
- ☐ Other features not listed above

* **5.2.2.1.** Please specify:

500 character(s) maximum

Your number one simplification idea?

5.3. What would be your number 1 priority for a single concrete **simplification measure** in Horizon 2020?

500 character(s) maximum

6. Follow-up to this survey

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.

Feedback on your experience of H2020 will be used to assess the effectiveness of simplification measures already in place and to develop new measures for further simplification of H2020 in the future.

6.1. You can choose to stay anonymous but we would be very grateful if we could recontact you in the second phase of the survey.
If you agree to this, please provide below an e-mail address:

Make sure to introduce the text as *'username@domain'*