Council of the European Union

Brussels, 18 March 2026
(OR. en)

7461/26

RECH 128
MED 17
AGRI 196
MIGR 87

COVER NOTE

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	17 March 2026
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	SWD(2026) 91 final
Subject:	COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EVALUATION Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2026) 91 final.

Encl.: SWD(2026) 91 final

EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 17.3.2026
SWD(2026) 91 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)

{SWD(2026) 92 final}

Table of contents

Glossary

Term or acronym	*Meaning or definition*
ANR	*Agence Nationale de la Recherche*
AWP	Annual Work Programme
EU	European Union
EEA	European Environment Agency
EMPIR	European Metrology Programme for Innovation and Research
EPM	European Partnership for Metrology
EUCRA	European Climate Risk Assessment
FNSSA	Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture
FP6	Sixth Framework Programme on Research of the European Community for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for Research and Technological Development and Demonstration activities
HES	Higher Education Establishment
Horizon 2020 – SC2	Horizon 2020's Societal Challenge 2, "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy"
Horizon 2020 – SC5	Horizon 2020's Societal Challenge 5, "Climate action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials"
Horizon Europe – Cluster 6	Horizon Europe's Cluster 6, "Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment"

Term or acronym	*Meaning or definition*
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (reporting tool)
OPC	Open Public Consultation
OTH	Organisation other than Higher Education Establishment (HES), Research Organisation (REC), Public Body (PUB) and Private-for-Profit Organisation (PRC).
PRC	Private-for-Profit Organisation
PRIMA	Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area
PRIMA-IS	PRIMA Implemention Structure – PRIMA Foundation
PRIMA-PS	PRIMA Participating States
PSIA	Participating State Initiated Activity
PUB	Public Body
REA	European Research Executive Agency
REC	Research Organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

Term or acronym	*Meaning or definition*
SWD	Staff Working Document
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TTG	Time to Grant
TTI	Time to Inform
TTP	Time to Pay
TTS	Time to Sign
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
WEFE Nexus	Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope of the evaluation/fitness check

This Staff Working Document (SWD) assesses the public-public "Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area" (PRIMA). PRIMA was established by the Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 (the original Basic Act), amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 (the "amending Basic Act")[1], following an interim evaluation[2].

PRIMA is a public-public institutionalised European partnership between the European Union and, currently, 20 participating States, established under Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 185 of the TFEU enables the EU to participate in research and innovation programmes undertaken jointly by several Member States. Originally, PRIMA was launched under the EU's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), and was then prolonged under its successor, Horizon Europe (2021-2027).

The main objective of PRIMA is to develop research and innovation (R&I) capacities and solutions to improve integrated water management and sustainable, healthy and resilient agro-food systems in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean basin. This region is heavily affected by climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as a result of different factors like population growth, urbanisation and unsustainable consumption and production patterns (see Chapter 3).

Currently, 20 countries are participating states in PRIMA:

- EU Member States: Bulgaria (who joined PRIMA under Horizon Europe), Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.
- Countries associated to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe: Israel, Tunisia and Türkiye.
- Countries not associated to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. These countries signed bilateral international agreements with the EU in 2017-2018 to participate in PRIMA. For the purpose of

[1] Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States, amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024. Consolidated text at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02017D1324-20240509

[2] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), Communication, COM(2023)285 final, and Staff Working Document, SWD(2023) 169 final. At: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:285:FIN and https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=SWD:2023:169:FIN

enabling these countries' participation in PRIMA also under Horizon Europe, these agreements are being revised and exchange of letters agreements are to be signed to confirm their participation in PRIMA from 2025 to 2027. Agreements, in the form of an Exchange of Letters have been signed with Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. Egypt's association to Horizon Europe is imminent enabling its continuing participation in PRIMA.

PRIMA supports collaborative research by international consortia with a thematic focus on water, agriculture and agro-food systems, as well as the interdependencies between these fields through the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus. The dedicated implementation structure, the PRIMA Foundation ("PRIMA Implementing Structure", PRIMA-IS), established in Barcelona, implements activities mainly in the form of calls for proposals in three sections:

- Section 1 calls: organised by PRIMA and funded exclusively by the European Union's Framework Programme on Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020 and, since 2025, Horizon Europe).
- Section 2 calls: also organised by PRIMA but funded by Participating States (PS).
- Section 3 calls: organised and funded by Participating States.

This Staff Working Document (SWD) aims to fulfil the European Commission's legal obligation set out in the PRIMA's amended Basic Act (Article 14.3), i.e. to "*carry out an interim evaluation of PRIMA by 31 December 2025*". The evaluation covers the period from the launch of PRIMA in 2017 until end 2024, including all Annual Work Programmes (AWPs) between 2018 and 2024. The SWD is based on the assessment criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and added value to the European Union (EU), including transparency and openness.

To support the interim evaluation, the Commission contracted an external support study led by CSIL with the support of Ecorys[3]. A competitive call for tenders was launched by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, using the framework contract RTD/2023/OP/0011. The Commission services received and evaluated three tenders. The support study is based on a set of methodologies and sources, including both quantitative and qualitative fieldwork data collections (surveys, interviews and case studies), with data and information triangulated to ensure the highest level of reliability. In addition, the PRIMA-IS delivered a detailed input report including a full set of statistics, indicators and explanations of key developments.

All existing documents related to PRIMA, such as the impact assessment and *interim* evaluation, the PRIMA Basic Act (2017) and the amended Basic Act (2024), the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), Statutes, website, PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool (available on the PRIMA website), the Annual Activity Reports, as well as relevant publications of evaluations of the Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe Framework Programmes and the European Partnerships established under those Framework Programmes, have been

[3] CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *Evaluation study on the Partnership for Research and Innovation for the Mediterranean Area*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Forthcoming. Specific contract No 300122930, under the framework contract RTD/2023/OP/0011.

reviewed. Overall, quantitative assessments have been performed and complemented, as far as possible, by qualitative insights. When appropriate, data have been benchmarked with R&I instruments focused on similar domains than PRIMA, especially within Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. All PRIMA calls until the end of 2024 have been launched under Horizon 2020 rules. For benchmarking, both Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, including the relevant Partnerships established under each of those Framework Programmes and the Missions established under Horizon Europe, are used as reference (see Chapter 2.2).

Limitations of the methodology

This analysis covers all PRIMA calls between 2018 and end 2024, all launched under Horizon 2020 rules. Horizon 2020 ran between 2014 and 2020, while its successor, Horizon Europe, launches calls between 2021 and 2027[4]. This means that the reference period of PRIMA does neither fit with Horizon 2020's, nor with Horizon Europe's. It would seem, *a priori*, more appropriate to use Horizon 2020 for comparison and benchmark, even if there would be gaps in terms of years, with likely implications in terms of priorities (e.g. evolving contexts and political priorities). But article 14.4 of the amended PRIMA Basic Act refers to synergies with "*other parts of Horizon Europe*", and calls for assessing "*the positioning against other initiatives supported through Horizon Europe*". This implies that both Horizon 2020, including the relevant Societal Challenges and Partnerships, and Horizon Europe, including the relevant Missions, Partnerships and Clusters, have to be used as reference for benchmarking and consistency.

Similarly, the domains covered by PRIMA (see Chapter 2.1) do not exactly fit with Horizon 2020's Societal Challenge 2 "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy", Societal Challenge 5 "Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials", or with Horizon Europe's Cluster 6 "Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment". This mismatch has also implications for a comparative analysis and benchmarking, which has to be done with prudence and nuance. Similarly, PRIMA's thematic areas do not directly correspond with Horizon Europe's Partnerships and Missions, further emphasising the need for careful consideration when making comparisons.

The cutting date of output data extraction (e.g. publications, patents) has also been fixed on the 31st of December 2024. At that moment, 57 projects were finalised, representing 21.2% of those funded by PRIMA in calls under Sections 1 and 2. These projects were selected in the initial calls launched by PRIMA (years 2018, 2019 and 2020). Any extrapolation from these data, especially output data, has to be prudent. Those projects are not necessarily representative of the whole PRIMA portfolio. One can expect not only an evolution of priorities, but also a learning curve along the duration of PRIMA.

[4] The 2025 call is not covered by this evaluation.

Several outputs, outcomes and/or impact data are not collected systematically through projects reporting. In addition, output data collected from reporting are not published in the PRIMA's website, but in an internal database (the so-called "Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning" tool, MEL). This SWD relies on these data, complemented by the *ad hoc* data collections from the support study, both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews and case studies).

The support study launched two surveys, one for beneficiaries of PRIMA grants, and another one for applicants who did not obtain a PRIMA grant. The questionnaires, in English, French, Italian and Spanish, were distributed by the PRIMA Foundation to the projects' beneficiaries (Sections 1 and 2) and unsuccessful applicants on 10 July 2025. The National Contact Points shared the links to the surveys with Section 3 projects and applicants. Reminders were sent on 24 July and 4 August 2025 and, due to the low response rate, the deadline was prolonged until 22 August. Finally, the survey for PRIMA participants collected 46 responses, while the survey for unsuccessful applicants collected 9 responses. By design, the survey is not a random one, and therefore not statistically representative. In addition, the low response rate confirms that the results cannot be generalised. The responses, however, are considered alongside the findings from interviews and case studies and can be used as a complementary source of insight and anecdotal evidence. Additionally, it is important to highlight that no private-for-profit organisation replied to the survey, despite the open invitation to participate. To complement the quantitative data and address its limitations, several stakeholders were also interviewed, both to assess PRIMA at strategic level and to carry-out case studies. The consortium in charge of the support study carried-out 10 semi-structured strategic interviews, notably to national funding agencies in Italy, Croatia, France, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Jordan, Portugal, and Germany, as well as the PRIMA Secretariat and the Union for the Mediterranean, complemented with additional 23 interviews to prepare the case studies. The interviews used guidelines developed during the inception phase of the study, and their minutes were systematically organised in a matrix aligned with the main evaluation questions, providing a structured framework that facilitated the consolidation of findings and enabled a horizontal analysis.

The support study prepared 22 case studies, covering completed and ongoing PRIMA-funded projects, selected to represent the different R&I actions supported by the partnership, notably on water management, farming systems and food value chains. On 21 October 2025, and online validation workshop was organised, with the participation of 114 PRIMA stakeholders.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

2.1 Description of the intervention and its objectives

The -impact assessment of PRIMA[5] accompanying the Commission's proposal in October 2016 considered that the main problem to be addressed was the **unsustainable management of water resources and food systems**, an issue exacerbated by climate change. Even if the impact assessment acknowledged the role of factors like political instability or the rapidly growing population, it defined the following main drivers:

- Uneven R&I resources in the Mediterranean countries, as shown by the uneven R&I intensities between Mediterranean countries and the number of researchers per million people.
- Limited coordination of R&I policy programming between Mediterranean countries. The impact assessment presented the complex and fragmented panorama of joint programming instruments that existed at that time, under FP6 and FP7.
- Lack of long-term strategic R&I agenda and multi-stakeholder governance, including limited coordination between different governmental services (e.g. agriculture, environment, energy, economy).

To address the main problem and its drivers, the impact assessment of PRIMA considered that it was necessary, as strategic objective, to **develop the common innovative solutions on water solutions and food systems that the Mediterranean region urgently needed**. This implied:

- A common long-term strategic R&I agenda.
- Alignment of national R&I programmes.
- Critical mass of actors and resources.
- Strengthening innovation capabilities.

This intervention logic is described in Figure A.1, in Annex VI.

The legal text finally adopted by the co-legislators slightly modified this intervention logic. Article 2 of the PRIMA Basic Act[6], stated that "*the general objectives of PRIMA are to build R&I capacities and to develop knowledge and common innovative solutions from agrofood systems, to make them sustainable, and for integrated water provision and management in the Mediterranean area, to make those systems and that provision and management more climate resilient, efficient, cost-effective and environmentally and socially sustainable, and to contribute to solving water scarcity, food security, nutrition, health, well-being and migration problems upstream*".

[5] Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States, COM(2016) 662 final, SWD(2016) 331 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD:2016:0332:FIN

[6] Decision (EU) 2017/1324, amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167.

This overall objective leads to four specific objectives, which are listed in the same article of the amended PRIMA Basic Act:

"(a) the formulation of a long-term, common, strategic agenda in the area of agro-food systems, to make them sustainable, and in the area of integrated water provision and management;

(b) the orientation of relevant national research and innovation programmes towards the implementation of the strategic agenda;

(c) the involvement of all relevant public and private sector actors in implementing the strategic agenda by pooling knowledge and financial resources to achieve the necessary critical mass;

(d) the strengthening of the research and innovation funding capacities and of the implementation capabilities of all actors involved including SMEs, academia, nongovernmental organisations and local research centres".

2.2 Point(s) of comparison

The points of comparison are:

- The impact assessment[7] and the intervention logic, with its main problems and its drivers, as well as its general and specific objectives, slightly modified by the Basic Act finally adopted by the co-legislators[8].
- The first interim evaluation adopted in 2023[9].

The first interim evaluation compared the progress made to address the problems identified in the impact assessment, and to what extent the strategic and specific objectives of PRIMA were achieved. When the interim evaluation of 2023 was carried-out, not any project funded by the Partnership had ended. Such interim evaluation was therefore focused on the structure and implementation process, but not on projects results and their impacts. The first interim evaluation indeed observed that "*the specific objectives* (…) *are not fully dependent on the exploitation of the achieved results in the projects*"[10].

While the first interim evaluation concluded that the implementation of PRIMA was on track, it also identified several areas that required improvement. These included simplifying and harmonising administrative procedures under Section 2, addressing the rather low success rates under Section 1, fostering synergies between projects and communities, encouraging further development of Section 3 calls, enhancing capacity building and communication to increase the PRIMA's attractiveness, improving Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or strengthening South-South cooperation.

[7] SWD(2016)332 final
[8] Decision (EU) 2017/1324
[9] COM(2023)285 final and SWD(2023)169 final
[10] SWD(2023)169 final, p. 8.

On 31 December 2024, 269 projects have been funded for a total budget of EUR 401.6 million. These data cover the calls launched between 2018 and 2024, but only Sections 1 (EUR 202.3 million) and 2 (EUR 199.3). In addition, 31 Participating States Initiated Activities (PSIAs) were launched under Section 3 in the same period, with a total allocated budget of EUR 257.5 million, including "Other Activities"[11]. EUR 115.7 million (44.9%) are in-kind contributions[12]. PSIAs led to 951 projects of small size (ca. EUR 270,000 on average). The current state of play of PRIMA implementation is presented in Chapter 3.3.

On the other hand, Article 14.4 of the PRIMA amended Basic Act states that the interim evaluation of PRIMA shall analyse, amongst others, "*synergies with other parts of Horizon Europe, such as other partnerships, missions, clusters and thematic or specific programmes*". This poses a challenge in identifying a suitable benchmark to evaluate PRIMA's performance, particularly given that the Partnership was governed by Horizon 2020 rules from 2018 to 2024, which may not provide a directly comparable framework. Therefore, to the extent possible, the points of comparison will be Horizon 2020 (notably Societal Challenge 2 and Societal Challenge 5); Horizon Europe (especially Cluster 6); Missions "Restore our Ocean and Waters", "A Soil Deal for Europe" and "Adaptation to Climate Change"; and Partnerships, such as the Article 185 on Metrology, the Circular Bio-Based Europe Joint Undertaking or the Co-Funded Partnership Water4All).

The legal bases of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe establish some targets (e.g. time to grant, time to pay), which will be used as reference in specific chapters of this SWD.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

3.1 Water in the EU and in the Mediterranean region

Evolution of water stress, scarcity, pollution and efficiency

Since the publication of the impact assessment of PRIMA, water stress and water scarcity, as well as extreme water-related events, are increasingly affecting people, agriculture and food production. Figure 1 shows the trends on people and land affected by water scarcity, only in the EU.

[11] "Other activities" refer to in-kind contributions from Participating States (PS) that support PRIMA's operation. These activities are exclusively funded, managed, and executed by National Funding Agencies (NFAs) and are expected to contribute to PRIMA's broader mission by strengthening research collaboration, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement across the Mediterranean region. Between 2018 and 2024, they include initiatives to promote knowledge exchange and best practices among researchers and experts projects, as well as the creation of collaborative platforms that facilitate stakeholder interaction and consortium building. Additionally, workshops and training sessions have been conducted to equip participants with the necessary skills to develop high-quality, competitive research proposals in PRIMA calls. Between 2018 and 2025, they represented EUR 1.25 million.

[12] PRIMA, (2025) *Input Report to the Second Interim Evaluation*. Internal document.

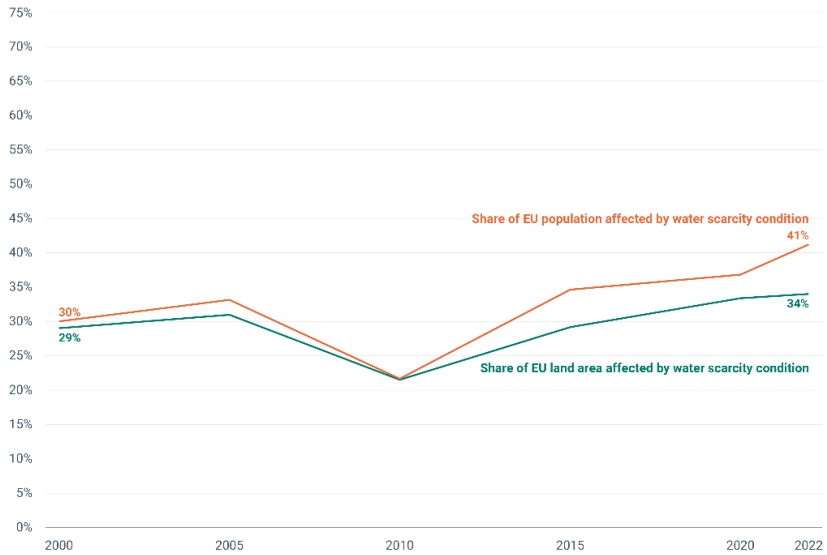

Figure 1: Area and population affected during at least one quarter of the year by water scarcity conditions in the EU, measured by the water exploitation index plus[13]. Source: EEA, at: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/use-of-freshwater-resources-in-europe-1

According to the EEA, in Southern European countries, water scarcity is indeed prevalent and around 30% of the population lives in areas with permanent water stress and up to 70% in areas with seasonal water stress. Agriculture, public water supply, and tourism are the main pressure factors on freshwater resources in this area[14]. In Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, around 180 million people suffer water scarcity[15].

Water is also unevenly distributed between Northern, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. In 2017, it was estimated that 72% of freshwater resources were in the North, 23% in the East, and only 5% in the South[16]. North Africa and the Middle East are indeed the most water-stressed regions in the planet, where extremely high water stress affects 83% of the population (Figure 2)[17].

[13] The Water exploitation index plus (WEI+) measures **water consumption** as a percentage of renewable freshwater resources at river basin or subunit levels, across each quarter of the year.

[14] EEA, (2025) *Water Scarcity Conditions in Europe*. At: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/use-of-freshwater-resources-in-europe-1

[15] Fader, M. *et al.* (2020) "Water". In: Cramer, W., Guiot, J.; Marini, K. (eds.) *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report*. Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, France, pp. 181-236, doi:10.5281/zenodo.7101074. This analysis fixes the limit of water scarcity at 1,000 m^3 capita $^{-1}$ year $^{-1}$.

[16] Kibaroglu, A., (2017) *Water Challenges in the Mediterranean*. European Institute of the Mediterranean, at: https://www.iemed.org/publication/water-challenges-in-the-mediterranean/

[17] Kuzma, S.; Saccoccia, L. and Chertok, M., (2023) *25 Countries, Housing One-Quarter of the Population, Face Extremely High Water Stress*. World Resources Institute, at: https://www.wri.org/insights/highest-water-stressed-countries?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template

Figure 2: Water stress in Mediterranean countries. Source: wri.org/aqueduct

The JRC explains that "*long-lasting, above-average temperatures and a sequence of warm spells have exacerbated the effect of the prolonged lack of precipitation, directly impacting soil moisture and vegetation growth, with severe impacts already visible in northern Africa, coastal regions of Spain, and most of the Mediterranean islands*". The combination of prolonged rain deficit and record-high temperatures negatively affects biomass growth and crop biomass accumulation in Spain, Italy, Greece, the Mediterranean islands, Morocco or Algeria. Public authorities are obliged to declare drought emergencies and irrigation restrictions (e.g. Catalonia, Portugal, Morocco). The impacts of droughts extend beyond their immediate effects, as they also create an environment that is prone to other extreme phenomena, such as wildfires[18].

Water issues are also linked with demographic growth in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, and with unsustainable production and consumption practices, such as over-abstraction of surface and groundwater resources, or the intensification of agriculture. All these factors further contribute to water shortages and water pollution[19]. Water quality is mainly challenged by nitrates, microplastics and heavy metals. For instance, the concentrations of nitrates in Mediterranean waters varies between 4 to 496 mg L^{-1} in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries and between 3.23 to 50.1 mg L^{-1} in European countries, mainly due to the increase in livestock and intensive agriculture, but also to poor treatment of urban and non-urban wastewater. Nitrates pollution leads to eutrophication, and therefore loss of aquatic organisms and a reduction in biodiversity. Other sources of water pollution are microplastics or salination of aquifers. All these forms

[18] Toreti, A., et al. (2024), *Drought in the Mediterranean Region - January 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, doi:10.2760/384093, JRC137036.

[19] UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan and Plan Bleu, (2020). *State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers*. UNEP, Nairobi, at: https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SoED_Summary.pdf

of pollution reduce water quality, and therefore water availability, aggravating water supply problems[20].

Table A.1 in Annex VI indicates, however, that water stress and water withdrawal for agriculture remained overall stable in Northern Africa and Western Asia[21] between 2017 and 2021. It illustrates the huge differences in terms of water stress but also in terms of water use efficiency between that region and Europe. These data, based on the FAO-Aquastat database, are not fully up to date: their reference year is 2021.

Table A.2, also in Annex VI, shows FAO's statistics on water stress in the PRIMA Participant countries. Data are estimates, and therefore not fully reliable, but they indicate some trends. First, as expected, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are more subject to water stress, which is often higher than 100% (meaning that there are more water withdrawals than freshwater resources). Secondly, while the data show some variability[22], the overall trend suggests that water stress is increasing, although the magnitude of this increase is relatively modest - or less pronounced than might have been expected (e.g. Algeria, Jordan, Spain, Tunisia or Türkiye).

The Report from the Commission on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive[23] explains that the level of knowledge of Member States on the state of water bodies (geographical coverage, biological and chemical water quality) has improved. On the other hand, based on 2016-2021 reported data, only 39.5% of surface water bodies in Europe are in good ecological status or ecological potential. This figure remains quite stable compared with the previous reporting period, 2009-2015. These data are also in line with those from the Nitrates Directive, which reported as eutrophic 36% of rivers, 32% of lakes, 31% of coastal waters, 32% of transitional waters and 81% of marine waters. The report also observes an improvement in certain biological and chemical quality parameters, even if not sufficient to improve the overall state of water bodies and to reduce the associated risks to health and environment. Concerning groundwater, 86% of groundwater bodies were in good chemical status. This is a slight improvement compared with the previous reference year, 2015: 82.2%. The most commonly reported pollutants leading to poor chemical status are nitrates, mainly coming from intensive agriculture and livestock farming through the excessive use of fertilisers and slurries/manures. Finally, the part of the report that assesses the implementation of the Floods Directive shows relevant improvements in flood risk management, with a better alignment of objectives and measures, and consideration of challenges posed by climate change.

---

[20] Vinci, G. et al., (2021) "The Health of the Water Planet: Challenges and Opportunities in the Mediterranean Area. An Overview", in *Earth*, *2*(4), 894-919, at/ https://doi.org/10.3390/earth2040052

[21] Covering Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, Yemen – i.e. not only Mediterranean countries and not only PRIMA Participating countries.

[22] In some countries, estimates from FAO-Aquastat are constant, which may indicate an insufficient reliability of the data.

[23] Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), COM(2025) 2 final, at: EUR-Lex - 52025DC0002 - EN - EUR-Lex

Concerning pollution from agricultural practices, the *Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook 2025*[24] confirms that the average nitrate concentration in EU groundwaters did not change significantly from 2000 to 2022, meaning that it is unlikely that the Zero Pollution target by 2030 will be met. On the contrary, the report explains that in the reference period (2018-2022), there has been a significant decrease in the use and risks of chemical pesticides, and in the use of more hazardous chemical pesticides compared with 2015-2017. There was also a slight increase of release of microplastics in the environment between 2016 and 2022 – again, off-track to reach the target.

Also, recent scientific literature indicates that in South-Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, France and Italy), groundwater wells levels are rather stable (68%), or even rising (20%), while only 12% are declining in the last decades. However, these data do not show very different situations and trends: increased precipitation in temperate climates, better groundwater management in semi-arid areas, or declining wells in semi-arid regions near agricultural areas whereas, in temperate regions, the decline is associated with large urban areas[25].

The European Environment Agency's (EEA) *Europe's Environment 2025* indicates that "*EU Member States have reduced their total water abstraction by 19% from 2000 to 2022 due to better water conveyance (transport of water from its source to where it is needed), efficiency of use and socio-economic changes*"[26]. These positive data are however insufficient to tackle the increasing pressures on water. In the EU, agriculture uses 59% of all water. Agriculture is therefore the main net water consumer in Europe, and climate change will lead to increasing water demand in this sector, if changes in practices are not implemented.

The EEA's *European Climate Risk Assessment* (EUCRA)[27] confirms that extreme heat is becoming more frequent and precipitation patterns are changing. In particular, precipitation extremes are increasing in severity. Recent years have seen catastrophic floods in various regions, with huge human and economic costs: Germany and Belgium in 2021 (EUR 44 billion damage and more than 200 deaths), Slovenia in 2023 (damage estimated at around 16% of national GDP), Greece in 2023, or Spain (Valencia) in 2024 (227 deaths and more than EUR 4 billion cost[28]).

---

[24] EEA-JRC, (2025) *Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook 2025* – EEA-JRC Report 13/2024. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, at : Zero pollution monitoring and outlook 2025 | European Environment Agency's home page

[25] Chávez García Silva, R., Reinecke, R., Copty, N.K. *et a*l., (2024) Multi-decadal groundwater observations reveal surprisingly stable levels in southwestern Europe. *Commun Earth Environ* **5**, 387. At: https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-024-01554-w

[26] EEA, (2025) *Europe's environment and climate: knowledge for resilience, prosperity and sustainability.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 122, at: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/europe-environment-2025/main-report

[27] EEA (2024) *European Climate Risk Assessment*. EEA Report 01/2024. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. At: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment

[28] Ware, J. and Oliver Pearce, O., (2024) *Counting the Cost 2024 A year of climate breakdown*. Christian Aid, at: https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/counting-the-cost-2024.pdf

EUCRA refers to "cascading climate risks", which compromise food and water security, energy security and financial stability, the health of the general population and of outdoor workers, and affects social cohesion and stability. Cascading climate risks can lead to system-wide challenges affecting whole societies, with vulnerable social groups particularly affected. According to EUCRA, Southern Europe is expected to be the most affected region, with notably considerable declines in overall rainfall and more severe droughts.

Climate change impacts in the Mediterranean region – the IPCC assessment

The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) included the first *ad hoc* assessment of the whole region, because it is virtually vulnerable to climate change as a whole. The conclusions are clear and strong[29]:

"Due to its particular combination of multiple strong climate hazards and high vulnerability, the Mediterranean region is a ***hotspot for highly interconnected climate risks****. The* ***main economic sectors in the region (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism) are highly vulnerable to climatic hazards****, while socioeconomic vulnerability is also considerable. The low-lying areas are the most vulnerable areas for coastal climate-related risks (e.g., sea level rise, floods, erosion) and other consequent risks (e.g., saltwater intrusion and agriculture damage) (high confidence).* ***Climate change threatens water availability, reducing river low flows and annual runoff by 5–70%, reducing hydropower capacity*** *(high confidence).* ***Yields of rain-fed crops may decrease by 64% in some locations*** *(high confidence). Ocean warming and acidification will impact marine ecosystems, with uncertain consequences on fisheries (low confidence).* ***Desertification will affect additional areas, notably in the south and southeast*** *(medium confidence) (…)"*

Transboundary water resources and conflict

The Mediterranean region is characterised by a high level of transboundary water resources, especially in Southern and Eastern areas, where 60% of water surface crosses borders. Northern Mediterranean countries present a water dependency ratio of 22%, in Southern Mediterranean countries, 18% of renewable water[30] comes from other countries, and in the Eastern countries, 27%. The same interdependency applies to aquifers, such as the Nubian Sandstone one, mainly shared between Egypt and Libya. These shared critical water resources tend to lead to disputes that aggravate existing conflicts, for instance in the

[29] Ali, E., et al., (2022). Cross-Chapter Paper 4: Mediterranean Region. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.* Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 2233–2272, doi: 10.1017/9781009325844.021. Highlighted by the authors of the SWD.

[30] According to the EEA's glossary, "*distinction is made between renewable and non-renewable water resources. Non-renewable water resources are not replenished at all or for a very long time by nature. This includes the so-called fossil waters. Renewable water resources are rechargeable due to the hydrological cycle unless they are overexploited, comprising groundwater aquifers and surface water like rivers and lakes. Internal renewable water resources comprise the average annual flow of rivers and groundwater generated from endogenous precipitation*". See: https://www.eea.europa.eu/help/glossary/eea-glossary/water-resources

Middle East or between Egypt and Ethiopia. However, especially in a context of climate change and increasing water stress and shortages, these shared resources pose an opportunity for collaboration[31] ("hydrodiplomacy" or "blue diplomacy").

3.2 Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean region

According to the PRIMA impact assessment one of the main challenges to address the unsustainable water provision and food systems, is the disparity in R&I resources across the Mediterranean region. Table A.3 in Annex VI, presents the R&I efforts in the countries participating to PRIMA, and the EU average. It shows that in most countries, the R&I investment as a percentage of GDP has increased in the last decade, but also since the establishment of PRIMA in 2018. Italy (from 2018) and Luxembourg (from both 2000 and 2018) are the only countries where the R&I effort has declined. Only Israel and Germany dedicate more than 3% of their GDP to R&I, and at the same time are the only PRIMA partner countries above the EU average (2.22% in 2023). Despite the positive progress, the R&I resources remain uneven between countries for which there are recent data. However, the gap is not only between North-South or North-East (with the exception of Israel), but also between EU Member States.

These data can be complemented with national ones[32], especially in countries like Morocco (from 0.77% GDP in 2018 to 0.8% in 2023), Tunisia (from 0.62% to 0.7%) or Jordan (from 0.43% to 0.5%). These data confirm a slight increase in the R&I efforts in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, even if less strong than in EU Member States as a whole.

3.3 PRIMA: Current state of play

In 2023, the European Commission carried out an interim evaluation of PRIMA[33], to comply with the legal obligation outlined in the PRIMA Basic Act. As explained above, at that time, none of the projects funded by PRIMA were finished. Therefore, the interim evaluation of 2023 was focused on the structure and implementation processes to fulfil the specific objectives, but not on the achieved results of the projects, their exploitation and impacts. By the end of 2024, 57 projects were finalised, which represent 21.1% of those funded between 2018 and 2024, under Sections 1 and 2.

[31] Sülün, E, (2023) *Key water challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean: A call for regional cooperation*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Peace Research Institute Oslo, at: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypern/20794.pdf ; Kiraboglu, A., (2017) *op.cit.*

[32] Project Future4Prima, draft Joint Programme, internal document. These data are not harmonised and not necessarily consistent with international databases.

[33] Commission Staff Working Document and Communication: Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. *Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)*, COM(2023)285 final and SWD(2023)169 final

Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, Annual Work Programmes and governance

The first operational objective of PRIMA, as established in the Basic Act, is "*the formulation of a long-term, common, strategic agenda in the area of agro-food systems, to make them sustainable, and in the area of integrated water provision and management"*. Therefore, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)[34] is the operational pillar of PRIMA.

Under the SRIA, PRIMA is structured around three interconnected thematic areas (management of water, farming systems and agro-food value chain, all connected through the WEFE Nexus since 2019) and eight operational objectives (water saving solutions, land and water sustainability, water governance systems, smart and sustainable farming, pests and pathogens in farming, nutrition and health, reduce losses and wastes, and new agro-food business models. Each of these operational objectives includes expected outputs, defined in a detailed manner in the SRIA. PRIMA's SRIA also defines cross-cutting themes, such as soils sustainability, food security, digital revolution, socio-economic research and stakeholder involvement, and capacity building. Finally, the SRIA defines a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), covering innovation in the three thematic areas, and in other fields like economic growth/competitiveness, diets/health/well-being, migration, as well as for the specific objectives.

PRIMA is implemented via Annual Work Programmes (AWPs), which define the calls for proposals and other activities envisaged for the upcoming 12 months. The AWPs are elaborated by the PRIMA-IS, different governing bodies and adopted by the European Commission.

The governance structure of PRIMA is presented in Figure 3. The PRIMA-IS supports the PRIMA Steering Committee and the Board of Trustees that consists of one representative from each Participating State. The European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) participate as observers on the Board. In addition, a Scientific Advisory Committee provides input for the best direction of R&I efforts.

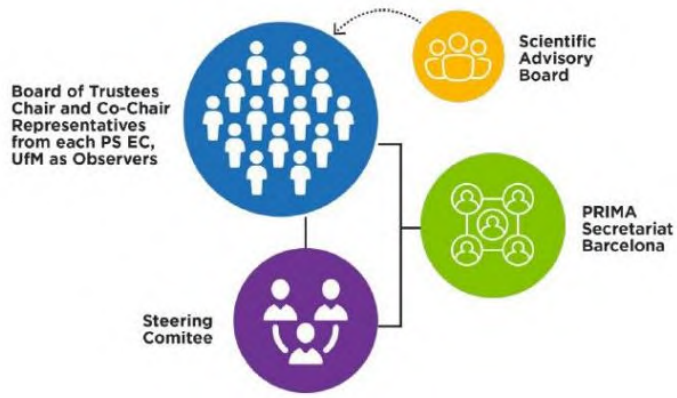

Figure 3: Governance structure of PRIMA. Source: Interim Evaluation of PRIMA, SWD(2023) 169 final, p. 10.

[34] Available at: https://prima-med.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/PRIMA-SRIA_Strategic-Research-and-Innovation-Agenda.pdf

Funding[35]

Between 2018 and 2024, 269 projects have been funded under Sections 1 and 2 of PRIMA, for a total budget of EUR 401.3 million. The number of beneficiaries is 2,591, meaning an average budget per beneficiary of EUR 156,814 (as a benchmark, EUR 463,719 under Horizon 2020; EUR 351,663 for Horizon 2020- Societal Challenge 2; EUR 374,076 for Horizon 2020- Societal Challenge 5)[36]. The funding is rather balanced between Section 1 (EUR 202.3 million, 50.4%) and Section 2 (EUR 199 million, 49.6%). Section 1 financed less projects (77) than Section 2 (192), meaning that the average budget by project funded under Section 2 is much smaller.

By thematic area, Farming Systems projects received 37% of the budget, followed by Agro-Food Value Chains (29.8%), Water Management (24.8%) and WEFE Nexus (8.4%). The low share of budget of the WEFE Nexus can be explained by its late introduction as thematic priority, in 2019, and by the fact that it remained a separate priority until 2023. The WEFE Nexus is also a domain that has reached the top of political agendas only recently. However, the unbalanced distribution of budget between the three other thematic areas could be the consequence of an implicit order of priorities when drafting the Annual Work Programmes, and by the selection of the highest-ranked projects in multi-topic calls in Section 2.

These data have to be complemented with Section 3 funding, presented in Table A.5 in Annex VI. Participant Initiated Activities (PSIAs) amounted EUR 256,3 million between 2018 and 2024, and "Other Activities" an additional EUR 1.2 million, in allocated funds. PSIAs higher in terms of committed funds (EUR 267.9).

Article 3.1 of the amended PRIMA Basic Act states that:

"The Union financial contribution to PRIMA, including EEA appropriations, ***shall be equal to the Participating States' contributions****. The Union financial contribution shall be up to EUR 325 000 000 and shall be distributed as follows:*

(a) up to EUR 220 000 000 from Horizon 2020;

(b) up to EUR 105 000 000 from Horizon Europe.

The amount of the Union financial contribution from Horizon Europe may be increased by contributions from third countries associated to Horizon Europe in accordance with Article 16(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695, ***provided that the total increase in the Union financial contribution is at least matched by the contribution from the Participating States*** *referred to in Article 1(1) of this Decision."*

[35] Except if another source is explicitly quoted, data that follow comes from the PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool, accessible in PRIMA's website (PRIMA: Partnership for Research & Innovation in the Mediterranean area).

[36] Horizon Dashboard, extraction 13/11/2025.

In practice, until end 2024, EU and Participating States contributions have been distributed by 2024[37] as follows:

- The EU allocated EUR 202.3 million for selected projects. In addition, EUR 9.64 million have been allocated for administrative expenses and EUR 1.88 million correspond to operational costs for monitoring and evaluation. The actual running costs of PRIMA at the end of 2024 were EUR 9.06 million[38].
- Participating States allocated EUR 456.8 million to projects, broken-down as follows:
    - Section 2: In-cash, EUR 199.3 million, and in-kind, EUR 4.42 million.
    - Section 3: EUR 256.3 million for Participating States Initiated Activities (PSIAs) and EUR 1.2 million for "other activities", which sum a total of EUR 257.5 million. In-kind contributions amounted EUR 115.7 million (44.9%).

Participation by country

Until the end of 2024, EU Member States had received 70.4% of the total budget under Sections 1 and 2. The main financial beneficiaries are Italy, Spain, Greece and Germany, followed by Morocco, Tunisia, Türkiye and Egypt. Figure 4 shows the ranking of beneficiaries by country, in terms of funding, projects where at least one national beneficiary is involved, and number of organisations. It covers Sections 1 and 2 together.

The ranking order changes slightly when comparing Section 1 and Section 2. Under Section 1, the main beneficiaries, in budgetary terms, are Italy, Spain, Greece, Tunisia, Morocco, Türkiye, France, Egypt and Germany, while under Section 2, the ranking is headed by Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece and Türkiye.

[37] Source: PRIMA, (2025) *Input Report*, op.cit., and Annual Activity Report 2024.

[38] More specifically, the EU contributions came from the budget lines 05.090301 - Societal challenges: Securing sufficient supplies of safe and high quality food and other bio-based products; 08.020201 - Industrial leadership: Leadership in nanotechnologies, advanced materials, laser technology, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing and processing; 08.020302 - Societal challenges: Improving food security, developing sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy; and 08.020305 - Societal challenges: Achieving a resource efficient and climate change resilient economy and a sustainable supply of raw materials. Source: PRIMA's Budgetary Impact Assessment.

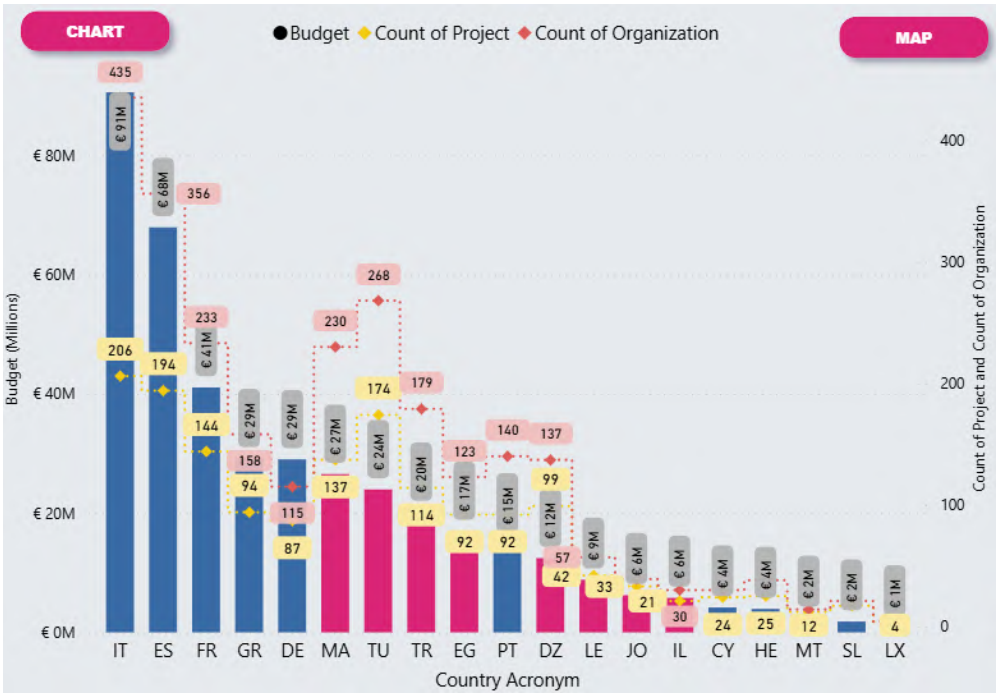

Figure 4: Beneficiaries by country, Sections 1 and 2. Source: PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool.

Participation by type of organisation

The PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool uses different categories groups for the types of organisations than Horizon Europe and its predecessor, Horizon 2020. These different categories are due to the different reporting tool, since PRIMA uses the instruments of the French *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* (ANR), and therefore its own breakdown.

Under PRIMA's monitoring, "Public Organisations" predominate (55.9% of the budget), followed by "Research Foundations" (23.8%), Small and Medium Entreprises (SMEs, 8.7%), "Associations" (5.5%), "Diverse Private" (4.5%) and "Enterprises" (other than SMEs, 1.6%).

These data are however transformed by PRIMA-IS into the Horizon 2020 – Horizon Europe classification. These data were cleaned by the authors of the support study, because the absence of identification code (PIC) implies double counting of the same organisation. These are the data presented in Table 1 below. Higher Education Establishments (HES) play the key role under Sections 1 and 2. They represent 49.8% of the beneficiaries, followed by Research Organisations (REC), with 28.3%. Private-for-Profit Organisations (PRC) and Public Bodies (PUB) participate much less prominently, 12.9% and 2% respectively. The PRIMA Input Report[39] explains that topics under Sections 1 and 2 have mainly an academic focus. Public bodies and private organisations have "supportive roles" when topics or projects have societal implications or commercial applications. Compared

[39] *op. cit.*

with other relevant EU R&I instruments, the participation of PRC is indeed much lower in PRIMA, including when one compares with the participation share of private bodies when focusing on PRIMA Participating States only, as shown in Table 1. Only the Mission Ocean and Waters presents a business participation (in terms of funding) similar to PRIMA's.

Table 1: Participation by type of organisation, 2018-2024, % of budget. Sources: PRIMA, CSIL-Ecorys and Horizon Dashboard. For the Mission Ocean and Waters: Mission Ocean and Waters Dashboard. Date of extraction: 14/11/2025.

	HES	REC	PRC	PUB	OTH
PRIMA	**49.8**	**28.3**	**12.9**	**2**	**7**
Horizon 2020	34	23.9	34.6	3.8	3.8
Horizon 2020- SC2	22.9	28.1	35.5	7.3	6.3
Horizon 2020- SC5	22.4	28.1	29.8	11.7	7.9
Horizon 2020- SC2 – PRIMA-PS	19	30.9	38.2	6.7	5.3
Horizon 2020- SC5 – PRIMA-PS	16.2	33.1	34.8	10	5.9
Horizon Europe	30.5	25.5	31.2	6.9	5.9
Horizon Europe- Cluster 6	23.3	29.3	22.8	15.1	9.5
Horizon Europe- Cluster 6 – PRIMA-PS	19.1	30.6	28.6	13.4	8.4
Mission Ocean and Waters	24	34.3	13.1	6	15.4

Also as a reference, the Water4All co-funded partnership (2022-2029)[40] includes, out of 90 partners, 10 "economic actors" (11.1%), 35 research ministries and funding agencies (38.9%) and 24 "research performing organisations" (26.7%), as well as 3 EU networks and 3 local authorities.

The top organisations that PRIMA funded until end 2024 always have an academic component: *Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement* (INRAE, France, EUR 5.5 million), Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA, Italy, EUR 4.9 million), *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (CSIC, Spain, EUR 4.9 million), University of Bologna (Italy, EUR 4.7 million), etc. The *Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique de Tunisie* (INRAT, Tunisia) is ranked 6th, with EUR 3.7 million but 34 participation – the maximum so far. Other relevant players from non-EU countries are the Lebanese International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA, EUR 3.4 million) or the Moroccan *Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique* (EUR 3.3 million). One can observe the strong presence of national research centres for agronomic research, which typically focus on applied R&I, notably on solutions for the agrifood sectors.

[40] https://www.water4all-partnership.eu/

SME participation

Horizon 2020 included a target of allocating 20% of funding for SMEs under the Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges pillar. In PRIMA, SMEs only represent 10.1% of the total funding under Sections 1 and 2.

Funding from Participating States (Section 2)

Table A.4 in Annex VI, details the funding from PRIMA-PS to Section 2 calls, country by country and comparing committed, allocated and disbursed amounts, for 2018-2023. The data show a significant gap between committed, allocated and disbursed amounts, especially in countries like Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Luxembourg, Malta or Jordan. Other countries, like Türkiye, Greece, Tunisia, Italy, Germany or Portugal allocate more money than initially committed. This is mainly due to the different success rates in Section 2 calls, where each PRIMA-PS finances its own organisations[41].

There are also large differences between the contributions from PRIMA-PS. Italy (EUR 42 million committed, EUR 42.8 allocated), France (EUR 32 million committed and EUR 24.8 million allocated), Spain (EUR 21.8 and EUR 22.9 million respectively) and Germany (EUR 17.3 and EUR 17.7 million) are the main contributors. At the other extreme one can find Slovenia (less than one million euros committed and allocated), Lebanon (EUR 1.8 million committed, 193,669 allocated) or Croatia (EUR 2.2 million and 1.9 respectively).

Other monitoring data

PRIMA's Annual Activity Reports provide additional relevant monitoring data, such as the Time to Inform (TTI)[42], the Time to Grant (TTG)[43], the Time to Sign[44] and the Time to Pay (TTP)[45]. They also provide data on the time for the preparation of the Work Programme. These indicators of the administrative performance of PRIMA are presented and analysed in Chapter 4.1.2 (Efficiency).

The Strategic Research Agenda of PRIMA[46] defines Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), covering also outputs, outcomes and impacts. These data, not published in PRIMA's website, are also extensively used in this report, notably in Chapters 4.1.1 (Effectiveness) and 4.1.2 (Efficiency).

[41] In addition, some countries like Malta and Türkiye redirect unspent Section 2 funds to Section 3.
[42] Time to Information (TTI): The number of days between the call closure and the announcement of results.
[43] Time to Grant (TTG): The total number of days from the call closure to the signing of the grant agreements. This encompasses the time required for evaluation, negotiation, and agreement finalisation.
[44] Time to Signature (TTS): The number of days between the announcement of results and the signing of the grant agreements.
[45] Time to Payment (TTP): The number of days between the signing of the grant agreements and the actual payment of funds.
[46] https://prima-med.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/PRIMA-SRIA_Strategic-Research-and-Innovation-Agenda.pdf, from page 36.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1. To what extent was the intervention successful and why?

Before assessing the success of PRIMA, it is important to put its size in perspective with other R&I funding instruments. Table A.6 in Annex VI, shows that PRIMA is a relatively small funding instrument. Its total budget (Sections 1 and 2) represents only 0.48% of the entirety of Horizon 2020, less than 10% of Societal Challenge 2, and 10.9% of Societal Challenge 5. These percentages are even lower if, instead of the total budget, one refers to the EU contribution (0.3%, 5.7% and 6.5% respectively). Therefore, PRIMA should be considered as a relatively minor piece in a much wider policy mix, at the level of the EU, Member States and non-EU PRIMA-PS. Its results and impacts should be assessed taking into account its relatively small size.

4.1.1 Effectiveness

"Macro-effectiveness"

As explained in Chapter 2.1, the main problem that PRIMA was expected to address was the unsustainable management of water resources and agro-food value chains, an issue exacerbated by climate change. This is a macro-problem that a programme of the scale of PRIMA cannot tackle alone. However, the data presented in Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 seem to indicate that, despite the increasing effects of climate change, combined with socio-economic and demographic pressures, relevant indicators like water stress or R&I investments have not deteriorated as much as could have been expected, or have even slightly improved (e.g. R&I investment as a percentage of GDP in most countries). Also, the general knowledge on water bodies' states and conditions, and the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, have improved in the past years, as shown in Chapter 3.1. This cannot be attributed to PRIMA alone; PRIMA is a contributor to a larger policy mix.

However, despite efforts leading to better water efficiency, water management remains unsustainable in several PRIMA Participating States (e.g. water withdrawal higher than freshwater resources, see Tables A.1 and A.2 in Annex VI), and the gap between Northern versus Southern and Eastern partners persists and even increases, both in terms of water management issues, and in terms of R&I investment efforts.

"Micro-effectiveness"

The PRIMA Basic Act, as well as the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe legal bases, include some targets that are focused on inputs: administrative costs, time to grant, time to pay, etc. There are no targets related to outputs, outcomes and impacts. Chapter 4.1.2 ("Efficiency") assesses to what extent PRIMA has achieved its legal targets. This sub-chapter benchmarks the outputs of PRIMA projects with other relevant EU R&I instruments, used as a reference to assess to what extent PRIMA is effective in terms of results.

Scientific outputs – Publications

Until the 31 of December 2024, PRIMA projects reported 616 peer-reviewed papers, with 5,665 citations[47] until that date (9.2 on average, median: 4, maximum: 319[48]). The average impact factor of these papers is 4.65, the median 4.2 and the maximum, 56.9[49].

The support study for the interim evaluation of PRIMA[50] refined these data and analysis. Starting from PRIMA reporting data, the support study expanded the number of publications using the LENS database[51] using keyword-based queries, duly cleaned and harmonised.

Doing so, a total of 1,119 scientific documents produced by PRIMA projects were retrieved. Among these documents, the large majority (79%) corresponded to peer-reviewed journal articles, followed by preprints (9%) and reports (4%). The years with the maximum number of released documents were 2022 and 2023. Declines were observed in 2024 and 2025, which is likely due to the time-lag between submission of papers, peer-review and approval for publication, and the time needed to include such scientific documents in the relevant databases. As expected, in 2025 preprints were a majority. It can be assumed that several of these preprints will lead to articles, and that additional journal papers will be released later in 2025 as well. Figure 5 presents the breakdown of scientific publications.

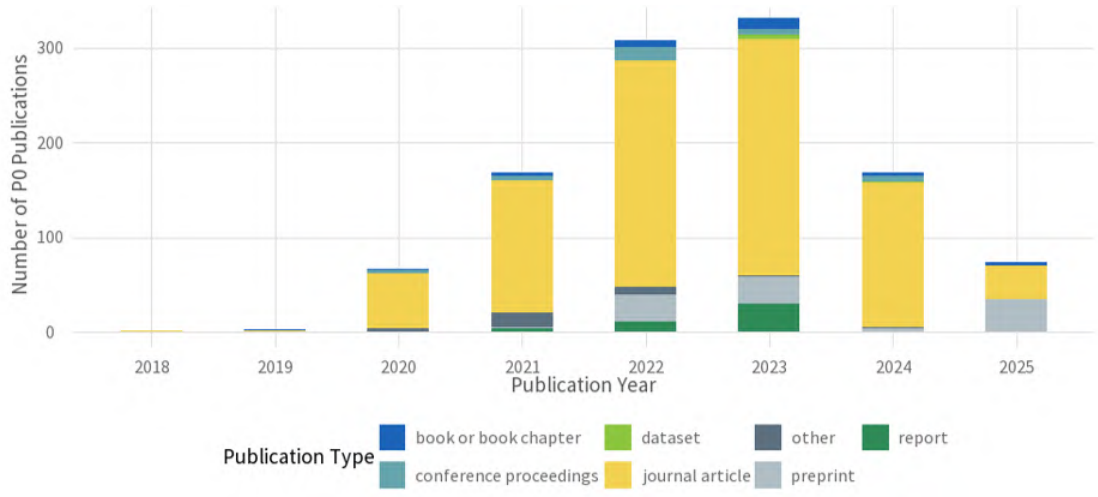

Figure 5: PRIMA scientific outputs by year of publication. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on data on 1,119 Publications extracted from LENS.

[47] Based on Web of Science Core Collection.
[48] The most cited paper is: Herrera-García, G. *et al.* (2021) "Mapping the global threat of land subsidence", *Science,* 371, pp. 34-36, doi:10.1126/science.abb8549
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op.cit.*
[51] LENS is an open access database and platform for discovering, analysing, and managing both scholarly and patent literature. It can be accessed at https://www.lens.org/

Most publications (62%) were produced within the framework of Section 2. This is consistent with the fact that Section 2 projects represented the majority of PRIMA activities during 2018–2024. Figure A.2 in Annex VI, shows the distribution of publications by thematic area. Water management covers 39% of publications, Farming systems 34%, Agro-food value chains 25% and the Nexus 2%.

If one compares scientific outputs with the number of projects and the dedicated budget, it appears that Water Management is outperforming. This thematic priority delivered 39% of the publications while holding only 23% of the projects and 25% of the budget. All the other thematic areas produce a lower share of publications than their share of budget or number of projects – including the Nexus, which was incorporated as a thematic priority later in time.

Figure A.3, also in Annex VI, shows the most prolific projects, in terms of scientific outputs. The figure shows that some PRIMA projects generated a disproportionate share of scientific publications. For instance, the project *InTheMed* alone produced over 6% of all PRIMA scientific outputs, and the 25 most prolific projects led to 56% of total publications. These high-output projects cover all thematic areas except the Nexus, though they are predominantly concentrated on Water Management. As explained by the support study, this pattern suggests that a limited number of PRIMA projects may exert an outsized scientific impact relative to the Partnership's overall priorities.

PRIMA projects have been typically less prolific than those funded by Horizon 2020-Societal Challenge 2, which can be attributed to the smaller project size. PRIMA projects delivered about 7.2 publications per project (considering projects from 2018-2020 calls and publications released between 2018 and 2025), compared to 11.1 from Horizon 2020 as a whole, and 24.3 for Horizon 2020-SC2 projects, over the same period. Performance in terms of publications per project was slightly better for Section 1 than for Section 2, but still below levels observed for Horizon 2020-SC 2 (Figure A.4 in Annex VI). These observations have to be nuanced when comparing with funding, as assessed in Chapter 4.1.2 ("Efficiency").

PRIMA publications identified using LENS have received so far an average of 11.6 citations each (median: 5). The most cited work[52], from the Water Management RESERVOIR project, has been referenced 342 times. Citation patterns are highly variable, with some publications receiving no citations, and citation levels differing across PRIMA's thematic areas (Figure A.5 in Annex VI). On average, publications on agri-food value chains and farming systems received more citations (15.3 and 10.9, respectively) than those on water management (10.1).

When benchmarked against similar publications indexed in LENS for 2018–2024, PRIMA citation averages are slightly lower:

- Water management: 10.1 (PRIMA) vs. 14.5 (LENS)

[52] Gerardo Herrera-García *et al., op.cit.*

- Agri-food value chains: 15.3 (PRIMA) vs. 19.4 (LENS)
- Farming systems: 10.9 (PRIMA) vs. 12.4 (LENS)

The bibliometric analysis conducted by the authors of the support study confirms that publications from PRIMA projects are typically less frequently cited than scientific papers from projects funded by Horizon 2020-SC 2 (Figure 6). Overall, for publications released between 2020 and 2025, Horizon-SC2 projects' outputs received 44% more citations than PRIMA ones on average, considering the same reference period, and Horizon Europe-Cluster 6's publications are quoted 55% more. The support study explains that this could be due to factors such as the more limited geographical coverage of PRIMA (i.e., Mediterranean basin), which may lead to a smaller pool of potential citing publications. The uneven resources dedicated to R&I in the different PRIMA Participating States likely also influences this scientific excellence gap.

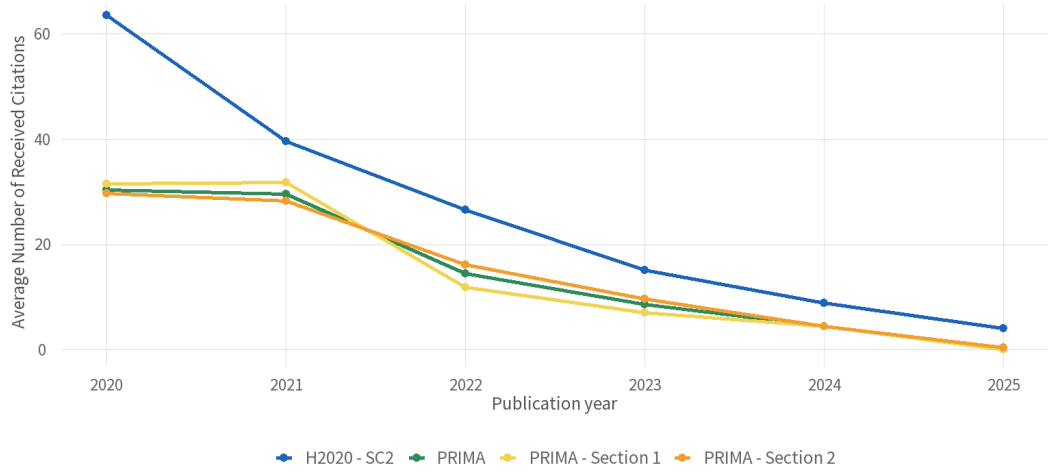

Figure 6: Citations to scientific publications by publication year (PRIMA vs. Horizon 2020-SC2). Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on PRIMA and Horizon Dashboard data.

Note: Projects for calls from 2018 to 2020 considered, covering all linked publications released in 2020-2025.

However, scientific publications from PRIMA projects have been cited by 11,056 other scientific publications, which shows a significant impact on scientific advancements.

The support study also elaborated a network analysis, which allows to map and assess the intricate citation networks that show the degree of influence among outputs. The authors applied the PageRank algorithm, which measures a node's importance based not only on citation frequency but also on the influence of the citing papers. This approach reveals research that is impactful within the broader scientific network, beyond raw citation counts. The most influential PRIMA publications based on this approach include papers on *"New approaches to improve crop tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses"*[53], *"Prediction of crop*

[53] González Guzman, M. *et al.*, (2021) *"New approaches to improve crop tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses"*. Physiologia Plantorum, *Vol. 174, Issue 1, doi:10.1111/ppl.13547*

coefficients from fraction of ground cover and height. Background and validation using ground and remote sensing data"[54] and *"Standard single and basal crop coefficients for field crops. Updates and advances to the FAO56 crop water requirements method"*[55]. When grouped by project, the most influential contributors to the network include OPTIMUS PRIME, SUPROMED, BIoRANGEPACK, StopMedWaste, and DELICIOUS.

It is also pertinent to estimate the figures related to peer-reviewed publications by funding, because the financial size of PRIMA projects is typically smaller. This analysis is presented in Chapter 4.1.2 ("Efficiency").

Scientific outcomes: Focus on gender

The support study conducted an analysis of PRIMA's research output, identifying the gender of the authors through different databases matching and cleaning, and excluding low-confidence cases. Based on this complex and prudent analysis, the authors estimated that among the 3,772 individual authors or co-authors of PRIMA scientific outputs, 53% were male, 45% female, and 2% undetermined. These proportions have remained relatively stable overtime, across different PRIMA implementation years. Men dominate the authorship of demonstrators, prototypes, and tools, while women are the majority among authors of policy documents. For the most common output types, reports, working papers, and journal articles, men remain in the majority, although the gap is relatively small for journal articles.

El-Ouahi and Larivière[56] estimate that female scientists represent about 36% of the authors of scientific publications in Agricultural Sciences, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, and only 31% for Engineering and Technology in the MENA region[57], with shares increasing in the last years. However, these aggregated data hide huge differences between countries; Tunisia, Lebanon, Turkey or Algeria have attained, overcame or are close to parity in fields like Agricultural Sciences or Natural Sciences. Except in Tunisia, women scholars are lagging behind in Engineering. Quoting UNESCO[58], the authors explain that "*several Arab States have the highest representation of women among engineering graduates, particularly in North Africa with Algeria at 48.5%, Tunisia at 44.2%, and Morocco at 42.2%*". In the EU, women accounted for 41% of researchers and engineers in 2023 according to Eurostat, varying between 50.8% (Denmark) and 34.3% (Slovakia and Malta).

[54] Pereira, L.S., *et al*., (2021) *"Prediction of crop coefficients from fraction of ground cover and height. Background and validation using ground and remote sensing data". Agricultural Water Management, Volume 252, doi: 10.1016/j.agwat.2020.106197*

[55] Pereira, P., *et al.*, (2021) "Standard single and basal crop coefficients for field crops. Updates and advances to the FAO56 crop water requirements method". Agricultural Water Management, Volume 243, doi: 10.1016/j.agwat.2020.106466.

[56] El-Ouahi, J. and Larivière, V., (2023) "On the lack of women researchers in the Middle East and North Africa". *Scientometrics,* 128, 4321–4348, doi: 10.1007/s11192-023-04768-5

[57] Larger than non-EU PRIMA-PS.

[58] UNESCO. (2021). *UNESCO Science Report: The race against time for smarter development*. Paris, UNESCO, at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000377433

From the case studies carried-out by the support study, it appears that gender and inclusion are addressed inconsistently across projects. Some projects successfully integrate and implement a gender dimension, but others limit their efforts to formally acknowledging gender considerations without specific, concrete actions. A few projects systematically evaluate gender impacts or other integrated social inclusion metrics beyond representation.

Patents and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

So far, PRIMA projects delivered 8 patent applications (or planned applications), stemming from 6 distinct projects. These applications were from projects in the Agri-Food Value chain and Farming Systems thematic areas in the 2018-2020 calls. Comparatively, for projects launched in the early calls (2018–2020), Horizon 2020 projects delivered 2,324 patent applications across 1,714 distinct families, while Horizon-SC2 projects accounted for 273 applications covering 62 families[59]. In terms of patent per project, under Horizon-SC2 there was one patent family per five projects, while PRIMA projects delivered roughly one patent family per 17 projects, i.e. over three times less frequent. These data must be nuanced taking into account the different scale of funding, in Chapter 4.4.1 ("Efficiency").

The support study also extracted the number of patents by teams not funded by PRIMA, but citing publications from PRIMA-funded projects, using the LENS database[60]. Among those patents citing at least one PRIMA publication, 12 unique IPR applications were identified, stemming, at least in part, from eight distinct PRIMA projects. They also were primarily related to the Agri-Food Value Chain and Farming Systems themes. Only a patent has been granted so far, a RNA-based Control of Powdery Mildew.

Innovations and their impacts

PRIMA projects report their product, service and process innovation activities[61] through the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) IT tool, at the beginning and the end of the projects. This information is mainly based on self-reporting, and only accessible upon request. Currently, these data do not systematically include economic and financial assessments of the innovation activities (e.g. costs and benefits compared with similar existing solutions, possibility of private investments), which limits the possibility of assessing to what extent the developed or tested solution can be implemented in the market.

[59] The European Patent Office defines patent families as "a collection of patent applications covering the same or similar technical content. The applications in a family are related to each other through priority claims". See: https://www.epo.org/en/searching-for-patents/helpful-resources/first-time-here/patent-families

[60] Data extraction : 17 July 2025.

[61] Based on the distinction between *innovation* (which requires introduction in the market or use within the firm) and *innovation activities* (i.e. "*all developmental, financial and commercial activities undertaken by a firm that are intended to result in an innovation")* by OECD/Eurostat, (2018) *Oslo Manual 2018: Guidelines for Collecting, Reporting and Using Data on* Innovation, 4th Edition, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities. OECD Publishing, Paris, doi: 10.1787/9789264304604-en, pp. 20-21. Typically, exploitation of innovation activities occurs after the end of R&I the projects.

Projects do not systematically report on the impacts of their demos, which are likely to have positive impacts at local level. It is therefore difficult to assess and quantify to what extent PRIMA projects help to directly address water and agro-food issues locally, and their social impact. Anecdotal evidence about some projects' impacts has been collected for this evaluation exercise, notably through case studies (see Box 4.2). It has to be mentioned, however, that other EU-funded R&I instruments, such as Missions like "Restoring our Ocean and Waters", are confronted with similar issues: even if addressing key environmental challenges through the implementation of solutions was their key objective, projects typically focus on the development of solutions, while their deployment is typically postponed to future phases, and the economic aspects of such innovation activities are hardly analysed[62].

The PRIMA's MEL database includes 170 items ("Key Exploitable Results", KERs), such as new and improved products (21.4%), services (19%) or processes (9.5%), while 19% are labelled "new or improved method, material, technology, protocol". Typically, projects start at TRL 3 (70.6%) and end at TRL 5 (46.5%), TRL 6 (28.2%) or TRL 7 (20%). This is comparable with the ongoing data of Horizon Europe[63], which typically jump 2-3 TRLs. Under Horizon Europe as a whole, the most common trajectories of TRL progression are, in this order, from TRL 3 at project start to TRL 5 at project end, from TRL 2 to TRL 4, and from TRL 6 to TRL 9. Under the Pillar II of Horizon Europe ("Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness"), the focus is on mid-TRL technologies, with most projects moving from TRL3-4 to TRL5-7.

Evidence collected through the case studies and surveys conducted by the authors of the support study show that PRIMA projects have generally advanced the state-of-the-art by introducing novel approaches and technologies, but most outputs remained at early or pilot stages of maturity rather than fully scaled solutions. This is arguably due to short project timelines and lack of commercialisation funding. Box 4.1 shows some examples of promising innovation activities, and their current barriers.

Box 4.1: Examples of innovation activities and their current barriers

LAGMED's patents on vaccine platforms and protection strategies have not yet led to market products, partly due to competing commercial products and resource constraints, though the team is seeking alternative administration routes and protection of biotechnological components.

SusMedHouse's patent applications attracted interest from two major Turkish greenhouse companies (letters of intent for collaboration on early detection systems and agro-robot), suggesting potential commercial uptake.

Other projects are doing concrete steps towards market uptake: A-BLOCK piloted blockchain traceability tools with agro-cooperatives, generating strong industry interest as reported by the

[62] Ayan, F. *et al.*, (2025) *Mission Restoring our Ocean and Waters – Portfolio analysis*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Forthcoming.

[63] Trucco, P.; van Lopik, J. and Zanobetti, L., (2025) *Scaling up ideas. An analysis of Technology Readiness Levels in Horizon Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, doi: 10.2777/1580173. However, data from the support study and this report are based on self-assessments and are not fully comparable because of different methodological approaches.

stakeholder contacted; STOPMEDWASTE developed valorisation strategies for by-products, with SMEs expressing willingness to test them; and MEDISMART reported contacts with packaging companies to scale its bio-based solutions.

Source: Support study, CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op.cit.*

However, the respondents to the survey to PRIMA beneficiaries expressed that their main outputs had indeed an academic nature: research publications (93%), new or improved research methodologies (35%), new datasets (46%), training programmes (46%) or new or improved tools, methods or techniques (28%). It should be mentioned that relatively few beneficiaries surveyed identified market-related outputs, e.g. new or improved product, services or processes (28%), large scale product validation and market replication (11%), business plans for the development of a company (13%) or prototypes (24%).

The case studies show however that impacts on the ground are beginning to emerge, even if these are still limited to specific pilots with uncertain prospects for wider uptake and scalability (Box 4.2). Solutions are typically at proof-of-concept stage, reflecting the TRL focus of PRIMA-funded research. Stakeholders consulted emphasised that delivering commercial results or fully market-ready products was not the primary goal. The main objective was to demonstrate the feasibility of innovative approaches under real conditions. This is a challenging conclusion if one take into consideration the second part of the core objective of PRIMA in Article 2 of the amended Basic Act, which implicitly implies deployment of solutions: "(…) *to make those [agrifood] systems and that [water] provision and management more climate resilient, efficient, cost-effective and environmentally and socially sustainable and to contribute to solving water scarcity, food security, nutrition, health, well-being and migration problems upstream".*

Box 4.2: Examples of projects with exploited outcomes and their impacts

INTEL IRRIS, Intelligent Irrigation System for Low-cost Autonomous Water Control in Small-scale Agriculture

The project INTEL-IRRIS (TRL 6-8) developed an affordable, easy-to-install soil moisture monitoring that harnesses Internet of Things & edge-computing smart technologies to optimise water use for smallholder farmers. The system provides farmers with irrigation recommendations taking into account crop needs and seasonal conditions to prevent water waste.

Piloted in Algeria and Morocco, the system has helped smallholder farmers save up to 20% on water usage. Its low cost (ca. 85€) and ease of use have shifted perceptions of smart farming, driving adoption. With local partners in Algeria and Morocco building and deploying the technology, international interest is growing in countries like Panama and Laos.

https://intel-irris.eu/

AWESOME, Managing Water, Ecosystems and Food Across Sectors and Scales in the South Mediterranean

The project AWESOME developed hydroponic and aquaponic systems for sustainable agriculture that reduce pressure on freshwater resources. The consortium estimates that water use can be up to 8 times less compared with traditional practices. These systems are intended for farmers, agricultural researchers, and small business owners. They address the significant

problem of reducing freshwater usage in agriculture, creating benefits such as sustainable food production, water conservation, and economic efficiency, also through higher crop yields and reduced dependency on chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

The solution is estimated to have attained TRL 7 (from TRL 3 when the project started), and partner companies such as Agrimatic (Egypt), PLUG'n'Grow (Egypt), and Stack Tek Farm (Germany) have expressed interest in acquiring the rights.

https://awesome-prima.eu/

SUSTAINOLIVE - Novel approaches to promote the Sustainability of olive groves in the Mediterranean

The SUSTAINOLIVE project (TRL 5-6) promoted agroecological practices to make Mediterranean olive farming more sustainable, integrating organic fertilisation, composting, biochar use, pruning-residue reuse, and livestock-soil synergies. It established a network of 54 paired olive farms across Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Tunisia, and Morocco to validate nature-based solutions for sustainable olive farming in the Mediterranean Basin.

The project demonstrated that biochar and composting techniques increased soil water-holding capacity by 20% and yields by 15% at sites in Morocco and Tunisia, while promoting agroecological practices such as livestock-soil integration and olive residue reuse.

Through 37-42 hands-on demonstration events and more than 30 practical abstracts, SUSTAINOLIVE achieved significant societal impact by transferring knowledge from European to non-EU partners, promoting new composting businesses (olive pomace now valued at €50/tonne), and driving a cultural shift among farmers toward sustainable practices. The project developed freely accessible tools including a carbon footprint calculator under review by the International Olive Oil Council, a nutrient balance calculator and soil quality indicators enabling farmer self-assessment.

The limited commercial exploitation of PRIMA projects' results contrasts with the relevance of demonstrations, with 127 demonstration sites in 15 Mediterranean countries according to data from the PRIMA-IS, and a rather common co-creation of innovation activities with stakeholders such as local users.

Conclusions: Effectiveness

The PRIMA's SRIA includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that cover areas like participation (e.g. integration of partners from non-traditional R&I networks, notably from non-EU PRIMA PS; type of beneficiary; number of unique beneficiaries), outputs (capacity-building events organised, publications, TRL levels achieved) or procedural (changes in processes in PRIMA Participating States R&I programmes), without always having a clear reference or benchmark. Neither are there are such output-related benchmarks or targets on the PRIMA Basic Act, nor on the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe legal bases. This causes an issue when measuring to what extent PRIMA is effective in terms of results.

PRIMA has so far delivered a significant number of scientific publications (1,119), mainly peer-reviewed papers. Compared with Horizon 2020, or with Horizon 2020-Societal

Challenge 2, PRIMA projects are less productive in terms of number of scientific outputs and their impact, measures as the number of citations, which could indicate a lower degree of scientific excellence. However, these conclusions have to be nuanced taking into account the lower funding of PRIMA projects – see Chapter 4.1.2. Some projects and peer-reviewed papers performed particularly well.

One of the objectives of PRIMA in Article 2 of its Basic Act is to *"build R&I capacities, develop knowledge and common innovative solutions"*. Legally speaking, there is no focus on the implementation and deployment of solutions, even if this is implicit in the logic of PRIMA's intervention. It is hardly possible to address water-related issues without implementing solutions on the ground. The innovation-related results of PRIMA projects look *a priori* more disappointing, especially when considering the ambitious objectives of the Partnership. PRIMA projects delivered a limited number of IPR applications (8), as well as commercial exploitation of innovation outputs. PRIMA projects develop solutions that typically remain at proof-of-concept stage, and stakeholders acknowledged that delivering commercial results or fully market-ready products was not the primary goal of the projects. The case studies show, however, that impacts on the ground are beginning to emerge, even if these are still typically limited to specific pilots with uncertain prospects for wider uptake and scalability. This contrasts with the high number of demonstrations sites and co-creation with stakeholders, which, in theory, should lead to ready-to-use solutions.

However, these innovation issues are also common in other EU-funded R&I instruments. Even if the main objective is to address key environmental challenges through the implementation of solutions, projects typically focus on the development phases, while the deployment is typically postponed to future phases, and the economic aspects of such innovation activities are hardly assessed by the projects themselves, for instance through the development of market analysis, business models or assessing the sustainability impact of demos and their possible uptake. PRIMA projects typically achieve a jump in terms of TRLs similar to Horizon Europe, notably its Pillar II. These benchmarks indicate that, in innovation terms, PRIMA projects are delivering similarly to other EU R&I funding instruments. However, in a context where competitiveness is increasingly relevant in EU policies (see Chapter 4.1.3, "Coherence") and, considering that the primary goal of PRIMA is to address the unsustainable management of water resources and food systems, more focus on deployment of solutions is advisable, probably from the Annual Work Programmes and as part of most projects.

4.1.2 Efficiency

Administrative costs of PRIMA-IS

Article 3.3(b) of the PRIMA amended Basic Act establishes that the Union's financial contribution to the partnership shall "*cover PRIMA-IS administrative costs, up to a*

maximum of 6 % of the Union financial contribution". This indicator can be calculated in different manners, such as:

- *Actual* contributions, or *actual payments*. This approach underestimates operational costs because there are payments of ongoing projects committed, but pending.
- Operational costs as estimated in *ranking lists* or *grant agreements*, after each evaluation. This approach provides a more accurate estimate, even if there can be deviations during projects' lifetimes, for example due to smaller than envisaged final expenditure by projects, bankruptcies, abandonment of partners, etc.
- Operational costs as estimated in the *work programmes*. This approach overestimates the operational costs and, therefore, underestimates the share of administrative costs since not all the budget planned for in the work programmes is committed and expended.

Table 2: Share of PRIMA-IS administrative costs, based on actual payments. Source: PRIMA Annual Activity report 2024.

Year	Allocated by the EU	Administrative costs of PRIMA-IS (a)	Experts (evaluations, operational) (b)	Operational costs (disbursements) (c)	Share of administrative costs (%) (a)/(a+b+c)*100
2018	962,000	801,792	280,153	–	-
2019	1,685,000	1,269,655	396,180	10,790,187	10.2%
2020	1,450,000	1,177,862	258,179	16.394.120	6.6%
2021	1,385,000	1,330,637	284,651	26,119,532	4.8%
2022	1,385,000	1,430,355	358,777	26,829,579	5%
2023	1,385,000	1,460,129	183,459	26,892,736	5.1%
2024	1,385,000	1,589,187	115,694	32,567,391	4.6%
Total	***9,637,000***	***9,059,617***	***1,592,914***	***139,593,545***	***6.03%***

According to the calculation method of Table 2, between 2018 and 2024, PRIMA has strictly respected the 6% threshold, when the calculation is based on actual payments. The only deviations appeared between 2019 and 2020, when administrative costs exceeded 6% of the EU contribution disbursed. This can be explained by the lower operational costs in the first PRIMA calls, while the administrative needs to build the PRIMA structure were relatively high.

The administrative costs of PRIMA are increasing, proportionally to the number of projects managed, and even beyond the amounts allocated by the Commission. So far, the gap is bridged by funds saved during previous years. However, this should not be an issue because a budget plan was made with the Commission until 2031, in order to respect the 6% ceiling.

As shown in Table 3, the allocated amounts are determined by the evaluation ranking lists. Using this calculation approach, the administrative costs of PRIMA remain well below the 6% threshold.

Table 3: Share of PRIMA administrative costs, based on ranking lists. Source: PRIMA Annual Activity report 2024

Years 2018-2024	Amounts
Administrative costs	9,059,617
Experts – Evaluations up to 2024 (operational)	1,876,993
Calls ranking lists	202,418,097
Total	**213,354,707**
% administrative costs/operational based on ranking lists	**4.2%**

As a reference for comparison, the Metrology Partnership, also based on Article 185 TFEU, with a new Decision adopted in 2021 to adapt it to Horizon Europe rules[64], follows a different approach than PRIMA. In the Metrology Partnership, administrative costs are funded by Participating States, subject to a ceiling of 5% of its budget. Based on the Annex 29 of Commission's Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe[65], the share of administrative costs of the European Metrology Programme for Innovation and Research (EMPIR) up to 2023 was 8.2% (EUR 25,4 million, with operational costs reaching EUR 282,9 million). Under Horizon Europe, its successor the European Partnership on Metrology (EPM) presents administrative costs up to 2023 of EUR 3,7 million (9% of operational plus administrative costs).

The Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe[66] considers that the 5% of administrative expenditure established in article 12(6) the legal base is so far respected[67]: 4.01%. This percentage is very similar than PRIMA's[68]. However, if all amounts disbursed in the whole Horizon Europe were taken into account, the share of administrative costs reaches 9.3% (administrative costs paid off, EUR 3,174 million; and operational costs paid off, EUR 30,883 million). However, these data are not fully comparable with PRIMA's.

Costs and benefits for different stakeholders

The direct financial costs and benefits for PRIMA-PS are presented in Chapter 4.2. Beyond the merely financial comparison of main beneficiaries and contributors to PRIMA, according to the stakeholders interviewed in the support study (mainly from R&I funding agencies) benefits from participating in PRIMA outweigh its costs. This is particularly true in terms of scientific and societal impact, as well as the opportunities it provides for Mediterranean cooperation and science diplomacy.

[64] Decision (EU) 2021/2084 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2021 on the participation of the Union in the European Partnership on Metrology jointly undertaken by several Member States, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D2084

[65] Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Interim Evaluation of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021 - 2024), COM(2025)189 final and SWD(2025)110 final, pages 11-12. At: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025SC0110

[66] *Ibid.*, page 63 and 67.

[67] Regulation (EU)2021/695. The legal calculation formula only considers expenditure drawing on certain budget sources (only the budget in the legal base) and the expenditure linked to indirect research, which excludes the JRC.

[68] It has to be taken into account that PRIMA-IS manages not only Section 1 projects (funded by the EU, and used for the calculation), but also Section 2 projects – except payments. This means that the efficiency in managing projects is, in fact, higher than shown by the figures.

However, several stakeholders mentioned administrative complexity[69] as problematic under Section 2. Asymmetric national procedures make coordination within consortia difficult, as do varied rules regarding eligible beneficiaries, especially for private actors and SMEs. This implies delays in payments, which affect significantly the beneficiaries, but also the smooth implementation of projects. This issue was already raised in the previous evaluation of PRIMA, but actions carried out to mitigate this issue (such as mutual learning exercises) have, thus far, been insufficient. Therefore, there is scope for simplification, particularly through harmonising procedures in Section 2 by aligning national and PRIMA processes. However, interviewed stakeholders expressed scepticism about the feasibility of achieving such harmonisation, mainly dependent on PRIMA-PS. Box 4.3 describes the problems encountered by participants under Section 2.

Box 4.3: Issues encountered by PRIMA beneficiaries under Section 2

- When a country receives more project proposals than its budget can support, it may occur that positively evaluated projects remain unfunded or lose partners, thereby compromising the research plan integrity. Although in some cases countries are willing to increase their contributions to support the participation of their organisations, this is not always possible without redistributing responsibilities and budgets among the selected consortia. This is particularly important for more vulnerable Participating States experiencing political instability or financial crises, which face difficulties meeting financial commitments, thereby constraining participation opportunities for beneficiaries from these countries.
- The signing of grant agreements with national funding agencies led to delays in payments to some of the teams participating in the consortia. Case study evidence demonstrates that, to overcome delays, partners used their own funds or reassigned tasks, which allowed most projects to restart field trials and demonstrations, catching up on lost time.
- Procedural differences considerably increase management costs for project coordinators, as they must adapt the project to potential changes resulting from partner withdrawal or the inability to pre-finance planned activities. Rescheduling is particularly problematic for time-sensitive activities in agricultural and agri-food projects.
- Funding caps differ considerably by country. In 2023–2024, Italy (EUR 500,000), France (EUR 420,000), and Spain (CDTI: EUR 400,000) set the highest ceilings for project coordinators, enabling them to lead larger projects. In contrast, Algeria (EUR 80,000), Israel (EUR 100,000), and Tunisia (EUR 45,000) apply much lower caps, which may limit their ability to coordinate projects[70]. These caps, which apply at different thresholds to non-coordinating roles as well, create an uneven playing field within consortia and lead to a suboptimal allocation of resources that is disconnected from the research plan.

Source: CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op. cit.*

More specifically, the support study's survey reveals that the preparation time of the proposals is typically up to 35 person-days, without need for external support from consultancies (National Contact Points, the PRIMA-IS or other departments in their organisation provided help between 20% and 30% of the cases). This is similar to the

[69] Under Section 2, each PRIMA-PS funds its beneficiaries. This implies different procedures and deadlines for beneficiaries, even if between the same project.
[70] Data on funding caps provided by the PRIMA-IS.

Horizon Europe's standards[71]. Most respondents consider that the overall efforts and costs to prepare a PRIMA proposal is acceptable and proportionate to the complexity of the proposed project, the number of consortium partners and to the volume of funding requested. Other aspects of the application process are also considered satisfactory in general: ease to identify and contact relevant consortium partners, clarity of the objectives of the topics, or the timeliness of the funding decisions. Only some unsuccessful applicants that replied to the survey raise concerns about the level of details provided in the feedback from evaluators.

The feedback on the resources required for managing the projects is also generally positive. Most participants find that time to sign the grant agreement is adequate, the expenditure eligibility requirements are clear, and PRIMA is sufficiently flexible in adapting the project objectives if circumstances change. Managing of a PRIMA project usually takes up to 35 person-days per year while the budget allocated to administrative tasks such as reporting and financial management is at least 6% of the total project budget. This is in the lower range of Horizon Europe overall and its Cluster 6 projects, estimated between 6% and 10%[72]. The management and reporting of the implementation of the PRIMA project is usually done by the consortium itself, without support of consultancies. Some stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the MEL platform used for monitoring and reporting, describing it as inefficient and difficult to use.

More than half of the survey respondents believe that they would not have achieved the same results, or only to a small extent, through a national or regional funding instrument. Some respondents explain that the value added of the PRIMA funding is associated with the relatively small scale of the projects, that they are easier to manage and accessible compared to other R&I funding. Participating in PRIMA also provides opportunities for countries with relatively limited access to Horizon Europe to accumulate skills and competences in R&I project management. This finding seems to confirm the hypothesis presented in Chapter 4.2.

Surveyed beneficiaries criticise that project participation is somewhat concentrated within a limited number of organisations, suggesting potential areas for enhancing the Programme's inclusiveness. There are also suggestions to encourage the participation of industrial organisations, operating in the energy, water efficiency and green innovation.

Interestingly, the reflections from beneficiaries on effectiveness are very consistent with those from non-beneficiaries. The latter, however, explain that they did not manage to find alternative funding than PRIMA, because this requires significant adaptations, including narrowing research areas, simplifying methods, reducing funding and project duration, and

[71] Catalano, G., Consiglio, G., Delponte, L., Monaco, F. et al., (2025) *Survey visualisation report – Feedback of Horizon Europe beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants – Supporting the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, as quoted by CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op. cit.*

[72] Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Interim Evaluation of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021 - 2024), SWD(2025) 110 final, Annex 4, page 47, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ebc71839-25bf-11f0-829d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

involving fewer and less diverse partners. Case studies also show that some key issues addressed by PRIMA tend to receive limited attention under other funding instruments.

Success rates

The first Interim Evaluation of PRIMA[73] highlighted the low success rates[74], especially under Section 1 (under 5% of eligible proposals between 2018 and 2021). For Section 2, the success rate was 7.2% in 2018, but increased to around 20% between 2019 and 2021. The Report from the Commission informed about the risks of such over-subscription, which "*can discourage in the future submission of high-level proposals*". In addition, low success rates imply an inefficient use of resources, employed to prepare proposals that are not funded and therefore do not lead to R&I activities.

However, low success rates are typical in programmes based on excellence, like PRIMA, Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe. Low success rates are the result of competition for R&I funding, with limited resources at both national and EU level (see Table A.3 in Annex VI). Low success rates also show a high level of interest to benefit from PRIMA's support, but at the same time can discourage further participation[75]. The first Interim Evaluation of PRIMA recommended to PRIMA-IS to "*address this issue and propose ways to increase the success rates of proposals selected for funding. For instance, the possibility of more tailored calls and further refinement of the application process in the two stages of the calls*". Table A.7 in Annex VI, shows the updated success rates between 2018 and 2024, broken down by PRIMA-PS, Sections and year. On average, the success rates were 4.1% under Section 1, 17.7% under Section 2 and 9.1% both combined.

Only in Section 2 can one observe a significant increase in success rates since 2021, while figures remain similar for Section 1, despite specific measures taken by the PRIMA-IS to address the recommendations (i.e. develop more specific and focused calls, encourage private sector participation and notably SMEs)[76]. It is likely too early to observe the real impacts of these measures.

As a reference, success rates under Horizon 2020 were 12% and under Horizon Europe they are now around 17%[77]. For Horizon 2020-SC2, they reach 13%[78] and for Horizon Europe-Cluster 6, 25%[79]. PRIMA Participating States presented success rates under Horizon Europe between 16.4% (Luxembourg) and 10% (Türkiye). More specifically, the overall success rate of Horizon Europe's Missions was 25% in July 2024, while for the

[73] COM(2023) 285 final and SWD(2023) 169 final, *op.cit.*

[74] Defined as the ratio between the number of proposal selected for funding and the number of eligible proposals.

[75] CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op. cit.*

[76] PRIMA, (2024) *Action Plan for Implementing Recommendations from the Interim Evaluation of PRIMA*. Internal document.

[77] Source: Horizon Dashboard, extraction 4/04/2025.

[78] *Ibid*.

[79] Fraunhofer ISI, Kerlen Evaluation, Science Metrix, Technopolis Group, ZSI, Dinges, [Dinges, M. and Coatanroch, G., eds.] (2024) *Horizon Europe and the green transition – Interim evaluation support study – Final report ("Phase 2" study)*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Quoted by the PRIMA Interim Evaluation support study, *op.cit.* Updated figure in the Horizon Dashboard, October 2025: 22%.

Mission "Restoring our Ocean and Waters", it reached 42%[80]. Institutionalised Partnerships under Horizon Europe (PRIMA excluded) typically present higher success rates than under Horizon Europe overall, higher than 30% in most Member States and Associated Countries, and rarely under 20% (Bulgaria, Malta, Slovakia and Türkiye)[81]. Based on this benchmark, it can be concluded that the extremely low success rate under Section 1 remain problematic, while Section 2 seems to present a good balance between excellence and use of resources to prepare proposals.

Time to prepare and publish the Work Programme

The preparation and publication of the Annual Work Programme is a critical moment of the implementation of PRIMA. The specificities of the process are described in Box 4.4.

Box 4.4: Administrative procedures to adopt PRIMA's AWPs

The preparation of the PRIMA AWP per se is not particularly complex, especially if compared with the co-creation for the Horizon Europe's Work Programme. The following steps have to be followed:

- The PRIMA Scientific Advisory Committee delivers a concept note that identifies priorities, followed by work programme topics;
- The first version of the AWP is submitted to the Board of Trustees, which comment and amend the draft;
- Then, the Commission receives the draft AWP and informal interservice consultations are launched;
- After exchanges between the Commission and the PRIMA-IS, the pre-final version is submitted to the Commission along with the consensus external evaluation report;
- An official Interservice Consultation is launched. According to the document length, it is usually open for two weeks;
- After addressing the comments and once the final version available, the translation of the summary and the adoption process are launched;
- Once the AWP is approved by the Commission, the Board of Trustees adopts it itself.

In parallel, with the extension of PRIMA and the increase of budget under Horizon Europe, the Commission needs to receive additional financial guarantee letters from PRIMA-PS to provide sufficient assurance that the Union will be able to recover any amounts unduly received by the PRIMA-IS from the Union. This step happens only once, but it is particularly cumbersome, and subject to political issues in PRIMA-PS (e.g. government changes) or between the Commission and PRIMA-PS (e.g. blockages due to parallel bilateral negotiations). It led to complications in the process to adopt the AWP 2025, first under Horizon Europe. In 2025, despite a deadline in November 2024 to deliver all financial guarantees, most were received late and some are even still pending in January 2026. As a consequence, the AWP could only be published on 31 March, thanks to different derogations. These issues, however, did not occur under Horizon 2020, when all financial guarantee letters were received between 2017 and 2018.

The time to prepare and adopt the Annual Work Programme takes around one year, as shown in Table A.8 in Annex VI. The process is not more complex than the preparation of the Horizon Europe's Work Programme, and only in very punctual situations (AWP 2025),

[80] European Commission, (2025) *Horizon Europe Missions Monitoring Flash*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Forthcoming.

[81] European Commission (2024), *Performance of European Partnerships - Biennial Monitoring Report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, figure 47, page 120. At: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/991766

the late publication could challenge the potential applicants, whose time to prepare their proposals (including building transnational consortia) may be more limited than what would be desirable.

Time to inform, time to sign, time to grant, time to pay

The time employed for key administrative processes uses to be considered as an indicator of administrative effectiveness. One of the positive conclusions of the final Evaluation of Horizon 2020 was, indeed, the radical decrease of the time to grant, from 270 days under FP7 to 187 days, well under the compulsory target of 245 days[82]. Article 31 of Horizon 2020, indeed, established a maximum period of five months to inform applicants, and a maximum period of eight months for signing the grant agreements, both counted from the final date for submission of complete proposals. The same article states that the Work Programmes may establish shorter periods.

The data for PRIMA are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Key time cost indicators, PRIMA Sections 1 and 2. Source: Ex Post Evaluation of Horizon 2020, SWD(2024) 29 final, and PRIMA's Interim Evaluation Input report.

	Section	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Horizon 2020 average
Time to Inform (TTI)	**S1**	133	134	66	74	83	75	70	**112 (Target: 153)**
	S2	105	190	99	80	99	127	n/a	
Time to Sign (TTS)	**S1**	177	93	149	120	116	137	114	**76**
	S2	340	276	270	219	222	n/a	n/a	
Time to Pay (TTP)	**S1**	25	20	10.8	25	20	22	9	**68**
	S2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Time to Grant (TTG)	**S1**	311	227	215	194	199	212	184	**187 (Target: 240)**
	S2	445	466	369	299	321	n/a	n/a	

Note: The Time to Inform is the number of days between calls closure and results announcement. The Time to Sign is the number of days between the announcement of results and the grant agreement signature. The Time to Pay is the number of days between the signature of the grant agreement and the first payment.

It can be observed that, except for the TTI in 2018, Section 1 performs better than Section 2. The previous Interim Evaluation of PRIMA already recommended to harmonise administrative procedures regarding Section 2[83]. As a response, efforts have been done at national level (e.g. simplified procedures and checks in PRIMA-PS like Spain, Egypt or Italy, further pre-financing in Spain) and at PRIMA-IS level (6-months maximum for grant

[82] Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, *Ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*, COM(2024) 49 final and SWD(2024) 29 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024SC0030

[83] Commission Staff Working Document and Communication: Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. *Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)*, SWD(2023)169 final, page 38.

agreement signature, closer monitoring)[84], but there has not been enough time to observe the impact of these measures.

PRIMA's TTI and TTP, at least for Section 1, are particularly good compared to the Horizon 2020 average, but several indicators are well below the performance of Horizon 2020. Under Section 1, TTS and TTG do not show a clear tendency, while TTI and TTP are rather stable since 2020. Instead, under Section 2, all available indicators show a clear improving trend. The very long timing in 2018 was due to the double check from the PRIMA's Board of Trustees of the first evaluation, which delayed the whole process helped to ensure the integrity and transparency of the first selection process[85], preparing the ground for future evaluations.

These data can be also compared with Horizon Europe and other relevant Partnerships under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Key time-cost indicators, other relevant EU-funded R&I instruments. Source: Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe and Fraunhofer ISI, (2024) *Circular bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking – Horizon Europe and the green transition interim evaluation support study – Partnership evaluation report*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

R&I instrument	TTI	TTS	TTG
Horizon Europe	130	95	240
Horizon Europe - Pillar II	108	125	244
EMPIR (art.185, Horizon 2020)	103	116	219
EPM (art.185, Horizon Europe)	99	152	248
Circular Biobased Joint Undertaking	137	(-)	237

Output-to-funding ratio of main outputs

Chapter 4.1.1 concluded that PRIMA projects deliver less scientific publications, patents and IPR than Horizon 2020 and, more specifically, than Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2, and that the average number of citations is also lower. However, these conclusions have to be nuanced, taking into account the funding of R&I projects, which is much lower in PRIMA.

The output-to-funding ratio of the main outputs of R&I projects, refers to the ratio between the number of outputs (publications, IPR) and impacts (citations), divided by the funding. This is a very raw indicator, because scientific papers and patents are not the only results of projects. Nevertheless, it gives an indication about the efficiency of R&I funding.

The support study shows, if the budget of projects is considered, that PRIMA performs similarly or better than comparable R&I programmes. In projects derived from 2018 to

[84] PRIMA, (2025) *op. cit.*, p. 74-77.
[85] PRIMA, (2025) *op. cit.*, p. 71-76.

2020 calls, the average funding received by PRIMA projects is about five times less than the financial support that Horizon 2020-SC2 projects obtain. Therefore, the scientific output per attributed funding is about 50% higher for PRIMA than for Horizon 2020-SC2 projects, and 19% when considering only Section 1 projects. Only Horizon 2020 as a whole performs more efficiently than PRIMA's Section 1, considering the number of scientific publications.

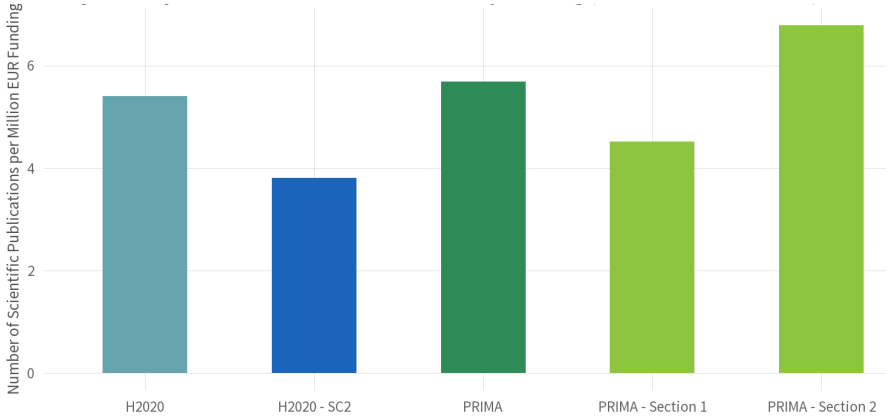

Figure 7: Number of scientific publications by received funding. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on PRIMA and Horizon Dashboard data.

Note: Projects for calls from 2018 to 2020 considered, covering all linked publications released in 2018-2025.

Similarly, the number of patent families per unit of funding was about 38% higher in PRIMA projects than in Horizon 2020-SC2, but slightly lower for Horizon 2020 as a whole. These results must be interpreted with caution, due to the inclusion of pending applications.

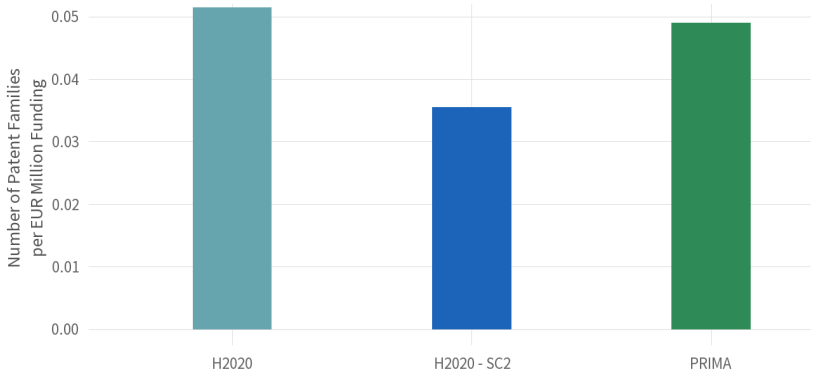

Figure 8: Number of patent families by received funding. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on PRIMA and Horizon Dashboard data.

Note: Projects for calls from 2018 to 2020 considered, covering all linked patents. PRIMA includes patent applications still in the pipeline. Funding corresponds to Max. EC Contribution for H2020-SC2, Union funding (Section 1) and national funding (Section 2) for PRIMA.

Conclusions: Efficiency

From a purely administrative point of view, PRIMA is delivering on most of its targets. The administrative costs of the PRIMA Foundation are under the 6% ceiling fixed in the amended Basic Act and are comparable to, or even more favourable than, other EU R&I funding mechanisms (e.g. EMPIR and its successor EPM, both institutionalised partnerships under Article 185 of the TFEU, or, if based on disbursed amounts, the whole Horizon Europe). Stakeholders are also satisfied with the administrative procedures and resources needed for both preparing proposals and managing projects. The main identified issues are under Section 2, where the many different national procedures lead to inefficiencies with negative impacts on projects' beneficiaries and their capacity to carry-out their research as planned. This had already been a conclusion of the first Interim Evaluation. Measures have been defined, but there was no time to properly implement them, or to be effective since the first evaluation. Moreover, the time to inform, time to grant or time to pay are under the Horizon 2020 targets and comparable to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe standards, notably for Section 1. Section 2 typically outperforms Section 1, and it is not always aligned with Horizon 2020 targets (e.g. TTG).

The first Interim Evaluation of PRIMA also alerted about the very low success rates, especially under Section 1 which are much lower than the averages under Horizon 2020, Horizon 2020-SC2, Horizon Europe, Horizon Europe-Cluster 6, the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, or other partnerships. The low success rates suggest that an amount of research and innovation resources is dedicated to preparing proposals that ultimately go unfunded. However, it appears that this has not led to a decrease in participation, as applicants continue to submit proposals, indicating a persistent interest in PRIMA.

Stakeholders, including non-beneficiaries of PRIMA, show a high level of satisfaction with the procedures and resources needed to prepare their R&I proposal and implement it. The estimated administrative costs of PRIMA projects are in the lower range of those funded by Horizon Europe and its Cluster 6.

Finally, while Chapter 4.1.1 ("Effectiveness") concluded that PRIMA delivers less publications and IPR that comparable EU-funded R&I programmes, if one compares scientific and IPR outputs by the funding received, PRIMA seems more efficient than Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 and it is comparable to Horizon 2020 as a whole.

4.1.3 Coherence

Policy coherence

Under the Juncker Commission (2014-2019), the EU played a critical role in reaching relevant international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement[86] and the Sustainable

[86] Paris Agreement, adopted by at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015, at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/parisagreement_publication.pdf

Development Goals (SDGs)[87], both in 2015. While the Paris Agreement does not explicitly refer to water, climate adaptation is one of its targets (notably in article 7), and food security – challenged by climate change – is presented as a "*fundamental priority*" in the recitals. Water and food systems are also key elements of the SDGs (e.g. SDG 2, "zero hunger"; SDG 6, "clean water and sanitation"; SDG 12, "responsible consumption and production"; SDG 13, "climate action"; SDG 17, "partnerships for the goals"). PRIMA was launched in this context, when environmental and sustainability policies were becoming increasingly important in the EU and international policy framework.

The top priority of the first Von der Leyen Commission (2019-2024)[88] was the European Green Deal, which aims to address, in a systemic and coherent manner, the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, all driven by natural resources depletion). The von der Leyen I Political Guidelines explicitly stated that "*climate change, biodiversity, food security, deforestation and land degradation go together. We need to change the way we produce, consume and trade. Preserving and restoring our ecosystem needs to guide all of our work*". The Political Guidelines focused particularly on sustainable agriculture and food systems, as well as the well-being of farmers, announcing a Farm to Fork Strategy. Water issues were less explicitly covered, with a few references to water quality – and none on water scarcity or stress. However, the Political Guidelines' intentions were further detailed in the European Green Deal Communication[89] and other relevant strategies such as the Farm to Fork Strategy[90], the Biodiversity Strategy[91], the Climate Adaptation Strategy[92] and the Zero Pollution Action Plan[93]. Preserving and restoring water resources and ecosystems were relevant parts of these initiatives, fully aligned with PRIMA's goals.

---

[87] 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/70/1

[88] Von der Leyen, U., (2019) *A Union that Strives for More. My agenda for Europe – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*. At: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/063d44e9-04ed-4033-acf9-639ecb187e87_en?filename=political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf

[89] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2019*) The European Green Deal*, COM(2019) 640 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52019DC0640

[90] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2020) *A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system***,** COM(2020) 381 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0381

[91] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2020) *EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Bringing nature back into our lives*, COM(2020) 380 final, at : https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0380

[92] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2021) *Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change*, COM(2021) 82 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0082

[93] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2021) *Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil'*, COM(2021) 400 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0400

Water issues gained additional momentum, at international and EU level, due to the UN Water Conference held in New York City between the 22 and 24 March 2023. The EU, again, played an instrumental role to move water issues at the top of the international political agendas, notably presenting 33 commitments for action. This conference helped to better integrate water issues in different EU and national policies, from food to energy security – also because the impacts of climate change on water are increasingly visible. Some months before, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework[94], agreed in December 2022 with the EU again playing a key role, included targets referring explicitly to water ecosystems (targets 2, 3 and 11), and sustainable agriculture and food systems (targets 10 and 16).

The Political Guidelines for 2024-2029[95] place greater emphasis on competitiveness and defence, rather than on biodiversity and the environment. The Draghi Report[96], while acknowledging the competitive advantage of the EU in clean technologies, contains a limited number of references to water or environmental resilience. However, the 2024-2029 Guidelines do include a priority on "Sustaining our quality of life: food security, water and nature", where agriculture, food systems, food security, fairness and well-being of farmers, as well as climate adaptation and water, are essential elements. The Guidelines announce a Water Resilience Strategy and underline the need for water security, showing that water issues remain relevant on the policy agenda and that they are a key component of competitiveness.

In March 2025, the Joint Strategy on the European Preparedness Union[97] alerted about the cascading effects of social, political and economic crises, with a particular emphasis on water. The Joint Strategy explains that, according to the European Central Bank, almost three-quarters of bank loans in the euro area are granted to companies that are highly dependent on at least one ecosystem services, notably on water.

The Water Resilience Strategy[98] was adopted in June 2025. The Strategy supports a "source-to-sea approach", not clearly present in PRIMA's priorities and actions, and establishes a "water efficiency first principle" in a water-smart economy, calls for restoring and protecting the water cycle, and for securing clean and affordable water for all,

[94] Decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, at: https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf

[95] Von der Leyen, U., (2024) *Europe's choice – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2025*. At: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

[96] Draghi, M., (2024) *The future of European competitiveness.* Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, at: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en#paragraph_47059

[97] Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *on the European Preparedness Union Strategy*, JOIN(2025) 130 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0130

[98] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *European Water Resilience Strategy*, COM(2025) 280 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0280

empowering consumers and other users. This is aligned with the objectives and actions of PRIMA. For instance, the WEFE nexus, introduced as a PRIMA priority in 2019, responds to the "water efficiency first" principle. Beyond specific WEFE topics in the PRIMA Annual Work Programmes, the nexus is embedded in all topics and projects, ensuring coherence between economic and environmental objectives. In terms of research and innovation, the Water Resilience Strategy explains that "*gaps remain in understanding European fresh and marine waters, water resource availability, climate changes, and the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus*". At international level, the Strategy supports better global water governance to strengthen the water, peace and security nexus, notably through regional water partnerships such as the Union for the Mediterranean Water Agenda 2030. The Strategy acknowledges that a considerable gap in international water financing persists. PRIMA contributes, to the extent of its limited funding, to bridge this financial gap, but also to improve water cooperation and governance through science and water diplomacy – based on the "equal footing" principle.

The Political Guidelines 2024-2029 also announced a new Pact for the Mediterranean, adopted in October 2025[99]. The Pact is based on three interconnected pillars, *a priori* linked with PRIMA's objectives and action: (1) *People: driving force for change, connections and* ***innovation***; (2) *Stronger,* ***more sustainable*** *and integrated economies*; and (3) *Security,* ***preparedness*** *and migration management*. PRIMA is explicitly mentioned as an instrument to "*strengthen joint research and innovation on water-energy-food-ecosystems (WEFE) nexus*"[100], and mentioned amongst the programmes that "*facilitate the recognition and transferability of skills and enhance international and circular mobility opportunities*"[101]. Water resilience and the WEFE nexus, priorities of PRIMA, are very present in the Communication.

Based on this policy background and evolution since the launch of PRIMA, it can be concluded that PRIMA was a pioneer for action in policy areas that have since become top priorities at EU and international level. One probable reason for this is because, being in a region particularly affected by water scarcity, stress, droughts and other extreme water-related phenomena, Mediterranean countries were more sensitive to these issues and anticipated their increasing importance for European societies and economies. Current policy developments at EU and international levels confirm the importance of water. However, in a political context in which competitiveness is a core priority, PRIMA projects could be more oriented towards uptake of technological and non-technological solutions.

[99] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *The Pact for the Mediterranean. One Sea, One Pact, One Future*, JOIN(2025) 26 final, at: https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/document/download/11646283-cc32-49ae-9639-744d0d6d7da8_en?filename=Joint%20communication%20on%20the%20Pact%20for%20the%20Mediterranean.pdf

[100] *Ibid.*, page 16.

[101] *Ibid*., page 6, footnote 16.

Synergies with other R&I initiatives

In 2024, the PRIMA-IS contracted a portfolio analysis, carried-out by a group of eight external experts who analysed 237 funded projects, of which 59 were completed and assessed more in-depth. The experts argue that "*PRIMA has actively integrated the objectives of key EU Missions under Horizon Europe* [Missions "A Soil Deal for Europe", "Adaptation to Climate Change" and "Restore our Ocean and Waters"] *into its strategic planning and funding priorities*". More concretely, the portfolio analysis mentions as example of synergies the collaboration with the Missions to draft PRIMA's AWP, or specific guidance provided to applicants to consider allocating budgets for activities that align with the objectives of EU Missions. The report shows several examples of synergies when looking at the details of the AWPs and projects, such as promoting water efficiency (e.g. efficient irrigation systems, integrating treated wastewater, water reuse), drought-resistant crops, or developing sustainable land management practices to fight soil erosion and degradation[102]. These conclusions from external experts deserve a more critical assessment: Is there really collaboration with Missions? Are there synergies or overlaps?

It is clear that PRIMA shares key objectives with these three EU Missions, but it is less obvious to affirm that, operationally, this leads to synergies and not overlaps, especially at project level. According to the interviews carried-out to prepare the support study, it was argued that PRIMA collaborates with the Mission Soil Deal for Europe and Mission Restore Our Ocean and Waters in drafting call topics, for instance embedding Mission-relevant requirements in application guidance. Typically, the Commission services assess and comment the draft AWPs of PRIMA, checking complementary or overlaps with other R&I funding instruments, including Missions – and especially to avoid any double-funding when projects are selected, but there is no evidence about a direct collaboration *ex ante*, to draft the initial version of PRIMA's AWP. Another issue is the uptake of solutions. The PRIMA-IS has established contacts with other EU funding instruments (e.g. via participation in workshops, in stakeholders' boards, co-organisation of events)[103], but there is no evidence of concrete actions or mechanisms leading to actual synergies (e.g. further funding of follow-up projects or implementation of PRIMA results). The interviews conducted by the authors of the support study indicate, indeed, that some stakeholders deplored a lack of formal monitoring mechanisms to keep track or map synergies between PRIMA and other programmes.

The European Research Executive Agency (REA) identified in November 2024 23 projects, mainly under Horizon 2020, which objectives were very consistent, or even overlapping, with PRIMA's priorities, all with participation of organisations from non-EU and non-Associated Countries PRIMA-PS[104]. These projects are typically more ambitious in budget than those funded by PRIMA, and it was not possible to find specific synergies. This raises questions about the gap analysis that PRIMA carries-out with the support of

[102] PRIMA, (2024) *Portfolio Analysis, 2018-2024*, p.5. Internal document, annex of the PRIMA Interim Evaluation Interim report, *op.cit.*

[103] PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input Report, pp. 147-153.

[104] REA, (2024) *Response to F2P 2024 request "RTD .16 – PRIMA – contribution to SRIA of the amended PRIMA proposal (2025-2027)" from the European Commission*, 30 November 2024. Internal document.

external experts to prepare the draft Annual Work Programme. Such gap analysis is typically focused on previous PRIMA AWPs and projects, and it should be extended to consider other EU-funded R&I projects and the state-of-the-art of knowledge, technologies and non-technological solutions, to increase excellence and impact of outputs and avoid creating a bubble and as much as possible, overlaps. At the same time, REA acknowledges a need for further monitoring and evaluating Horizon Europe's project outcomes and impact. This issue – which is not news in EU R&I Framework Programmes – also challenges possible synergies between projects.

At R&I policy level, most interviewees reported PRIMA's significant complementarity with national, European, and international programmes, showing a clear alignment between PRIMA and national R&I strategies. This stakeholders' assessment responds to at least two of the operational objectives of PRIMA, and notably the operational objective (b), "*orientation of relevant national research and innovation programmes towards the implementation of the strategic agenda"*. The question is if this is fully attributable to PRIMA, or if it depends on more general tendencies (e.g. the European Green Deal and its impact on R&I, increasing sensitivity about water issues and their consequences, socio-economic trends towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns) – to which PRIMA both adapts and contributes to.

PRIMA projects are typically encouraged to establish synergies with other R&I actions, in particular in the Annual Work Programmes. So far, successful examples of such synergies, leading for instance to an uptake of solutions, have not been identified . The modest resources of PRIMA projects is probably an obstacle, but other EU-funded R&I actions are confronted with the same issue, for instance the Mission Ocean and Waters[105].

As explained in the support study, joint calls have not yet been organised due to administrative barriers. PRIMA is not fully aligned with the Framework Programme cycle and, during the period covered by this evaluation, was still operating under Horizon 2020 rules. Although the partnership is now transitioning into Horizon Europe, starting from the 2025 call, there are currently no plans to pool resources with other EU partnerships[106].

Finally, opportunities exist with international partnerships like the Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA). The FNSSA was the first common priority research and innovation area, launched in 2017 at the Africa-EU High Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation, embedded in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). It shares with PRIMA similar or complementary objectives, i.e boosting the impact of Africa-EU joint research at local level by addressing the entire value-chain, strengthening capacity-building (human, research infrastructures and institutional) and focusing on demonstration projects and pilot actions to bring research and innovation results to users. It also aims to improve access to sustainably produced,

[105] The Commission is conducting the contract 'Studies fostering cross programme synergies and links in support of the implementation of the Mission' (CINEA/2023/OP/0004), to identify and make recommendations for such synergies, so far limited. Publication forthcoming.

[106] CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op.cit.*

nutritious and safe food, enhance income growth and promote rural development. It has already channelled a joint investment of EUR 381 million.

Conclusions: Coherence

When it was designed, PRIMA was a pioneer for action in policy areas that have since become key issues on the political agenda, at international level (e.g. Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, UN Water Conference) and at EU level (e.g. European Green Deal). PRIMA is consistent and contributes to several EU strategies, such as the Climate Adaptation Strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, among others. While the Political Guidelines of the second von der Leyen Commission are more focused on competitiveness and defence, the Guidelines do include a priority on "sustaining our quality of life: food security, water and nature". Subsequently, the Commission has adopted the Water Resilience Strategy and the Mediterranean Pact, both fully aligned with PRIMA's activities. However, more focus on the exploitation and deployment of solutions is necessary, both to address water-related issues on the ground and to contribute to competitiveness.

More operationally, PRIMA shares key objectives with Horizon Europe, for instance with three EU Missions (Restore our Ocean and Waters, Climate Adaptation and A Soil Deal for Europe). Despite efforts from the PRIMA-IS to promote synergies with other funding mechanisms, within and beyond Horizon Europe, there is no evidence of concrete actions leading to actual synergies (e.g. further funding of projects or implementation of PRIMA results). Similarly, strong similarities have been identified between a set of 23 Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects and PRIMA's priorities, without trace of concrete synergies. These are lost opportunities to increase the efficiency and impact of projects. This issue raises questions about the gap analysis that is conducted to prepare the Annual Work Programmes, which should further extend to what is already funded by the Horizon Europe and its predecessors or even the whole state-of-the-art, well beyond what has been supported in previous PRIMA calls.

Stakeholders also consider that there is a clear alignment between PRIMA and national R&I strategies. This is important, because it responds to PRIMA's operational objectives. However, it is difficult to fully attribute such alignment to PRIMA. It may depend on other factors and trends (e.g. the European Green Deal and its impact on R&I, increasing sensitivity about water issues and their consequences, socio-economic trends towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns) to which PRIMA both adapts and contributes.

At international level, there are unexploited opportunities with multilateral partnerships with similar objectives than PRIMA, like the FNSSA, which can help to increase R&I funding and impacts on the ground.

4.2. How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom?

Participation and involvement of Third Countries

Article 3.5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) establishes that the EU's international relations have to contribute to "*peace, security and the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights* (…)". This is further developed in Article 21.2, which fixes as objectives of the Union's external action, amongst others:

- "*foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty;*
- *help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development;*
- *assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters*"

The principle of participation of non-EU countries on "equal footing" was underlined in both the impact assessment of PRIMA and in its first interim evaluation as a key added-value of the partnership. Such principle of equal footing is reflected in co-decision, co-financing and co-management in the design/structure and operation of the governance bodies, in the evaluation panels' constitution, and within PRIMA-IS staff, but also in terms of participation of non-EU Participating States.

In contrast to the traditional North-South cooperation logic, where Northern Countries often take a leading role in providing technical advice to Southern countries, the "equal footing approach" promotes a more balanced and reciprocal relationship. Under PRIMA, solutions are designed and funded jointly, in co-creation.

Chapter 3.3 explained that PRIMA participant EU Member States have received 70.4% of the projects' budget under Sections 1 and 2, and the main beneficiaries are also EU Member States[107]. These data have to be nuanced and compared with the participation of non-EU PRIMA Participating States under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. These data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Participation of non-EU PRIMA Participating States in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, compared with all PRIMA-PS, % of total EU contribution and % total budget. Source: PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool and Horizon Dashboard, extraction 14/11/2025.

	% Participation PRIMA non- EU PS, out of the EU contribution	**% Participation PRIMA non-EU PS, out of the total budget**
PRIMA **-** 2018-2024	34,4 (S1)	29.6 (S1+S2)
Horizon 2020, SC2 – 2014- 2020	1.5	1.6
Horizon 2020, SC5 – 2014- 2020	1.3	1.4
Horizon Europe, Cluster 6 – 2021-2027 (ongoing)	1.6	1.9

[107] It has to be reminded that S1 is funded by the EU, while under S2 each PRIMA-PS finances its own organisations.

These data show that, indeed, the participation of non-EU Member States, both Associated and non-Associated, is much higher under PRIMA than in the R&I Framework Programmes as a whole, taking as reference the Societal Challenges 2 and 5, or Horizon Europe Cluster 6, closer to the objectives of PRIMA. It is worth noting that, despite the existence of PRIMA, the share of participation of Southern and Eastern non-EU PRIMA Participating States has not decreased overtime. It has even slightly increased from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe. This indicates that being a beneficiary of PRIMA does not come at the expense of the "traditional" participation in the R&I Framework Programmes, but rather complements it. One could even hypothesise that PRIMA has increased the capacities of non-EU Participating States to benefit from the EU R&I Framework Programmes.

Leverage of funding

Two of the specific objectives of PRIMA refer to "*pooling (...) financial resources*" and "*strengthening the research and innovation funding capacities*". It is therefore pertinent to assess the leverage of funding, i.e. to what extent the EU contribution has led to additional funding from PRIMA Participating States. This leverage is calculated dividing the total amounts allocated by PRIMA Participating States in Section 2 and 3 (in cash and in kind), by the total EU contribution, including administrative costs, in Section 1. This indicator was presented in the first Interim Evaluation of PRIMA[108]. At that time, for the reference period 2018-2020, the total leverage was 1.43, calculated in disbursed amounts.

Calculation Methodology:

$$\text{Leverage Ratio} = \frac{\text{PS Contributions (Section 2 Financial + Section 2 In-Kind + Section 3 In-Kind)}}{\text{EU Contributions (Section 1 + Operational Costs)}}$$

It has to be taken into account that Participating States Initiated Activities (PSIAs) are implemented and funded independently from the PRIMA-IS by one PRIMA-PS alone or by several PRIMA-PS without the Union's financial contribution. They are not necessarily transnational R&I actions; they can be limited to national beneficiaries. However, they contribute to the objectives of PRIMA, addressing national priorities, and demonstrating the PRIMA-PS' willingness to invest in sustainable solutions, fostering R&I capacities and in critical areas such as water management, sustainable agriculture, and food security. To ensure consistency with PRIMA's goals, PRIMA-IS carries-out a structured monitoring process to ensure that all activities align with PRIMA's objectives and adhere to the necessary guidelines. This monitoring includes an assessment from external experts, certification from funding agencies, and a final external validation.

The leverages for the period 2018-2024 are presented in Table A.9 in Annex VI. They are based on amounts actually *used*, i.e. typically lower than the amounts disbursed by the EU and PRIMA-PS. On average, PRIMA does create a positive leverage of 1.53, attracting

[108] SWD(2023) 169 final, *op.cit.*, pp.31-32.

additional funding from Participating States towards the objectives of the Partnership. Article 3 of the PRIMA's amended Basic Act establishes that EU contributions must be at least matched by the contributions from Participating States. This is indeed the case overall, even if not systematically every year. Participating States have contributed a bit more to S3, which includes actions that are not necessarily transnational, than to S2.

If instead of calculating the leverage indicator based on *actual disbursed* amounts the *allocated amounts* further to evaluations are considered, the index is much higher, 2.15 on average. The allocated amounts have a theoretical character, based on the projects' proposals, but in practice changes during the implementation (i.e. changes of beneficiaries, bankruptcies, lower costs than expected, etc.) lead to less funding – especially under S2 and S3.

On 1st of July 2024, the leverage of all institutionalised partnerships (article 185-187) under Horizon Europe was 1.44, a bit lower than PRIMA's. It is however unclear how this figure has been calculated, if based on disbursed or on committed/allocated amounts[109]. According to the Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe[110], EPM, the Metrology Partnership under Horizon Europe, reaches 2.3 – higher than EMPIR, its predecessor under Horizon 2020. Under Horizon Europe, the leverage of Partnerships varies between 0.41 (Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking) and 3.62 (Clean Hydrogen), while under Horizon 2020, the maximum was 2.83 (Circular Biobased Europe Joint Undertaking, formerly Bio-Based Industries Joint Undertaking) and the minimum 0.89 (Innovative Medicines Initiative, now Innovative Health Initiative)[111]. The Co-funded Partnership Water4All/Water Security for the Planet – of different nature than institutionalised partnerships, but covering similar objectives related to water than PRIMA – reached end 2023 a leverage of 2.33[112].

Matchmaking between EU- and PRIMA-PS funding

Article 3(1) of the amended PRIMA Basic Act states that "*the amount of the Union financial contribution from Horizon Europe may be increased by contributions from third countries associated to Horizon Europe in accordance with Article 16(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 [Horizon Europe Regulation], provided that the total increase in the Union financial contribution is at least matched by the contribution from the Participating States referred to in Article 1(1) of this Decision*". The PRIMA Basic Act of 2017 had a similar article 3(1), indicating that "*the Union financial contribution, including EFTA appropriations, shall equal the Participating States' contributions to PRIMA. The Union financial contribution shall not exceed EUR 220,000,000*".

It is therefore pertinent to assess if this matchmaking has occurred in practice between 2018 and 2024. These data are based on disbursed amounts to PRIMA, i.e. not all yet used under each work programme and annual exercise. This analysis is complementary to the

[109] European Commission (2024), *op.cit*. p. 34.
[110] SWD (2025)110, *op.cit*, p. 225.
[111] *Ibid*., pp. 220-222.
[112] *Ibid*., p. 231.

leverage calculated in the previous sub-chapter. The data for PRIMA-PS do not completely include 2024, because the evaluation of proposals for the AWP 2024 was finalised at the end of 2024, and some funding decisions were made early 2025. Contracts are expected to be signed by June 2025, and actual disbursements will only follow. As a consequence, no 2024 cash contributions by PRIMA-PS can be certified yet. In addition, both cash and in-kind contributions from PRIMA-PS are officially reported in the year following disbursement. Contributions for 2024 will only be formally certified in 2025.

Table A.10 in Annex VI, shows that the sum of PRIMA-PS in cash and in-kind contributions, including S2 and S3 (EUR 213. 5 million until 2023), is much higher than the EU contribution (EUR 155.7 million). This demonstrates the compliance with article 3(1) obligation, even if it could be argued that the financial contribution of Participating States in cash and in-kind (EUR 118.1 million) for S2 is lower than the EU funding.

Direct financial costs and benefits for PRIMA-PS

The support study shows that PRIMA has consistently exceeded its initial budgetary targets for funding beneficiaries from PRIMA Participating States that are not Member States (25%), peaking at nearly 37% in 2022. PRIMA projects involved a wide range of partners from across the Mediterranean basin and beyond, but participation was quite concentrated. For Sections 1 and 2 during the period 2018-2024, out of a total of 2,603 participations in PRIMA projects, more than half (58%) came from only five countries: Italy, Spain, Tunisia, France and Morocco. At the same time, contributions from PRIMA-PS are uneven, as shown in Table A.4 in Annex VI (between EUR 42.8 million allocated by Italy and EUR 193,669 by Lebanon, both between 2018 and 2023). However, costs and benefits for PRIMA-PS and their organisations are not limited to merely financial ones. Benefits include, *inter alia*, direct outcomes from projects, increased skills, improved reputation, access to markets or access to networks.

Network analysis

One of the key objectives of PRIMA is to structure the R&I policies across the Mediterranean in the domains of intervention (water management, farming systems, and agri-food value chains, WEFE nexus). This implies fostering new R&I collaboration networks. Therefore, the support study conducted a network analysis to assess progress towards this objective.

Figure 9 shows that, while PRIMA has contributed to build a strong and interconnected collaboration network, a few countries clearly emerge as central players: Italy (435 participations), Spain (358), Tunisia (265), France (228), and Morocco (227) stand out for their high levels of participation in projects and form the core of the network. These five countries collaborate intensively with one another; Italy and Spain alone share 157 joint projects, followed by Italy and Tunisia (136), Spain and Tunisia (124), Italy and Morocco (108), and Italy and France (107). PRIMA has particularly succeeded in setting up an intense web of collaborations between EU countries and the Maghreb region. This North–South axis, anchored by Tunisia, Morocco, and to a lesser extent Algeria, is a defining

feature of the programme's network, reinforced also by strong links with Turkey, Egypt and Germany. Networks between non-EU PRIMA Participating States are, however, less frequent. This is not surprising and reflect the limited collaboration between intra-Northern African and Middle East countries, for instance on trade, traditionally focused on Europe and with governments rather reluctant to trust and work with their neighbours[113].

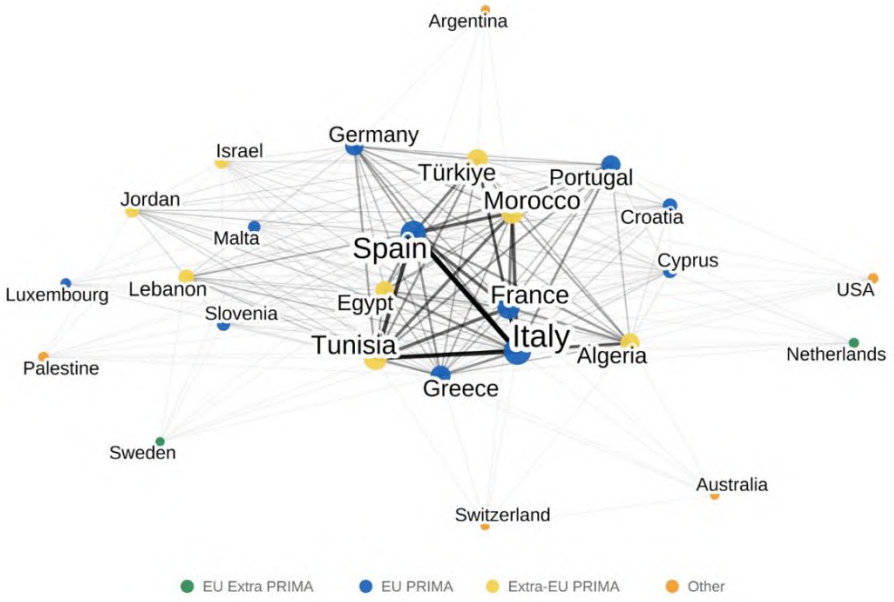

Figure 9: Network of participating countries in PRIMA. Source: Support study, based on data on 2603 participations to PRIMA projects over the period 2018-2024. Section 1 and 2 only.

Note: Blue = EU PRIMA, Yellow = non-EU PRIMA, Orange = Other; size of the nodes proportional to the number of participations in PRIMA projects, size of the edges proportional to the number of PRIMA projects where institutions from the two linked countries collaborate.

The support study explains that project coordination remains also concentrated in a few EU countries: Italy (92 projects), Spain (63) and France (25), followed by Germany (22) and Greece (21). In contrast, non-EU countries play a more limited role in coordination. Turkey coordinates ten projects, Tunisia eight, and Morocco four, primarily in Section 2. The authors consider that this disparity may be due to the different capacities and experience among participating countries, with EU-based organisations generally having more experience in managing complex, cross-border R&I projects. Another potential explanation could be that non-EU countries receiving the PRIMA funding would need to convert the funds to their local currency, resulting in additional costs associated with currency exchange and bank transfers, which could negatively impact the project's budget. Nevertheless, there are signs of gradual progress. Tunisia, and to lesser extent Morocco and Algeria, have steadily increased their role as a coordinating country.

[113] Verdier-Chouchane, A.; Ben Ali, M.S.; and Karagueuzian, C., (2016). "Trade Diversification and Intra-Regional Trade in North Africa". In: Ben Ali, M.S. (eds) *Economic Development in the Middle East and North Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, doi: 10.1057/9781137480668_8 , p. 173.

In fact, the centrality of Member States like Italy, Spain or, to lesser extent, France, is a common trend under other funding instruments which objectives are at least partially consistent with PRIMA's. This is for example the case of the Circular Bio-Based Europe Joint Undertaking[114], Horizon 2020-Societal Challenge 2 and Horizon Europe-Cluster 6[115]. This indicates that major PRIMA EU countries have also a central role in EU R&I funding programmes with similar objectives, but PRIMA has managed to integrate in such networks non-EU countries. Indeed, interviews confirm that most of these North-South-East networks did not exist before PRIMA, and stakeholders explain that collaborations use to continue overtime, after the project ends.

Newcomers

The support study analysed a random sample of projects to estimate the number of newcomers over PRIMA calls. The analysis shows that around 80% of PRIMA beneficiaries over the 2018–2024 period had already participation experience in EU Framework Programmes (FP), and only 24% of participant organisations from non-EU PRIMA Participating States were newcomers. The percentage of newcomers has declined overtime. This is in fact a common feature in EU FPs, due to the high competition and the learning curve associated with participation. The interviews conducted as part of the case studies confirm that, indeed, prior experience in FP7 or Horizon 2020 was a crucial factor for preparing successful proposals and managing projects effectively. These data also explain the results why pre-existing networks in the water and agro-food domains remain central under PRIMA.

Conclusions: EU added-value

The core principle of PRIMA is collaboration between EU and non-EU Member States on an equal footing, based on co-creation, co-funding and co-decision. While EU countries received the majority of funding (more than 70%), the participation of non-EU Member States is much higher than in Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 and Horizon Europe Cluster 6. Indeed, the participation of non-EU PRIMA Participating States has slightly increased from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe. This indicates that being a beneficiary of PRIMA is additional to the "traditional" participation in the R&I Framework Programmes. It is possible that PRIMA may have increased the capacities of non-EU Participating States to benefit from the "core" EU R&I Framework Programmes.

PRIMA also creates positive financial leverage, attracting additional funding from Participating States towards the objectives of the partnership. PRIMA is compliant with the legal matchmaking obligation between EU and Participating States' funding, especially thanks to Section 3 – which is not necessarily collaborative R&I. *Allocated amounts*, i.e.

[114] Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, (2024) *Partnership Evaluation Report: Circular Bio-Based Europe Joint Undertaking. Horizon Europe and the Green Transition Interim evaluation support study*, p. 21, at: https://publica.fraunhofer.de/entities/publication/873fe8bc-70a0-47a3-8b8e-5bd47213b01c

[115] CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *op. cit*.

theoretical funds from the EU or Participating States based on project's proposals after evaluation, are also much lower than *actual* amounts, especially for S2 and S3.

However, both the financial contributions and the sum of grants received by organisations from the different PRIMA-PS are very uneven. Some countries like Italy, Spain, Tunisia, France or Morocco are the most central in the network analysis, both in terms of participation and connections. In fact, the EU countries that are central in PRIMA are also key in EU-funded R&I programmes and Partnerships with similar objectives. The difference of PRIMA is that third countries (both Associated and non-Associated) have benefited from such networks, becoming central players of the partnership. This is a very positive outcome, in line with the objectives of PRIMA, even if it tends to limit the openness of the partnership to newcomers.

4.3. Is the intervention still relevant?

Water issues and their economic, social and environmental consequences are and will remain key in the Mediterranean region, but also beyond. As shown in Chapter 3, more than 40% of the European population is affected by water scarcity at least one-quarter of the year, and floods are increasingly widespread and intense in Europe as a whole, the fastest-warming continent[116]. Any action on water in Europe and the Mediterranean area – the most water-stressed region in the world – looks relevant.

This is confirmed by the stakeholders interviewed in the support study. They show an overall agreement that PRIMA has been effective in addressing both current and future challenges as well as emerging trends, through the implementation of joint solutions and the promotion of regional collaboration between the South, the East and the North of the Mediterranean. They also consider that PRIMA has demonstrated flexibility to adapt to evolving priorities, both in response to external shocks and in anticipation of emerging needs. Despite such PRIMA's capacity of response, stakeholders raised several emerging needs that are partially or inadequately addressed. These include digitalisation, with limited infrastructure and low adoption among farmers in several PRIMA-PS. This suggests a need for more accessible and low-cost solutions, but also calls for further synergies and cooperation with other projects outside PRIMA, well advanced in these domains, notably with Horizon Europe's support. There are discussions within the PRIMA' Board of Trustees, and as part of the analysis that the project FUTURE4PRIMA[117] is conducting, about expanding PRIMA's thematic scope to areas like energy efficiency and digital solutions, but stakeholders caution that such broadening could dilute PRIMA's identity and strain limited resources. However, the development, access and use of digital infrastructures, which is included in PRIMA's SRIA, could be further supported, perhaps even as a priority in order to move towards better monitoring and efficiency.

Nevertheless, it is debatable if the resources (funding) and ongoing results (outputs, outcomes and impacts) of PRIMA projects are commensurate with its extremely ambitious

[116] Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), (2025) *European State of the Climate 2024*, doi: 10.24381/14j9-s541

[117] Funded by under Horizon Europe, Grant No. 101131632. At: https://future4prima.eu/

objectives. Some stakeholders claim that an increase in financial resources is needed to match the scale of current and emerging challenges. At the same time, interviewees also propose to expand PRIMA's scope of intervention to other thematic areas, which would in turn require more resources. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity regarding who should provide additional funding to PRIMA and whether it should come from the EU, Participating States, or other sources, such as the private sector. It must also be noted that water-related challenges are not only addressed by PRIMA. There are several other instruments, including under Horizon Europe, and further synergies could improve the impact of public investments. The stakeholders consulted in the framework of the support study argued that they do not see any other option for the continuity of PRIMA after Horizon Europe than under Article 185 of the TFEU. In any case, a reflection would be needed on how to better align resources and objectives.

PRIMA's own logic of intervention seems arguable. It focuses on R&I activities and their coordination through a strategic agenda, as the solution to address the unsustainable management of water resources and food systems in the Mediterranean region. Climate change is presented as a factor that exacerbates water scarcity and stress. Yes, R&I has a role to play to increase water efficiency, but a programme like PRIMA is too small to tackle a challenge that implies a radical shift in production and consumption patterns, and huge investments, beyond R&I efforts. PRIMA projects have positive impacts at local level, through demonstration sites and pilots on the ground, for instance, providing clean water or sanitation to local populations in rural areas. While consulted stakeholders emphasise that the partnership delivers concrete, community-based solutions for adapting to climate change impacts, it has not been possible to identify or measure such impacts – which are perhaps taking place, but are not reported systematically by projects. The extensive analysis of projects' reporting data, and the *ad hoc* data collections conducted to support this evaluation, only enabled the identification of a few projects that are starting to exploit their innovation outcomes, or plan to do so soon. This is an issue, especially when the current Commission's focus on competitiveness is taken into account.

PRIMA is clearly aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal, the top priority of the von der Leyen I Commission. This alignment persists under the von der Leyen II Commission, with the commitment to "*stay the course on the goals set out in the European Green Deal*" clearly stated in the Political Guidelines 2024-2029, notably under the Clean Industrial Deal.

Last but not least, the consulted stakeholders identified PRIMA as a good model for science diplomacy through its capacity to work across different countries on the same thematic areas. This confirms one of the conclusions of the previous Interim Evaluation of PRIMA. In a region severely affected by climate change and water stress and scarcity, which exacerbate geopolitical and socio-economic tensions, PRIMA is presented as a key instrument for science and water diplomacy, instrumental to build a sense of trust and

inclusiveness between the EU and its neighbours, and to increase collaboration between Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries[118].

Water (and science) diplomacy can play a role, although typically there is a gap between water cooperation at technical level and final political decisions, which may be more focused on national and security interests. Evidence shows that, in the MENA region, "*progress in political and security relations, unrelated to shared waters, tends to create enabling environments for water negotiations, but not the other way around*"[119]. While the positive role of external actors, like the EU in this case, as a donor and dialogue facilitator, is acknowledged, political support to take policy action based on the shared knowledge remains a *conditio sine qua non* for water diplomacy success[120]. Following the Royal Society definition[121], one could argue that PRIMA clearly contributes to "diplomacy for science" (i.e. "*the use of diplomatic action to facilitate international scientific collaboration*"), but its role for "science for diplomacy" (i.e. "*the use of science as a soft power to advance diplomatic objectives*") and for "science in diplomacy" (i.e. "*the direct support of diplomatic processes through science*") should not be overestimated.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED?

5.1. Conclusions

PRIMA is a relatively small funding instrument under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe that aims to tackle critical issues through international collaboration on R&I. Its resources – and even its logic of intervention – are not commensurate with the challenges: water stress and scarcity in the Mediterranean area are driven by the triple planetary crisis, demographic trends, urbanisation, and unsustainable production and consumption practices. While very important, collaborative R&I and the co-development of knowledge and solutions to improve water efficiency are hardly sufficient to address the significant water-related problems in the Mediterranean region. This said, "macro" indicators on water and R&I efforts have remained more or less stable in the past years, despite increasing environmental, financial and geopolitical pressures. This cannot be attributed exclusively to PRIMA, which is only part of a much larger policy mix (*Effectiveness, Relevance*).

What follows summarises the main conclusions from this evaluation:

- PRIMA has accomplished its operational objectives, i.e. the formulation of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda that, according to the stakeholders consulted, has helped to align national R&I funding mechanisms; and to attract a

[118] COM(2023)285 final, *op.cit.*
[119] Klimes, M., (2024) "Water Diplomacy Alone Cannot Save the MENA Region", in *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 25, Number 1, Summer 2024, pp. 165, doi: 10.1353/gia.2024.a934899
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Royal Society and AAAS, (eds., 2010) *New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy. Navigating the Changing Balance of Power*. Royal Society, London. At: www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/New_Frontiers.pdf

large and diverse set of stakeholders and additional R&I resources. *(Effectiveness, EU added-value).*

- PRIMA has reached and even surpassed its administrative targets, for instance in terms of matchmaking between EU and Participating States funding, in terms administrative costs *(Efficiency)* or in terms of non-EU PRIMA PS' participation *(EU added-value)*.

- For some effectiveness indicators, such as the Time to Inform (TTI) or the Time to Pay (TTP) for Section 1 calls, PRIMA performs better than the Horizon 2020 average, but this is not the case for most indicators (Time to Sign, Time to Grant for Section 1, all indicators for Section 2), which are well below the performance of Horizon 2020. There is a significant gap between Section 1 and Section 2 calls for these effectiveness indicators, with Section 2 performing less well. This issue was identified in the first interim evaluation of PRIMA. Measures have been designed, but it is still early to see their results, and stakeholders are still critical about the delays in Section 2. The own procedures to prepare and adopt the Annual Work Programme are heavy and time and resources consuming. *(Efficiency).*

- However, overall stakeholders consider the administrative costs, including timing and resources, for proposals preparation and projects management, adequate (about 35 person-days for preparation and for management, and 6% of the budget as administrative tasks). *(Efficiency).*

- Success rates are very low in PRIMA, especially under Section 1. Success rates are well below Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe averages. This is a challenge for consortia that prepare proposals. In case of rejection, always limited and precious R&I resources are lost. This is not an issue exclusive to PRIMA, with an increasing over-subscription rate in Horizon Europe too, but it remains problematic. However, the low success rates do not prevent organisations from presenting proposals, meaning that PRIMA remains extremely attractive. While (the few) non-beneficiaries surveyed did not express strong dissatisfaction with the resources required to prepare their proposal, they explained that they were unable to find alternative funding sources, because this requires significant adaptations, including narrowing research areas, simplifying methods, reducing funding and project duration, and involving fewer and less diverse partners *(Efficiency).*

- PRIMA projects, most still ongoing, have delivered a significant number of scientific publications but only a few patents and exploited innovations. Neither the projects' reporting, nor the *ad hoc* data collections to conduct this assessment, could systematically identify innovations implemented on the ground and their economic, social and environmental impacts. Stakeholders acknowledged that the main outputs of projects are of academic nature (peer-reviewed papers, new or improved research methodologies, new datasets, training programmes and new or improved tools, methods or techniques). This seems to be confirmed by the low participation of private-for-profit organisations, compared to Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and other relevant partnerships and EU Missions. *(Effectiveness)*

- The survey and case studies allowed to identify some results actually exploited or close to be implemented, but there is no systemic monitoring of innovation

outcomes, their costs and competitiveness, and their impacts. This is an issue to respond to the main objective of PRIMA, i.e. addressing water-related crises. Without exploitation of innovations, water management can hardly be improved, not even at local level. However, this issue is not exclusive to PRIMA and is common to most EU R&I instruments. In fact, if TRLs are used as reference, PRIMA performs similarly than Horizon Europe (notably its Pillar II) *(Effectiveness)*.

- It must be recalled, however, that exploitation of results\ is not an explicit objective of PRIMA as per its Basic Act. However, considering that competitiveness is a top EU priority, the lack of exploitation of innovation results is a concern, in terms of *effectiveness*, *coherence* and *relevance*.

- PRIMA projects deliver quantitatively fewer scientific publications and IPR than Horizon 2020 and its Societal Challenge 2. Also, qualitatively, scientific publications from PRIMA projects obtain fewer citations on average – with strong differences between projects, with one single project producing over 6% of all PRIMA scientific outputs, and the 25 most prolific projects leading to 56% of total publications. The *effectiveness* of PRIMA compared to other EU R&I programmes may be debated, but it is essential to consider the funding context. With fewer resources available, PRIMA projects must be more efficient in order to deliver results and their output-to-funding ratio suggests that they are able to achieve a higher level of *efficiency*, making the most of the limited resources at their disposal.

- There is an overwhelming consensus amongst stakeholders: PRIMA is a good model for science diplomacy through its capacity to work across different countries in the same thematic areas. This confirms a key conclusion of the first interim evaluation of PRIMA. The core logic of PRIMA, where Northern, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean partners work together in equal footing, goes beyond the traditional North-South cooperation, where developed countries "help" developing countries, often in a quite paternalistic manner. With PRIMA, co-creation and co-development on an equal footing is the norm. *(Relevance, EU added-value)*.

- In spite of this equal footing principle, organisations from some countries are more central in PRIMA, both in terms of beneficiaries and of networks. This is the case of Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco or Egypt. In fact, the central EU countries in PRIMA are also the key Member States in EU-funded R&I financial instruments which objectives are similar to PRIMA's. The main difference is that PRIMA has managed to integrate some Third Countries as central network players (*EU added-value*).

- The logic of the intervention behind PRIMA is not fully *Coherent*. The objectives of the partnership are too broad compared with the resources. This makes it difficult to prove the *Effectiveness* and *Relevance* of PRIMA, also in view of missing output-related benchmarks and targets to measure success.

A strength of PRIMA is, paradoxically, its relatively small size. PRIMA projects cannot tackle the main drivers of water scarcity, water stress and pollution in the Mediterranean region as a whole, i.e. climate change, demographic trends, urbanisation and unsustainable consumption and production patterns. However, they can, through demonstration sites,

tests and pilots on the ground, help to improve local peoples' living conditions. Some identified projects show that this is possible, but the monitoring of these solutions and their impacts remains insufficient, and the focus of the programme and/or its projects is, currently, mainly academic. Integrating a multi-actor approach from a project's outset (farmers, land users, local populations and authorities, etc.) is likely to increase impacts and uptake. This is becoming the standard approach in Horizon Europe R&I actions.

Box 5.1: SWOT analysis of PRIMA

Strengths	***Weaknesses***
- Very strong instrument for science and water diplomacy, based on the "equal footing" principle. - Integration of organisations from non-EU and non-Associated countries Participating States in EU R&I networks. - PRIMA is reaching its administrative and operational targets. - Significant academic outcomes. - Generalised satisfaction from stakeholders, both at policy and projects level. - Low cost of the partnership compared with other EU-funded instruments. - Certain financial leverage for R&I. - Administrative and funding matchmaking targets achieved.	- Low participation of private-for-profit organisations and not sufficient focus on delivering solutions with impact on the ground. - No explicit focus on deployment of solutions in the Basic Act. - Lack of focus on deployment of technologies and solutions, and insufficient economic and financial assessment of such solution to exploit them in the market or internal to the firm. - Administrative procedures for Section 2 projects are heavy, un-harmonised and imply long delays. - Very low success rates, especially under Section 1. This implies a loss of R&I resources.
Opportunities	***Threats***
- PRIMA projects can have a strong impact at local level, which is now not well supported and monitored. - Integrating a multi-actor approach since the start of projects, as it is happening under Horizon Europe, is likely to increase impacts and uptake of solutions. - Synergies with other EU financial instruments, in particular those which management is decentralised, would improve impact and deployment. This requires further action from Participating States. - Funding Section 2 projects through a "common pot" fed by all PRIMA-PS, avoiding the current national financing of beneficiaries, would be a strong simplification measure for beneficiaries and public administrations. - Strengthen the cooperative R&I component of Section 3.	- The new EU R&I Framework Programme proposal establishes new rules, more restrictive, for partnerships. The continuity of PRIMA beyond the current Horizon Europe is therefore uncertain and subject to decisions at political level. - Participating States could demonstrate further commitment, including financial.

In July 2025, the European Commission adopted its proposal for the next R&I Framework Programme[122], as well as the Specific Programme[123]. These proposals present stricter criteria for partnerships, including those based on Article 185 of the TFEU like PRIMA. For instance, recital (9) of the next Horizon Europe 2028-2034 proposal says that "*a strategic and coherent portfolio of a limited number of European Partnerships should be established*", and "*partnerships should be established where a close involvement of the Union is required and should ensure appropriate voting rights for the Union as well as sufficient co-investment by other partners to leverage Union funding*". Article 11 of the proposal articulates a set of conditions to launch or prolong partnerships, further developed in Article 5 of the Specific Programme proposal. *Inter alia*, such criteria refer to portfolio relevance, critical mass of resources, partners composition ("*at least five Member States and private entities representing substantial segments of their respective ecosystems*"), pan-European relevance, mission orientation, business plan, openness and transparency, or continuous monitoring. This SWD provides (some) answers to these questions.

5.2. Lessons learned and recommendations

This interim evaluation of PRIMA responds to a legal obligation in the Basic Act and follows the one published in 2023. Therefore, unsurprisingly, this analysis confirms some of the conclusions and recommendations of the first evaluation. Even if measures have been taken to address different issues, these have not been fully effective yet. The main added value of this interim evaluation is that, for the first time since the launch of PRIMA, output, outcomes and impacts from its initial projects are assessed. Some of the issues identified and recommendations in this evaluation do not differ and are aligned with the ones presented in previous evaluations to other EU-funded R&I instruments.

Sections 2 and 3

The implementation of Section 2, where each PRIMA-PS funds its own organisations according to its rules, creates delays and coordination issues. Budget thresholds set by countries also artificially determine the role of each organisation within a project. This problem was already raised in the first interim evaluation of PRIMA, and some PRIMA-PS took measures, still not fully implemented or effective. However, the issue is far from being solved. The creation of a "common pot" fed by PRIMA-PS, with similar rules than S1, would simplify the procedures and shorten deadlines. In addition, this approach would increase the excellence of proposals and projects. It is unclear if national legislations allow

[122] Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695, COM(2025) 543 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0543

[123] Proposal for a Council Decision on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034, laying down the rules for participation and dissemination under that Programme, and repealing Decision (EU) 2021/764, COM(2025) 544 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025PC0544

for such approach, and if PRIMA-PS would have the will to implement it, even some PRIMA-PS have shown willingness to increase their support to excellent proposals.

On the other hand, Section 3 is not necessarily funding collaborative R&I. Under S3, one PRIMA-PS can support its own organisations only. For Participating States, supporting R&I projects that are aligned with PRIMA's objectives through S3 allows to comply with the compulsory matchmaking between EU and Participating States funding. However, the main added-value of PRIMA – and of the EU R&I Framework Programmes – is indeed collaborative research and innovation and therefore a higher weight of Section 2 versus Section 3 would be aligned with collaborative R&I principles, and would further demonstrate the commitment of PRIMA-PS.

More focus on innovation and deployment of solutions

Like in other EU R&I funding instruments, there is room for improvement in terms of implementation and deployment of solutions. The main focus of PRIMA projects, currently, is academic. In the event of a potential revision of PRIMA's Basic Act, particularly in the context of a possible continuation under FP10, a greater emphasis could be placed on developing business plans within projects. This could involve conducting economic and financial assessments of the solutions developed and tested, as well as establishing connections with investors and users of solutions (such as farmers) to facilitate the commercialisation and scaling-up of these solutions. However, as scaling-up and deployment are money intensive activities, it would be seen if this can be reflected in the potential commitments of the Participating States, notably EU Member States.

Further inclusiveness

PRIMA has managed to integrate in existing R&I networks organisations from non-EU Participating States. However, participation remains concentrated among a limited number of organisations, with a limited openness to newcomers. This is a consequence of the strong competition to obtain grants, illustrated by the very low success rates. The previous evaluation already called for enhancing collaboration between non-EU PS, and the PRIMA management reacted accordingly (e.g. stricter eligibility requirements as the inclusion of non-EU Participating States in consortia from 2023), but the effects of these measures have not still materialised.

Similarly, PRIMA presents a low participation of private-for-profit organisations, including SMEs. This is likely to have a negative impact on the implementation of solutions that projects develop, notably through their commercial exploitation, and therefore limits the impact of PRIMA on the ground.

Synergies

Efforts to enhance synergies with other funding mechanisms are underway. For the time being, the evidence of success, notably at project level, remains to be seen. However, this issue has been historically rather generalised in EU-funded R&I programmes and mechanisms. In the case of PRIMA, for which financial resources are scarce but ambitions very high, synergies are particularly important. Beyond measures already implemented

(e.g. contacts with financial organisations, advocacy in the Annual Work Programmes), there is scope for improvement of the gap analysis that is conducted to prepare the AWPs. This analysis should include at least Horizon Europe's work programme and projects, including relevant mechanisms like the relevant European Partnerships and EU Missions. The gap analysis should present the state-of-the-art of knowledge, technologies and solutions in order to help ensure complementarity and to avoid overlaps with other funding instruments.

Beyond efforts of the European Commission to enhance synergies between EU funding instruments, Member States also have a role to play. Key financial instruments like Cohesion Funds or the Recovery and Resilience Facility-Next Generation EU are managed at Member State level. PRIMA EU Participating States could make efforts to leverage on solutions deployed and tested by PRIMA, in theory well adapted to their own environment.

Transparency of published data

Despite a very comprehensive website[124], which includes access to relevant data and legal documents, further efforts can be done to improve the transparency of PRIMA. Data resources available online are only input indicators, while the SRIA defines Key Performance Indicators that cover also outputs, outcomes and impacts from projects. These data are not accessible in PRIMA's website, which challenges the monitoring obligations established in Article 14 of the amended Basic Act. To conduct the current interim evaluation, the Commission services and the contractors for the support study had to rely on the output data provided directly by the PRIMA-IS. The fact that PRIMA uses a different platform than Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe does not help to ensure transparency, coherence and further dissemination of data on the Partnership's performance. It could even amount to administrative burden in order to publish PRIMA data in the main Commission's database for R&I, CORDIS. Stakeholders consulted also raised the use of the different platforms and digital tools as a burden that requires simplification. Organisations do not even use the same PIC (identification number), which makes counting and comparisons complicated. Similarly, Annual Activity Reports are not published on the website, even if they are the main source for financial data[125]. This said, the situation of other instruments and Partnerships in terms of transparency, looking at their websites and evaluations, is hardly better than PRIMA's.

[124] https://prima-med.org/

[125] It has to be noted that Article 74(9) of the Financial Regulation states that "*the annual activity reports for the financial year of the authorising officers and, where applicable, authorising officers by delegation of Union institutions, Union bodies, European offices and agencies shall be published by 1 July of the following financial year on the website of the respective Union institution, Union body, European office or agency in an easily accessible way, subject to duly justified confidentiality and security considerations*".

ANNEX I: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead DG

The European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) for Research and Innovation is the lead DG for this interim evaluation (PLAN/2024/2290).

Derogations granted and justification

A derogation to waive the Open Public Consultation (OPC) was given from the European Commission's Secretariat-General on 10 January 2025 (Ares(2025)1895605). The reason was that a previous interim evaluation of PRIMA according to Horizon 2020 rules took place in spring 2023 (COM(2023) 285 final and SWD(2023)169 final). It already included an OPC that gathered 10 responses from stakeholders. In addition, another Impact Assessment, including an OPC, is expected for 2026 in relation to the potential continuation of PRIMA under the successor of the current Horizon Europe Framework Programme on Research and Innovation (i.e. "FP10"). The Commission services agreed that conducting three OPCs within a four-year period may lead to stakeholder fatigue, which could compromise the participation and quality of responses in the 2026 OPC. In addition, this could lead to inefficient use of resources, as the same stakeholders would be consulted multiple times within a short period. However, the support study to conduct this Interim Evaluation already included a consultation with stakeholders (interviews, surveys) as described below.

Organisation and timing

An Interservice Group met for the first time on 5 June 2025. It involved representatives from the Secretariat-General, DG for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), DG for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), DG for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MEDA), DG for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), and DG for the Environment (DG ENV), with the support of the Commission's Legal Services. A representative of DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) was appointed, but could not attend the first meeting. The Interservice Group contributed to the evaluation and ensured that it met the necessary standards. It met twice, on 5/06/2025 and on 23/10/2025. The final inter-service consultation took place between 19/01/2026 and 30/01/2026.

Evidence, sources and quality

Literature :

- Ali, E., W. Cramer, J. Carnicer, E. Georgopoulou, N.J.M. Hilmi, G. Le Cozannet, and P. Lionello, (2022). Cross-Chapter Paper 4: "Mediterranean Region". In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.* Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K.

Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, pp. 2233–2272, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.021

- Ayan, F. *et al.*, (2025) *Mission Restoring our Ocean and Waters – Portfolio analysis*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Forthcoming.

- Catalano, G., Consiglio, G., Delponte, L., Monaco, F. et al., (2025) *Survey visualisation report – Feedback of Horizon Europe beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants – Supporting the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

- Chávez García Silva, R., Reinecke, R., Copty, N.K. *et al*., (2024) "Multi-decadal groundwater observations reveal surprisingly stable levels in southwestern Europe". *Communications Earth and Environment,* 5, 387, doi: 10.1038/s43247-024-01554-w

- Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO), (2025) *European State of the Climate 2024*, doi: 10.24381/14j9-s541

- CSIL and Ecorys, (2025) *Evaluation study on the Partnership for Research and Innovation for the Mediterranean Area* [Laura Delponte, L.; Colnot, L.; Scorrano, M.; Dimitrova, N.; Hoya, C.; Šamec, H.R.; Ruiz, T.]. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Forthcoming.

- Draghi, M., (2024) *The future of European competitiveness.* Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, at: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en#paragraph_47059

- EEA, (2024) *European Climate Risk Assessment*. EEA Report 01/2024. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. At: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment

- EEA, (2025) *Water Scarcity Conditions in Europe*. At: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/use-of-freshwater-resources-in-europe-1

- EEA-JRC, (2025) *Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook 2025* – EEA-JRC Report 13/2024. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, at : Zero pollution monitoring and outlook 2025 | European Environment Agency's home page

- EEA, (2025) *Europe's environment and climate: knowledge for resilience, prosperity and sustainability.* Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, at: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/europe-environment-2025/main-report

- El-Ouahi, J. and Larivière, V., (2023) "On the lack of women researchers in the Middle East and North Africa". *Scientometrics,* 128, 4321–4348, doi: 10.1007/s11192-023-04768-5

- European Commission (2024), *Performance of European partnerships – Biennial monitoring report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. At: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/991766

- Fader, M.; Giupponi, C.; Burak, S.; Dakhlaoui, H.; Koutroulis, A.; Lange, M.A.; Llasat, M.C.; Pulido-Velazquez, D.; Sanz-Cobeña, A. (2020) "Water". In: Cramer, W., Guiot, J.; Marini, K. (eds.) *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report*. Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, France, pp. 181-236, doi:10.5281/zenodo.7101074

- Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, (2024) *Partnership Evaluation Report: Circular Bio-Based Europe Joint Undertaking. Horizon Europe and the Green Transition Interim evaluation support study*, at: https://publica.fraunhofer.de/entities/publication/873fe8bc-70a0-47a3-8b8e-5bd47213b01c

- Fraunhofer ISI, Kerlen Evaluation, Science Metrix, Technopolis Group, ZSI, Dinges, [Dinges, M. and Coatanroch, G., eds.] (2024) *Horizon Europe and the green transition – Interim evaluation support study – Final report ("Phase 2" study).* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

- González Guzman, M. *et al.*, (2021) *"New approaches to improve crop tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses"*. Physiologia Plantorum*, Vol. 174, Issue 1, doi:10.1111/ppl.13547*Herrera-García, G. *et al.* (2021) "Mapping the global threat of land subsidence". *Science,* 371, pp. 34-36, doi:10.1126/science.abb8549

- Kibaroglu, A., (2017) *Water Challenges in the Mediterranean*. European Institute of the Mediterranean, at: https://www.iemed.org/publication/water-challenges-in-the-mediterranean/

- Klimes, M., (2024) "Water Diplomacy Alone Cannot Save the MENA Region", in *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 25, Number 1, Summer 2024, pp. 160-167, doi: 10.1353/gia.2024.a934899

- Kuzma, S.; Saccoccia, L. and Chertok, M., (2023) *25 Countries, Housing One-Quarter of the Population, Face Extremely High Water Stress*. World Resources Institute, at: https://www.wri.org/insights/highest-water-stressed-countries?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template

- OECD/Eurostat, (2018) *Oslo Manual 2018: Guidelines for Collecting, Reporting and Using Data on Innovation,* 4th Edition, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities. OECD Publishing, Paris, doi: 10.1787/9789264304604-en

- Pereira, L.S., *et al.*, (2021) *"Prediction of crop coefficients from fraction of ground cover and height. Background and validation using ground and remote sensing*

data". Agricultural Water Management, Volume 252, doi: 10.1016/j.agwat.2020.106197

- Pereira, P. *et al.*, (2021) "Standard single and basal crop coefficients for field crops. Updates and advances to the FAO56 crop water requirements method". Agricultural Water Management, Volume 243, doi: 10.1016/j.agwat.2020.106466.

- Royal Society and AAAS, (eds., 2010) *New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy. Navigating the Changing Balance of Power*. Royal Society, London. At: www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/New_Frontiers.pdf

- Sülün, E., (2023) *Key water challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean: A call for regional cooperation*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Peace Research Institute Oslo, at: https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypern/20794.pdf

- Toreti, A., Bavera, D., Acosta Navarro, J., Acquafresca, L., Arias-Muñoz, C., Avanzi, F., Barbosa, P., Cremonese, E., De Jager, A., Ferraris, L., Fioravanti, G., Gabellani, S., Grimaldi, S., Hrast Essenfelder, A., Isabellon, M., Maetens, W., Magni, D., Masante, D., Mazzeschi, M., Mccormick, N., Rossi, L. and Salamon, P., (2024) *Drought in the Mediterranean Region - January 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, doi:10.2760/384093, JRC137036.

- Trucco, P.; van Lopik, J. and Zanobetti, L., (2025) *Scaling up ideas. An analysis of Technology Readiness Levels in Horizon Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, doi: 10.2777/1580173

- UNESCO, (2021) *UNESCO Science Report: The race against time for smarter development*. UNESCO, Paris, at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/notice?id=p::usmarcdef_0000377433

- United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan and Plan Bleu, (2020). *State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean: Summary for Decision Makers*. UNEP, Nairobi, at: https://planbleu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SoED_Summary.pdf

- Verdier-Chouchane, A.; Ben Ali, M.S. ; and Karagueuzian, C., (2016) "Trade Diversification and Intra-Regional Trade in North Africa". In: Ben Ali, M.S. (ed.) *Economic Development in the Middle East and North Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, doi: 10.1057/9781137480668_8

- Vinci, G.; Maddaloni, L., Mancini, L.; Prencipe, S.A.; Ruggeri, M. and Tiradritti, M., (2021) "The Health of the Water Planet: Challenges and Opportunities in the Mediterranean Area. An Overview", in *Earth*, *2*(4), 894-919, at/ https://doi.org/10.3390/earth2040052

- Ware, J. and Oliver Pearce, O., (2024) *Counting the Cost 2024. A year of climate breakdown*. Christian Aid, at: https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/counting-the-cost-2024.pdf

Legislation and policy documents (in historical order):

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/70/1

- Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States, COM(2016) 662 final, SWD(2016) 331 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD:2016:0332:FIN

- Decision (EU) 2017/1324 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 on the participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States, amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024. Consolidated text at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02017D1324-20240509

- PRIMA (2017) *Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda 2018-2028*, at: https://prima-med.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/PRIMA-SRIA_Strategic-Research-and-Innovation-Agenda.pdf

- Von der Leyen, U., (2019) *A Union that Strives for More. My agenda for Europe – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*. At: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/063d44e9-04ed-4033-acf9-639ecb187e87_en?filename=political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2019*) The European Green Deal*, COM(2019) 640 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52019DC0640

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2020) *EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Bringing nature back into our lives*, COM(2020) 380 final, at : https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0380

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2020) *A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system***,** COM(2020) 381 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52020DC0381

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2021) *Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU*

Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, COM(2021) 82 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0082

- Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj/eng

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2021) *Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil'*, COM(2021) 400 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0400

- Decision (EU) 2021/2084 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2021 on the participation of the Union in the European Partnership on Metrology jointly undertaken by several Member States, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D2084

- Decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, at: https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf

- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: *Interim Evaluation of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)*. Communication, COM(2023) 285 final, and Staff Working Document, SWD(2023) 169 final. At: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:285:FIN and https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=SWD:2023:169:FIN

- Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast). At: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj/eng

- Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, *Ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*, COM(2024) 49 final and SWD(2024) 29 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024SC0030

- Von der Leyen, U., (2024) *Europe's choice – Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2025*. At: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

- Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), COM(2025) 2 final. At: EUR-Lex - 52025DC0002 - EN - EUR-Lex

- Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Interim Evaluation of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021 - 2024), COM(2025) 189 final and SWD(2025) 110 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025SC0110

- Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *on the European Preparedness Union Strategy*, JOIN(2025) 130 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0130

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *European Water Resilience Strategy*, COM(2025) 280 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0280

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695, COM(2025) 543 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0543

- Proposal for a Council Decision on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034, laying down the rules for participation and dissemination under that Programme, and repealing Decision (EU) 2021/764, COM(2025) 544 final, at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025PC0544

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2025) *The Pact for the Mediterranean. One Sea, One Pact, One Future*, JOIN(2025) 26 final, at: https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/document/download/11646283-cc32-49ae-9639-744d0d6d7da8_en?filename=Joint%20communication%20on%20the%20Pact%20for%20the%20Mediterranean.pdf

Databases:

- Horizon Dashboard: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/horizon-dashboard

- CORDA

- Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database

- FAO-Aquastat: https://www.fao.org/aquastat/en/

- LENS: https://www.lens.org/

- PRIMA Intelligent Analytical tool, at: https://prima-med.org/who-we-are/prima-in-numbers/

- World Bank, World Development indicators: https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators

Other sources:

- PRIMA, (2018) *PRIMA Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda 2018-2028*, at: https://prima-med.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/PRIMA-SRIA_Strategic-Research-and-Innovation-Agenda.pdf

- PRIMA, (2024) *Portfolio Analysis, 2018-2024.* Internal document.

- PRIMA, (2024) *Action Plan for Implementing Recommendations from the Interim Evaluation of PRIMA*. Internal document.

- PRIMA, (2025) *Input Report to the Second Interim Evaluation*. Internal document.

- REA, (2024) *Response to F2P 2024 request "RTD .16 – PRIMA – contribution to SRIA of the amended PRIMA proposal (2025-2027) from the European Commission"*, 30 November 2024. Internal document.

Ad hoc data collections (by the contractors of the support study, the consortium CSIL-Ecorys):

- Two surveys, with target population PRIMA beneficiaries and unsuccessful PRIMA applicants.

- 11 semi-structured interviews.

- 22 case studies.

External expertise

As required by Article 14.3 of the amended PRIMA Basic Act Expert, the assistance of external independent experts has been widely used to prepare this Commission Staff Working Document. It mainly includes the Study report on the interim evaluation of PRIMA, commissioned by the European Commission. The contractor is a consortium between CSIL and Ecorys, selected through a competitive call for tenders launched by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, using the framework contract RTD/2023/OP/0011. The Commission services received and evaluated three tenders. The support study was based on a set of methodologies and sources, including both quantitative and qualitative fieldwork data collections (surveys, interviews and case studies), with data and information triangulated to ensure the highest level of reliability. The limitations of the methodology are described in Annex II.

ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

Study design

Limitations and reliability of data

This analysis covers all PRIMA calls between 2018 and end 2024, all under Horizon 2020 rules. Horizon 2020 ran between 2014 and 2020, while its successor, Horizon Europe, launches calls between 2021 and 2027. This means that the reference period of PRIMA does not fit with Horizon 2020. It seems more appropriate to use Horizon 2020 for comparison and benchmark, even if there will be gaps in terms of years, with likely implications in terms of priorities (e.g. evolving contexts and political priorities). However, Article 14.4 of the PRIMA's amended Basic Act states that the evaluation has to assess, *inter alia*, "*synergies with other parts of Horizon Europe, such as other partnerships, missions, clusters and thematic or specific programmes*", meaning that Horizon Europe, its Clusters, Partnerships and Missions have to be also used as reference, despite different legal bases.

Similarly, the domains covered by PRIMA (see Chapter 2.1) do neither exactly fit with Horizon 2020's Societal Challenges 2 or 5, nor with the Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe. A similar issue is encountered with partnerships, such as Water4All, or Missions. Amongst the latter, the closer to PRIMA's themes is Restoring our Ocean and Waters, but marine R&I is not under PRIMA's scope. Again, this has implications for comparison and benchmarking.

At the date of the final extraction of data to conduct this evaluation, 31 December 2024, 57 projects were finalised, representing 21.1% of those funded by PRIMA in calls until end 2024. These projects were selected in the initial calls launched by PRIMA (years 2018, 2019 and 2020). Any extrapolation from these data, especially output data, has to be done with caution. Those projects are not necessarily representative of the whole PRIMA portfolio. One can expect not only an evolution of priorities, but also a learning curve during the duration of PRIMA.

The PRIMA website (https://prima-med.org/) includes a "PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool" with many monitoring data, only based on inputs (budget, participation, etc.). Project's reporting is done through a different platform, the so-called "Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning" (MEL), not particularly user-friendly. To conduct this SWD and the support study, both the Commission services and the authors of the support study had to rely on data provided by the PRIMA Foundation, notably a very comprehensive Interim Evaluation Input Report. Some inconsistencies were identified within the report and with the PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool or the Annual Activity Reports. They were duly clarified and corrected.

These data were complemented by specific data collections from external contractors, to carry-out the support study. This included:

- 10 semi-structured interviews, mainly to R&I funding agencies from PRIMA Participating States, the PRIMA Secretariat and other international bodies like the Union for the Mediterranean.
- Two surveys to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of PRIMA.
- 22 case studies, which preparation required 23 additional interviews.

Data from PRIMA databases, based on reporting, were refined a further assessed by the contractors, who also made a triangulation of data to validate their reliability.

The support study launched two surveys, one for beneficiaries of PRIMA grants, and another one for applicants who did not benefit from PRIMA support. The questionnaires, in English, French, Italian and Spanish, were distributed by the PRIMA Foundation to the projects beneficiaries (Sections 1 and 2) and unsuccessful applicants in July 2025. The National Contact Points shared the links to the surveys with Section 3 projects and applicants. Reminders were sent on 24 July and 4 August 2025 and, due to the low response rate, the deadline was prolonged until the 22nd of August. Finally, the survey for PRIMA participants collected 46 responses, while the survey for unsuccessful applicants collected 9 responses. By design, the survey is not a random one, and therefore not statistically representative. In addition, the low response rate confirms that the results cannot be generalised. The responses, however, are considered alongside the findings from interviews and case studies and can be used as a complementary source of insight and anecdotal evidence. It has to be noted, also, that not any private-for-profit organisation replied to the survey.

To complement these data sources, several stakeholders were also interviewed, both to assess PRIMA at strategic level and to carry-out case studies. The consortium in charge of the support study carried-out 10 semi-structured strategic interviews, notably to national funding agencies in Italy, Croatia, France, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Jordan, Portugal, and Germany, as well as the PRIMA Secretariat and the Union for the Mediterranean, complemented with additional 23 interviews to prepare the case studies. The interviews used guidelines developed during the inception phase of the study, and their minutes were systematically organised in a matrix aligned with the main evaluation questions, providing a structured framework that facilitated the consolidation of findings and enabled a horizontal analysis.

The support study prepared 22 case studies, covering completed and ongoing PRIMA-funded projects, selected to represent the different R&I actions supported by the partnership, notably on water management, farming systems and agricultural value chains.

On 21 October 2025, an online validation workshop was organised, with the participation of 114 PRIMA stakeholders.

Methodology, sources of information and data analysis

The methodology of this evaluation is based on:

- Desk research, including scientific literature, notably on water, agro-food systems and climate change in the Mediterranean countries, as well as reports, policies and legislation from the Commission.
- Data analysis, using as primary sources statistics from PRIMA (i.e. funding, participation, with different breakdowns), including data non-published from projects' reporting (notably, on project outputs).
- An *Input Report* drafted by the PRIMA Foundation, which included an analysis of the primary sources of data and the context of the partnership, based on desk research and the direct experience with the day-to-day management of PRIMA. This Input Report provides in a synthetic manner several data and information for both the Commission services and the support study.
- *Ad hoc* data collections from the support study conducted by CSIL and Ecorys: two surveys (target populations: PRIMA beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants to PRIMA grants), interviews and case studies. The consortium triangulated primary data and data collected to ensure reliability.
- The analysis done by the contractors.

This evaluation combines the analysis from the Commission services with the analysis from the consortium CSIL-Ecorys, following the structure and approaches established in the Better Regulation Guidelines of the European Commission. An evaluation matrix prepared at the beginning of the process served as guide to prepare the evaluation, with very minor changes. The evaluation matrix is presented in Annex III.

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX AND, WHERE RELEVANT, DETAILS ON ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS (BY CRITERION)

EFFECTIVENESS To what extent has been PRIMA successful in achieving their key objectives?					
Evaluation questions	**Sub-questions**	**Judgement criteria**	**Indicators and information requirements**	**Data sources**	**Analysis cross reference**
EQ1 – To what extent has PRIMA addressed the unsustainable management of water resources and food systems in the EU and the Mediterranean area?	**"Macro" questions:** • **EQ1.1** - How has the situation of water stress and scarcity evolved in the EU and the Mediterranean area? • **EQ1.2** – How has R&I funding and capacities evolved in the EU and the Mediterranean area? **"Micro" questions:** • **EQ1.3 -** To what extent the scientific results of PRIMA's projects have been published in peer-reviewed journals, high-ranked peer-reviewed journals, and to what extent have these papers been cited in other peer-reviewed publications and in relevant reports?	• Evolution of water stress in relevant EU and Mediterranean Countries (**EQ1.1**). • Evolution of R&I funding in relevant EU and Mediterranean Countries (**EQ1.2**). • Comparison of bibliometric statistics of PRIMA with other R&I funding programmes, such as Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 (**EQ1.3**). • Bibliometric statistics, by gender (**EQ1.3**). • Comparison of patents statistics (production and use) of PRIMA with other relevant R&I funding programmes, such as Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 (**EQ1.4**). • Innovations from PRIMA projects exploited in the market (**EQ1.5**). • Likeliness to exploit results from projects in the market (**EQ1.6**).	**Quantitative indicators:** • Trends of water stress in the EU and Mediterranean area **(EQ1.1)** • Trends of R&I funding, as a percentage of GDP, in the EU and PRIMA PS **(EQ1.2)**. • Publications in peer-reviewed journals, high ranked peer-reviewed journals and citations, including in relevant international reports, compared with other EU R&I funding programmes (**EQ1.3**). • Share of female authors of scientific outcomes (**EQ1.3**). • Patents submitted from PRIMA-funded projects and IPR, as well as their exploitation, compared with other EU R&I funding programmes (**EQ1.4**).	**Desk research:** • PRIMA's Interim Evaluation Input report. • PRIMA Interim Evaluation Support Study. • PRIMA's portfolio analysis. **Data sources:** • Eurostat • FAO-Aquastat • WRI-Aqueduct • World Bank, World Development indicators • PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool • Horizon Dashboard	Chapter 4.1.1

	• **EQ1.4** – To what extent PRIMA's projects have delivered new patents and other Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and to what extent are these IPR exploited. • **EQ1.5** – To what extent PRIMA's projects have delivered innovations exploited in the market? • **EQ1.6** – To what extent PRIMA's projects have delivered innovations ready to be exploited in the market? • **EQ1.7** – What is the environmental impact of PRIMA? • **EQ1.8** – What is the social impact of PRIMA?	• Environmental impacts of innovations exploited or likely to be exploited in the market (**EQ1.7**). • Social impacts of PRIMA: exposure to water stress or pollution, jobs created, well-being and better living conditions (**EQ1.8**).	• Technological Readiness Levels – TRLs (**EQ1.5**). • Number of innovations exploited in the market and aggregated sales **(EQ1.5).** • Water, energy and resources efficiency of innovations exploited in the market or likely to be exploited (**EQ1.7**). • GHG emissions reduction and pollution prevention or mitigation derived from PRIMA innovations (**EQ1.7**). • Jobs created and expected (**EQ1.8**). • Number of people benefitting from PRIMA's innovation in terms of less water stress, less pollution, better and more affordable food (**EQ1.8**). **Qualitative indicators** • Key Exploitable Results (**EQ1.5**). • Market and financial analysis of the exploitation of results (**EQ1.6**). • Existing contacts with potential investors or clients of the innovation (**EQ1.6**).	• CORDA • LENS **Other sources:** • Stakeholders survey, interviews and case studies	

EFFICIENCY To what extent has been PRIMA cost-efficient in achieving its key objectives?					
Evaluation questions	**Sub-questions**	**Judgement criteria**	**Indicators and information requirements**	**Data sources**	**Analysis cross reference**
EQ2 – Is the cost of implementation of PRIMA justified?	• **EQ2.1** - What have been the administrative costs of PRIMA's management, ex ante and ex post controls and monitoring, compared with relevant Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe instruments and Partnerships? • **EQ2.2** - What have been the estimated costs for applicants and beneficiaries of PRIMA, compared with relevant Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe instruments and Partnerships? • **EQ2.3** - What have been the estimated costs for public administrations dealing with PRIMA? ▪ **EQ2.4** – Does PRIMA deliver administratively fast enough, compared with other relevant EU R&I programmes? ▪ **EQ2.5** – What is the cost-efficiency of the main projects' outputs, outcomes and impacts (economic, social, environmental)? ▪ **EQ2.7** – Potential scope for simplification and cost reductions.	• Comparison of administrative costs of PRIMA Foundation with the legal target and other relevant R&I programmes and Partnerships (**EQ2.1**) • Reasonableness of the administrative costs of PRIMA management, for different administrations (**EQ2.1 to EQ2.3**). • Reasonableness of costs of application and project management for applicants and beneficiaries (**EQ2.4**). • Difference between the expected implementation costs/benefits at the time of the adoption, and the actual implementation costs/benefits (**EQ2.3**). • Speed of main administrative processes to manage the PRIMA's core business (**EQ2.4**). • Benchmark of time to implement (speed) different administrative processes with legal targets under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (**EQ2.4**) • Output-to-funding ratio of main outputs and outcomes of projects, based on total costs, compared with relevant EU R&I programmes and Partnerships (**EQ2.6**) • Simplification measures at the different stages of PRIMA's implementation and for the different actors and assessment their tentative impacts (**EQ2.7**).	**Quantitative indicators** • Administrative budget of PRIMA compared with other relevant EU R&I programmes (**EQ2.1**). • Estimated cost of application and project management for applicants and beneficiaries, R&I programmes (**EQ2.2**). • Success rates in PRIMA, compared with other relevant EU R&I programmes (**EQ2.2**) • Estimated costs (in particular human resources) for the European Commission, Participant Countries' administration and PRIMA PS (**EQ2.3**). • Time to prepare the AWP, Time to Inform, Time to Grant, Time to Sign, Time to Payment (**EQ2.4**). • Number of peer-reviewed publications, high-ranked peer-reviewed publications, patents and other relevant outputs, outcomes and impacts, divided by the total budget of projects (**EQ2.5**). • Stakeholders'proposals on simplification measures (**EQ2.7**) **Qualitative indicators** • Success rates as an indicator of efficiency or excellence (**EQ2.2**).	**Desk Research** • PRIMA Annual Activity Reports. • PRIMA's Interim Evaluation Input report. • Horizon 2020 Ex Post Evaluation. **Data sources:** • Horizon Dashboard. • CORDA • LENS • Stakeholders consultation (survey, interviews, case studies).	Chapter 4.1.2

COHERENCE How well has PRIMA worked with other funding and policy interventions and how well have specific R&I actions worked together?					
Evaluation questions	**Sub-questions**	**Judgement criteria**	**Indicators and information requirements**	**Data sources**	**Analysis cross reference**
EQ3 – To what extent PRIMA complements or overlaps with the political priorities of the European Union, such as the European Green Deal, including its commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Zero Pollution Action Plan or the Farm to Fork Strategy, amongst others?	• **EQ3.1** - How well have PRIMA objectives and interventions fit the priorities of the European Union and its international commitments? • **EQ3.2** – Synergies or overlaps with the priorities of other R&I initiatives, at EU, national or sub-national levels? • **EQ3.3** - Synergies or overlaps with the priorities of other non-R&I EU funding mechanisms (LIFE, Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Global Europe, etc.)? • **EQ3.4** – Participation in different EU-funding programmes, from research to innovation.	• Comparison of EU policy priorities since the adoption of PRIMA's Basic Act (**EQ3.1**). • Complementarity of the objectives, work programmes and projects funded by PRIMA and other EU R&I initiatives (Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, Partnerships), and actions carried-out to ensure synergies (**EQ3.2**). • Complementarity of the objectives, work programmes and projects funded by PRIMA and other EU non-R&I initiatives (LIFE, RRF, ERDF, etc.), and actions carried-out to ensure synergies (**EQ3.3**). • From research to innovation implementation: Complementarity in terms of participation between PRIMA and other relevant EU funds (**EQ3.4**)	**Quantitative indicators** • **EQ3.4** – Participation in PRIMA, other relevant R&I and non-R&I funding programmes (**EQ3.2, EQ3.3**). **Qualitative indicators** • Coherence between relevant EU policy documents and PRIMA's priorities and SRIA (**EQ3.1**). • Coherence between PRIMA priorities and priorities of Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2, Horizon Europe Cluster 6, and relevant Partnerships (**EQ3.2**). • Actions carried-out to promote synergies between PRIMA and relevant EU R&I programmes (**EQ3.2**). • Coherence between PRIMA priorities and priorities of EU- non R&I funding programmes (**EQ3.3**). • Actions carried-out to promote synergies between PRIMA and relevant EU non-R&I programmes (**EQ3.3**).	**Desk research:** • PRIMA Basic Act, SRIA and AWPs • EU policy and legal documents since 2018. • PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input report. • PRIMA Portfolio Analysis 2018-2024. **Data sources:** • CORDA. • PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool. **Other sources:** • Stakeholders consultation (survey, interviews, case studies).	Chapter 4.1.3

EU ADDED-VALUE To what extent has PRIMA helped to reach its objectives compared to what could have been reasonably expected a baseline scenario without the partnership?					
Evaluation questions	**Sub-questions**	**Judgement criteria**	**Indicators and information requirements**	**Data sources**	**Analysis cross reference**
EQ4a – To what extent has the PRIMA helped to increase the participation of non-EU PRIMA-PS to R&I programmes? **EQ4b** – To what extent has PRIMA contributed to increase the R&I funding and excellence in its area of intervention?	• **EQ4a.1** – What is the share of participation of non-EU PRIMA-PS to the partnership compared with relevant EU R&I programme? • **EQ4b.1** – How much public funding has PRIMA attracted, beyond EU contribution? • **EQ4b.2** – What are the costs and benefits of PRIMA-PS and how are they distributed?	• Comparison of participation data between relevant EU R&I programmes (**EQ4a.1**). • Financial leverage of PRIMA, public and private (**EQ4b.1**). • Achievement of the legally requested matchmaking between EU and PRIMA-PS funding (**EQ4b.1**). • Direct financial costs and benefits for PRIMA-PS (**EQ4b.2**). • Network analysis (**EQ4b.2**). • Newcomers analysis (**EQ4b.2).**	**Quantitative indicators:** • Participation of non-EU PRIMA-PS in Horizon 2020 SC2, Horizon Europe Cluster 6 and PRIMA (**EQ4a.1**). • PRIMA public additional to EU contribution (**EQ4b.1**). **Qualitative indicators** • Assessment of main stakeholders in PRIMA PS (**EQ4a.1**).	**Desk Research:** • PRIMA Annual Activity reports. • PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input report. • Support study for PRIMA Interim Evaluation. **Data sources:** • PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool. • Horizon Dashboard. **Other sources :** • Stakeholder consultation (survey, interviews, case studies).	Chapter 4.2 Chapter 3 (main stakeholders)

RELEVANCE Has PRIMA achieved its objectives and does it remain fit-for-purpose in the current evolving context?					
Evaluation questions	**Sub-questions**	**Judgement criteria**	**Indicators and information requirements**	**Data sources**	**Analysis cross reference**
EQ5a – Are PRIMA's logic of intervention, problem definition and objectives still pertinent, considering external factors like climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, the changing geopolitical context, or the evolving political priorities of the EU and PRIMA PS? **EQ5b** – Is there sufficient commitment from PRIMA PS to prolong its implementation and maintain or expand its funding? **EQ5c** – What is the role of PRIMA for science and water diplomacy?	• Are PRIMA results commensurate with its objectives and resources (**EQ5a.1**)? • Is there sufficient commitment from PRIMA-PS to prolong its implementation? (**EQ5b.1**). • Is PRIMA playing a relevant role for science and water diplomacy in the Mediterranean countries? (**EQ5c).**	• Comparison of resources and needs to address the objectives of PRIMA (**EQ5a.1**). • Commitment of PRIMA-PS to prolong PRIMA after Horizon Europe, and under which legal structure (**EQ5b.1**). • Reflection on actual impact of science and diplomacy (**EQ5c).**	**Quantitative indicators** • Resource needs to address the objectives of PRIMA (**EQ5a.1**). • Relevance of PRIMA for science and water diplomacy, according to stakeholders and literature (**EQ5c**). **Qualitative indicators** • Assessment of stakeholders about future options for PRIMA-PS (**EQ5b.1**).	**Desk Research:** • PRIMA's Interim Evaluation Input report. • Support study to conduct the Interim Evaluation of PRIMA. • Literature on science and water diplomacy. **Other sources :** • Stakeholders consultation (survey, interviews, case studies).	Chapter 4.3

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS AND TABLE ON SIMPLIFICATION AND BURDEN REDUCTION

Table 1. Overview of costs and benefits identified in the evaluation[126]

		Citizens/Consumers		Businesses		Administrations		R&I Communities	
		Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Costs description:									
Costs: **Direct compliance costs** (adjustment costs, administrative costs, regulatory charges) **Enforcement costs** (costs associated with activities linked to the implementation of an initiative such as monitoring, inspections and adjudication/litigation) **Indirect costs** (indirect compliance costs or other indirect costs such as transaction costs)	**Recurrent**	PRIMA costs per inhabitant: EU citizens: ca. EUR 0.47 *per capita* Plus: PRIMA PS citizens: ca. EUR 0.74 *per capita*	The direct costs for citizens derive from the taxes they pay to finance the public contributions to PRIMA, at EU level (Section 1) and in its Participating States (Sections 2 and 3), including administrative costs. A *per capita* quantification results from dividing the funding expenditures of PRIMA by the number of inhabitants.	(Not quantified)	The direct costs for business are those incurred by private-for-profit organisation that applied and/or participated in PRIMA projects.	Full cost for the EU (Section 1): EUR 213.8 million Of which: administrative costs PRIMA-IS: EUR 9,1 million Based on disbursed amounts: 6.03% Based on ranking lists: 4.4% Full costs for PRIMA-PS (Sections 2 and 3): EUR 456.8 million	The administrative costs of the PRIMA-IS are limited to 6% of the Union financial contribution (Art. 3.3.b of the Basic Act). In practice, this can be calculated based on disbursed amounts or based on the ranking lists). For PRIMA Participating States, the full costs of PRIMA are the amounts allocated to Section 1 and 2, in cash and in-kind.	Estimated cost of managing a PRIMA project: ca. 6% of the project's budget.	Time, financial and human resources to prepare proposals and for managing projects has been estimated in the support study, based on self-assessments, in *ad hoc* data collections. The human resources to prepare proposals is estimated around 35 person-days. Managing a project represents also 35 person-days per year. No breakdown by type of organisation.

Benefits description:									
Benefits: **Direct benefits** (such as improved well being: changes in pollution levels, safety, health, employment; market efficiency) **Indirect benefits** (such as wider economic benefits, macroeconomic benefits, social impacts, environmental impacts)	**Recurrent**	(Not quantified)	The direct benefits for citizens are difficult to quantify, because the existing reporting data and *ad hoc* data collections have been unable to identify and measure systematically the impact of projects on the ground (e.g. additional people with access to clean water, improved water efficiency, jobs created or safeguarded, etc.). Indirect benefits, as those derived from increased knowledge,	Funding received by private-for-profit organisations: ca. EUR 51.8 million	Business represent a minority of participants in PRIMA projects (ca. 12.9% of the funding, 10.9% SMEs) This assessment could not quantitatively estimate other direct benefits for businesses, derived from the commercialisation of products and services developed by PRIMA projects. There is no systematic data collection of these data, neither through	Public bodies received ca. EUR 8 million.	Public bodies represent ca. 2% of the funding received by beneficiaries.	Funding received by beneficiaries other than private-for-profit organisations and public bodies ca. EUR 341.7 million Other benefits not monetised. Benefits such as publications, IPRs or networks are analysed in the core report.	R&I communities other than private-for-profit and public bodies represent most of the participant in PRIMA projects (ca. 85.7% of the funding) For R&I communities, other direct benefits derive from scientific publications and their impact, IPR and their exploitation, start-ups, staff employed in PRIMA projects, PhDs, etc., not monetised in this analysis. Indirect benefits derive from new knowledge and skills, or access to

[126] Where there is a prior impact assessment, the table should contain as a minimum the costs/benefits identified in the IA with the information gathered on the actual cost/benefit. As available, the table should include the monetisation (€) of the costs/benefits based on any quantitative translation of the data (time taken, person days, number of records/equipment/staff etc. affected or involved represented in monetary value – see Standard cost model, for example). For all information presented, it should be included in the comments section whether it relates to all Member States or is drawn from a subset. An indication of the robustness of the data should be provided in Annex II on Methodology and analytical models used.

			improved environment and their social consequences (e.g. resilience) have not been quantified. This is a difficult task in a small- scale instrument like PRIMA.		projects' reporting, nor through *ad hoc* data collections. <u>Indirect benefits</u> for business mainly derive from acquired knowledge and skills, access to networks or potential efficiency gains in their day-to-day activities – not quantified at this stage.				networks, or reputation, not monetised in this analysis.

TABLE 2: Simplification and burden reduction (savings already achieved)								
	Citizens/Consumers/Workers		Businesses		Administrations		R&I communities	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Simplification measures under Section 1								
Type: One-off and recurrent	Section 1 follows the rules of Horizon 2020 (until end of 2024) and, afterwards, of Horizon Europe (from the call for proposals 2025, not covered by this assessment). Horizon Europe already includes simplification measures compared with Horizon 2020, duly implemented since the first PRIMA call in 2025. The expected impacts are those of Horizon Europe. Some were assessed in the Mid-term review of Horizon Europe (e.g. the review estimated that lump sums save 30% of administrative costs for beneficiaries). There are no data yet to quantify the impact of these measures in the specific case of PRIMA.							
Simplification measures under Section 2								
Type: Recurrent	The Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Interim Evaluation of PRIMA adopted in 2023 (COM(2023)285 final) stated that "(…) *additional efforts from PRIMA implementing structure and the Participating States are needed to further increase the efficiency notably of Section 2, by reducing the complexity caused by different national funding schemes and work towards streamlining of national administrative procedures, to reduce time to grant, strengthen the reliability and improve the speed*". Measures have been taken in some PRIMA-PS, for instance through simplified administrative procedures and checks in PRIMA-PS like Spain, Egypt or Italy, or further pre-financing in Spain, and at PRIMA-IS level (e.g. 6-months maximum for grant agreement signature, closer monitoring). It is too early to observe the effects of such measures and their impact (in particular quantitatively) on the different stakeholders.							

PART II: Potential simplification and burden reduction (savings)								
	Citizens/Consumers/Workers		Businesses		Administrations		R&I communities	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Simplification measures under Section 1								
Type: One-off and recurrent	The Commission proposal for a Regulation establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 (COM(2025)543 final) focuses particularly on simplification, presented as an "overarching priority of the Commission". It includes measures like reduced length of the work programmes, open topics by default, no distinction between RIAs and IAs, single funding rate of up to 100%, except for for-profit entities other than SMEs, with a funding rate of up to 70%, lump sum funding as the default form of Union contribution, or implementation of other simplified forms of cost, including personnel unit costs. These measures, however, will not be implemented in Section 1 of PRIMA in its current phase under Horizon Europe. This said, beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants show a high level of satisfaction with the rules for Section under Horizon 2020, as explained in this SWD.							

Simplification proposals under Section 2	
Type: One-off	*Use the European Commission IT tools for reporting and monitoring, i.e. Compass and CORDIS instead of MEL* This proposal has been raised by different stakeholders consulted, who complained about the difficulty of using the MEL, especially when they have previous experience with the EU's Framework Programmes on R&I and the Commission's IT tools. The current use of MEL creates also burden for monitoring and evaluation from public administrations, such as the Commission, but also to PRIMA-IS. The latter is obliged to transfer periodically the data from MEL to Excel, to allow the Commission services to include them in CORDA and CORDIS. The own breakdown categories are different and require manual adaptations to compare data with relevant EU R&I funding instruments, with potential errors. Therefore, such measure would also increase transparency. The quantitative savings of such measure have not been estimated, but it can consider that the main beneficiaries would be the PRIMA beneficiaries and unsuccessful applicants, the PRIMA-IS and the public administrations dealing with PRIMA, including the European Commission. Implementing this proposal could also have a cost, to guarantee the security of the EU IT tools amongst all stakeholders. This is already done in public-private partnerships.
Type: Recurrent	*Fund Section 2 projects through a "common pot"* Right now, each PRIMA Participating State finances its national beneficiaries under Section 2. This issue, raised by several stakeholders, creates delays in payment and challenges the smooth implementation of projects. The problem could be solved creating a "common pot" with national contributions from PRIMA-PS, to be used to fund Section 2 projects. This would increase the administrative costs for PRIMA-IS, because it should be responsible of payments for Section 2 projects on top of the current activities, but would decrease the burden for national administrations, and especially for PRIMA beneficiaries. The savings have not been quantified, and there are potential legal barriers in PRIMA-PS that would require a more detailed analysis.
Type: Recurrent	*Simplify and shorten the Annual Work Programme* In line with the Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe 2028-2034, PRIMA could shorten and simplify the Annual Work Programme. For instance, the AWP 2025 is 111 pages long, and in 2024, it had 105 pages. This is hardly commensurate with the number of topics or actions funded. However, this actions, while relatively easy to implement, will not have a very significant effect on stakeholders (applicants and public administrations).

ANNEX V. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION

A derogation to waive the Open Public Consultation (OPC) was given from the European Commission's Secretariat-General on 10 January 2025 (Ares(2025)1895605), as explained in Annex I.

ANNEX VI. ADDITIONAL FIGURES AND TABLES

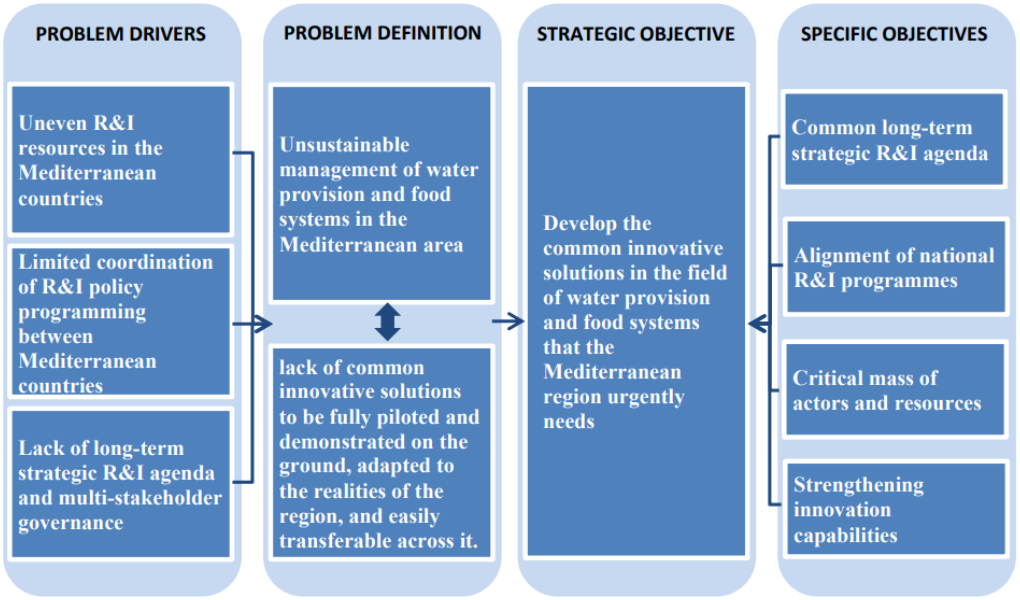

Figure A.1: Intervention logic of PRIMA, as presented in its impact assessment, p. 25

Table A.1: Water stress, water withdrawal in agriculture and water use efficiency, 2017-2021.
Source: FAO-Aquastat, at: https://data.apps.fao.org/aquastat/?lang=en

Region	Indicator	Unit	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Northern Africa and Western Asia	SDG 6.4.2. Water stress	%	79.43	77.67	84.28	81.51	79.64
	Agricultural water withdrawal as a % of total renewable water resources	%	49.24	48.66	51.87	49.48	47.67
	SDG 6.4.1. Water use efficiency	US$/m3	11.98	12.49	11.64	11.51	12.67
	SDG 6.4.1 Irrigated agriculture water use efficiency	US$/m3	0.4	0.39	0.39	0.43	0.45
Europe	SDG 6.4.2. Water stress	%	8.47	8.58	8.49	8.39	8.41
	Agricultural water withdrawal as a % of total renewable water resources	%	1.26	1.26	1.27	1.26	1.26
	SDG 6.4.1. Water use efficiency	US$/m3	61.22	62.39	64.11	61.42	64.33
	SDG 6.4.1 Irrigated agriculture water use efficiency	US$/m3	0.58	0.63	0.61	0.61	0.57

Note: Water stress is defined as the "ratio between total freshwater withdrawn by all major sectors and total renewable freshwater resources, after taking into account environmental water requirements". FAO terminology portal, at: https://www.fao.org/faoterm/viewentry/en/?entryId=172346

Water use efficiency is defined as "the value added in US dollars per volume of water used in cubic meters, by a given economic activity over time. It considers water use by all economic activities, with a focus on agriculture, industry and the service sector. The indicator allows countries to assess to what extent their economic growth depends on the use of their water resources. Regional differences in climate and water availability must be considered in the interpretation of this indicator, in particular for agriculture". See: https://www.unwater.org/our-work/integrated-monitoring-initiative-sdg-6/indicator-641-change-water-use-efficiency-over-time

Table A.2: Water stress and water use efficiency in PRIMA PS, 2017-2021. Source: FAO-Aquastat. All data are estimates.

SDG 6.4.2 - Water stress (%)							
Country	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Algeria	137.9	141.8	145.7	149.6	140.6	144.8	n/a
Bulgaria	41.8	40.1	40.1	36.7	38.5	40.2	n/a
Croatia	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	n/a
Cyprus	29.5	28.3	27.6	31.6	32.1	30.5	n/a
Egypt	141.2	141.2	141.2	141.2	141.2	141.2	n/a
France	23.6	23.6	22.9	21.6	21.4	21.4	n/a
Germany	38	36.9	35.6	35.6	35.6	35.6	n/a
Greece	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.4	20.3	n/a
Israel	103.6	95.9	100.4	110	132	129.7	n/a
Italy	29.8	29.7	29.8	29.8	29.7	29.7	n/a
Jordan	100.4	102.2	104.3	106	102.5	105.2	n/a
Lebanon	58.8	58.8	58.8	58.8	58.8	58.8	n/a
Luxembourg	3.8	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.8	4	n/a
Malta	91.1	84.6	80.7	81.7	78.5	72.6	n/a
Morocco	50.8	50.8	50.8	50.8	50.8	50.8	n/a
Portugal	12.4	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3	n/a
Slovenia	6.3	6.5	6.4	6.8	6.3	5.6	n/a
Spain	41	40.1	39.8	43.3	43.3	43.3	n/a
Tunisia	89.5	96	96.3	98.1	98.1	98.1	n/a
Türkiye	43.7	45.4	46.3	46.1	43.4	47.9	n/a

Table A.3: R&I expenditure as a percentage of GDP. Sources: World Bank, World Development indicators, at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GB.XPD.RSDV.GD.ZS?name_desc=false (extraction 28/01/2024). For the EU, EU Member States and Türkiye, in italic, 2022 and 2023: Eurostat (extraction 28/01/2024)

Country	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	***2023***
Bulgaria	0.50	0.44	0.56	0.95	0.77	0.74	0.75	0.83	0.85	0.77	*0.75*	*0.79*
Cyprus	0.23	0.37	0.44	0.48	0.52	0.54	0.61	0.71	0.84	0.83	*0.7*	*0.68*
Germany	2.41	2.44	2.73	2.93	2.94	3.05	3.11	3.17	3.13	3.14	*3.07*	*3.11*
Algeria		0.07				0.53						
Egypt, Arab Rep.	0.19	0.24	0.43	0.72	0.71	0.64	0.69	0.80	0.92	0.91	1.02	
Spain	0.88	1.10	1.36	1.22	1.19	1.21	1.24	1.25	1.41	1.43	*1.27*	*1.49*
European Union	**1.76**	**1.78**	**1.97**	**2.12**	**2.12**	**2.15**	**2.19**	**2.23**	**2.30**	**2.27**	***2.21***	***2.22***
France	2.09	2.05	2.18	2.23	2.22	2.20	2.20	2.19	2.28	2.22	*2.23*	*2.19*

Country	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	*2023*
Greece		0.58	0.60	0.97	1.01	1.15	1.21	1.27	1.51	1.46	*0.82*	*1.49*
Croatia	1.04	0.85	0.73	0.83	0.85	0.85	0.95	1.08	1.24	1.24	*0.79*	*1.39*
Israel	3.83	3.92	3.86	4.21	4.47	4.62	4.78	5.22	5.71	5.56		
Italy	1.00	1.04	1.22	1.34	1.37	1.37	1.42	1.46	1.51	1.45	*1.29*	*1.31*
Jordan					0.70							
Lebanon												
Luxembourg	1.58	1.56	1.42	1.25	1.27	1.24	1.17	1.18	1.09	1.04	*1.23*	*1.03*
Morocco			0.66									
Malta		0.53	0.59	0.72	0.56	0.55	0.58	0.56	0.65	0.67	*0.73*	*0.61*
Portugal	0.72	0.76	1.54	1.24	1.28	1.32	1.35	1.40	1.61	1.68	*1.32*	*1.69*
Slovenia	1.36	1.42	2.05	2.20	2.01	1.87	1.95	2.04	2.14	2.13	*2.59*	*2.13*
Tunisia		0.71	0.66	0.59	0.57	0.70	0.72	0.75				
Türkiye	0.47	0.56	0.79	0.88	1.12	1.18	1.27	1.32	1.37	1.40	*0.81*	*1.32*

Table A.4: Comparison of the committed, allocated, and disbursed amount per Section 2 calls 2018-2023 per country (in EUR). Source: PRIMA Annual Activity Report 2024.

Countries	NFA	Commited (2018- 2023)	Allocated (2018 - 2023)	Disbursed (2018 -2023)	% Allocated vs Commited	% Disbursed vs Allocated	Limit 6% in-kind contribution Committed	Limit 6% in-kind contribution Allocated	6% in-kind contribution (2018-2023)
Spain	AEI	15 000 000	18 483 374	17 387 848	123%	94%	900 000	1 109 002	438 470
Spain	CDTI	6 750 000	4 452 165	2 518 859	66%	57%	405 000	267 130	171 077
France	ANR	32 000 000	24 869 113	16 591 236	78%	67%	1 920 000	1 492 147	243 104
Slovenia	ARIS	930 000	638 234	555 199	69%	87%	55 800	38 294	21 207
Germany	BMBF	17 315 000	17 650 730	12 476 985	102%	71%	1 038 900	1 059 044	588 481
Lebanon	CNRS-L	1 800 000	193 669	72 734	11%	38%	108 000	11 620	21 706
Portugal	FCT	6 485 000	6 463 742	3 540 717	100%	55%	389 100	387 824	115 250
Luxembourg	FNR	2 400 000	835 531	300 833	35%	36%	144 000	50 132	3 046
Greece	GSRT	7 800 000	9 254 708	4 253 484	119%	46%	468 000	555 282	52 513
Israel	MOST/ISERD	3 750 000	1 066 743	283 737	28%	27%	225 000	64 005	58 963
Malta	MCST	2 800 000	1 062 490	715 938	38%	67%	168 000	63 749	76 914
Tunisia	MESRS	8 500 000	8 735 150	6 791 001	103%	78%	510 000	524 109	265 422
Algeria	DGRSDT	13 000 000	6 194 122	3 330 048	48%	54%	780 000	371 647	278 228
Morocco	MESRSFC	17 600 000	11 818 094	7 913 976	67%	67%	1 056 000	709 086	793 750
Italy	MUR	42 000 000	42 841 438	26 241 043	102%	61%	2 520 000	2 570 486	652 312
Croatia	MSE	2 185 715	1 898 500	1 560 581	87%	82%	131 143	113 910	2 250
Cyprus	RPF	2 400 000	1 380 535	902 301	58%	65%	144 000	82 832	13 691
Jordan	SRSF	253 500	266 314	69 077	105%	26%	15 210	15 979	0
Jordan	HCST	4 316 000	1 650 840	178 562	38%	11%	258 960	99 050	24 048
Turkey	TUBITAK	6 300 000	7 579 971	6 147 613	120%	81%	378 000	454 798	122 792
Egypt	ASRT	9 000 000	2 736 301	1 118 454	30%	41%	540 000	164 178	5 375
Egypt	STDF	11 550 000	2 606 558	1 180 641	23%	45%	693 000	156 393	0
	Total (in €)	**214 135 215**	**172 678 321**	**114 130 865**	**81%**	**66%**	**12 848 113**	**10 360 699**	**3 948 600**

Table A.5: PRIMA Section 3 funding. Source: PRIMA Interim Evaluation Interim report, *op.cit*. Updated on 20/10/2025.

AWPs	Committed funds		Allocated funds		Disbursed payments	
	PSIA	Other activities	PSIA	Other activities	PSIA	Other activities
2018	26 860 000	680 000	7 287 922	734 723	5 730 002	734 723
2019	46 000 000	275 000	33 680 827	415 078	20 054 848	41 5078
2020	26 480 000	95 020	25 111 584	72 842	1 395 921	72 842
2021	46 560 000	62 800	61 773 880	4 000	33 881 474	4 000
2022	49 425 000	39 000	92 111 707	5 363	18 351 949	5 363
2023	31 375 000	25 000	9 098 776	0	2 209 020	0
2024	41 203 663	15 000	27 212 932	13 552	20 232 917	13 552
Sub-Total 7 years	***267 903 663***	***1 191 820***	***256 277 628***	***1 245 558***	***114 420 131***	***1 245 558***
TOTAL Section 3	**269 095 483**		**257 523 186**		**115 665 689**	

Note: Committed funds refer to the amounts legally reserved to cover future expenses, such as those from grant agreements. Allocated funds are those committed amounts that will be legally expended, for instance after the evaluation of projects. Disbursed amounts are those already paid to the right-owners (e.g. beneficiaries of grants).

Table A.6: PRIMA budget compared with Horizon 2020. Source: PRIMA Intelligent Analytical Tool and Horizon Dashboard, extraction: 14/11/2025. PRIMA budgets for Sections 1 and 2 only.

	EU contribution	Total budget
Max EU contribution in Basic Act (million EUR)	220	(-)
PRIMA, actual, 2018-2024, S1 - S2 (million EUR)	202.3 (S1)	401.6 (S1+S2)
Horizon 2020 (million EUR)	68,005.2	83,325.3
PRIMA as % Horizon 2020	*0.3%*	*0.48%*
Horizon 2020, SC2 (million EUR)	3,524	4,349.7
PRIMA as % Horizon 2020, SC2	*5.7%*	*9.2%*
PRIMA-PS in Horizon 2020, SC2 (million EUR)	1,707.6	2,072.6
PRIMA as % of PRIMA-PS in Horizon 2020, SC2	*11.8%*	*16.7%*
Horizon 2020, SC5 (million EUR)	3,118.1	3,683.5
PRIMA as % Horizon 2020, SC5	*6.5%*	*10.9%*
PRIMA-PS in Horizon 2020, SC5 (million EUR)	1.580.6	1,860.2
PRIMA as % of PRIMA-PS in Horizon 2020, SC5	*12.8%*	*21.6%*

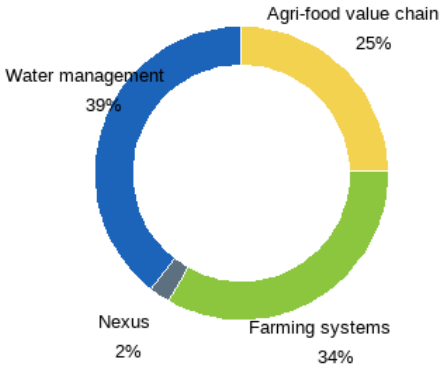

Figure A.2: PRIMA projects' publications by thematic area. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on data on 1,119 publications extracted from LENS.

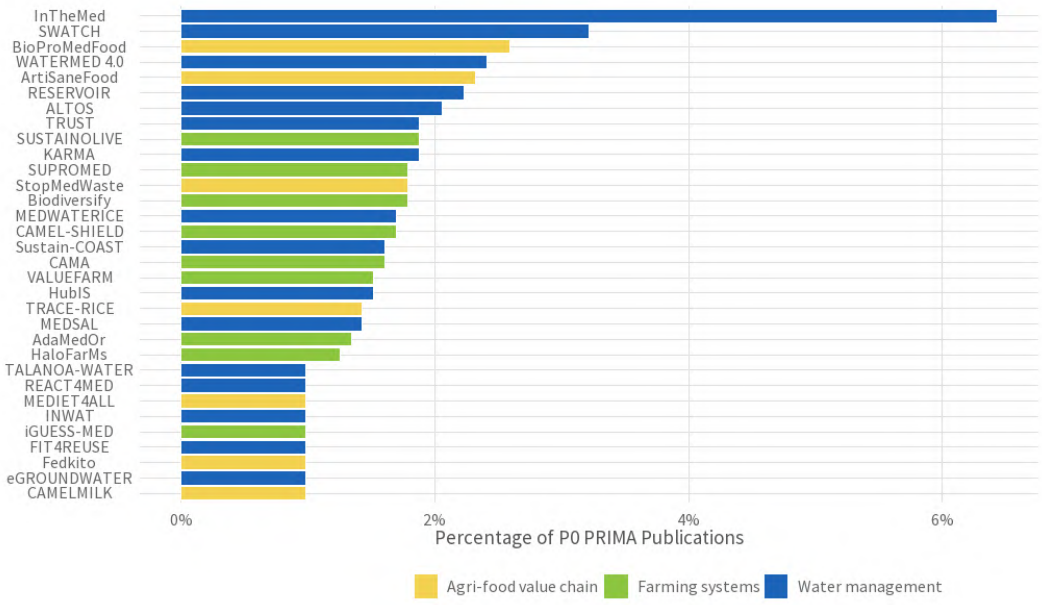

Figure A.3: Top 25 PRIMA Projects with the most scientific publications. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on data on 1,119 Publications extracted from LENS.

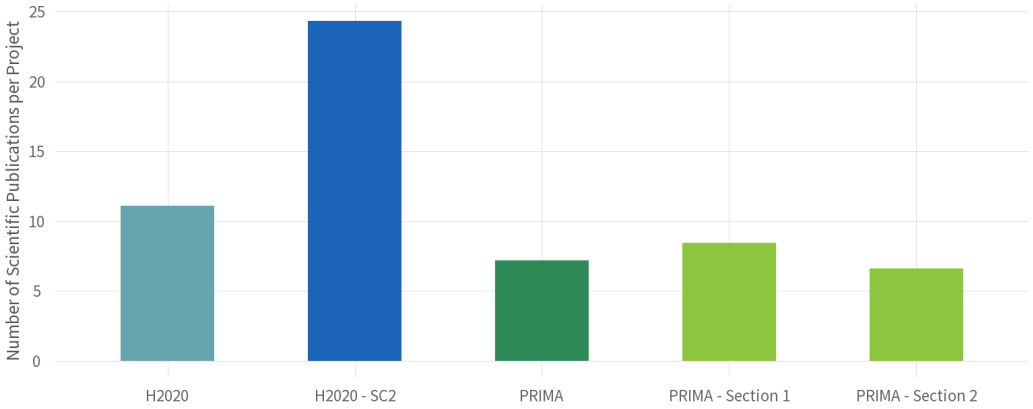

Figure A.4: Number of scientific publications by project. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on PRIMA and Horizon Dashboard data.

Note: Projects for calls from 2018 to 2020 considered, covering all linked publications released in 2018-2025

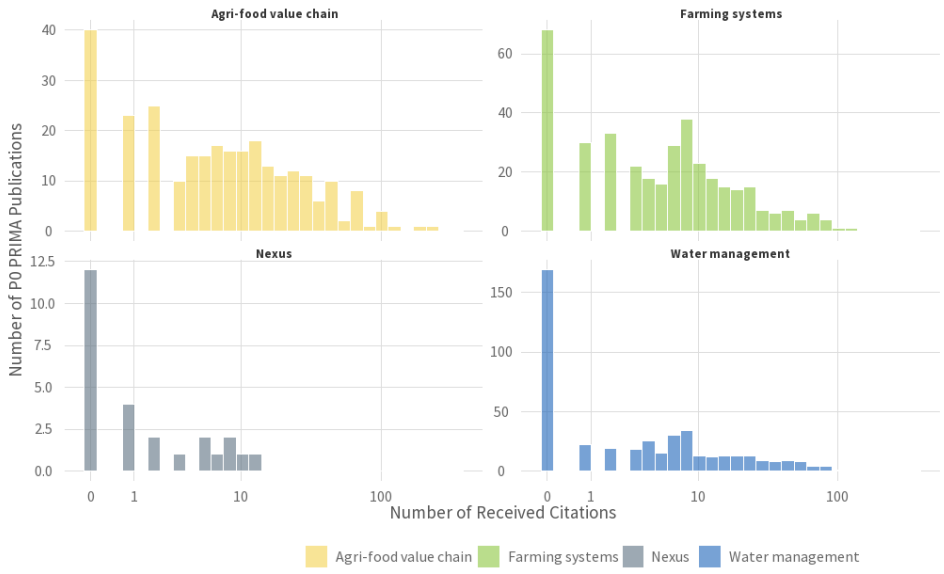

Figure A.5: Distribution of citations received by PRIMA publications by thematic area. Source: Support study, authors' elaboration based on data on 1,119 Publications extracted from LENS.

Table A.7: Success rates by PRIMA-PS, for Sections 1 and 2 and combined. Source: PRIMA Analytical Intelligent Tool.

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Algeria	2.5%	6.6%	5.1%	4.8%	4.9%	4.1%	4.8%	**4.4%**
Croatia	7.1%		8.3%	7.7%	5.0%			**5.6%**
Cyprus	1.9%		2.5%	4.3%	9.5%	7.7%	4.2%	**3.8%**
Egypt	1.1%	7.6%	3.5%	5.3%	3.9%	6.4%	2.2%	**4.1%**
France	3.8%	7.0%	6.7%	3.8%	4.1%	4.5%	1.5%	**4.5%**
Germany	3.1%	8.8%	2.6%	2.3%	6.9%	6.3%		**4.2%**
Greece	2.7%	5.7%	4.4%	4.9%	9.1%	6.0%	5.2%	**5.1%**
Israel	2.3%	2.9%	5.3%	4.9%	9.1%	5.3%		**4.2%**
Italy	2.3%	5.7%	5.6%	4.8%	5.1%	5.8%	3.9%	**4.5%**
Jordan		8.6%	4.4%	1.5%	7.4%	4.5%	5.0%	**3.9%**
Lebanon	1.4%	7.1%	13.1%	12.3%	10.0%	2.7%	10.0%	**7.9%**
Malta		5.3%	8.7%	4.5%	21.4%			**6.0%**
Morocco	1.8%	5.0%	3.3%	5.5%	4.8%	6.8%	4.8%	**4.6%**
Portugal	1.5%	6.7%	4.8%	1.9%	5.1%	6.5%	6.1%	**4.1%**
Slovenia				10.5%	8.3%	12.5%		**3.7%**
Spain	2.7%	8.0%	5.4%	3.6%	5.6%	5.6%	4.1%	**4.7%**
Tunisia	2.5%	7.6%	6.1%	5.3%	7.4%	6.0%	4.5%	**5.3%**
Turkey	4.1%	7.9%	7.8%	3.5%	7.3%	4.8%	4.0%	**5.5%**
Total	**2.0%**	**6.5%**	**4.7%**	**3.7%**	**5.1%**	**4.8%**	**3.4%**	**4.1%**

Section 1

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Algeria	9.0%	19.0%	26.4%	22.9%	16.1%	26.2%	37.8%	**19.7%**
Croatia		25.0%	14.3%	20.0%	63.6%	66.7%	75.0%	**36.5%**
Cyprus	7.7%	22.2%	19.0%	8.7%	18.2%	12.5%	25.0%	**14.2%**
Egypt	6.7%	16.9%	17.9%	12.5%	33.3%	17.4%	22.2%	**15.1%**
France	13.3%	18.0%	28.9%	20.9%	26.0%	36.5%	39.0%	**23.7%**
Germany	9.3%	24.3%	27.5%	22.7%	27.3%	32.5%	37.5%	**21.2%**
Greece	6.5%	15.1%	19.7%	19.4%		20.7%		**13.8%**
Israel	15.4%	33.3%		40.0%	75.0%	28.6%		**25.0%**
Italy	8.7%	21.1%	20.4%	22.6%	31.5%	23.5%	35.3%	**19.4%**
Jordan	7.8%			6.7%		26.7%	33.3%	**9.6%**
Lebanon	7.1%	41.7%	20.0%	50.0%	50.0%	20.0%	50.0%	**23.9%**
Luxembourg		100.0%		33.3%	100.0%	50.0%		**40.0%**
Malta	10.5%		16.7%		25.0%	33.3%		**10.9%**
Morocco	12.6%	19.0%	22.7%	25.6%	31.9%	34.5%	25.0%	**23.3%**
Portugal	6.9%	25.0%	23.1%	20.8%	36.4%	24.4%	35.7%	**20.6%**
Slovenia		50.0%	33.3%	20.0%		50.0%	37.5%	**28.3%**
Spain	8.2%	25.5%	17.4%	24.7%	30.4%	28.4%	33.3%	**20.1%**
Tunisia	9.3%	18.4%	21.7%	22.5%	26.3%	27.5%	43.9%	**19.6%**
Turkey	7.9%	17.5%	10.2%	20.4%	31.7%	28.3%	29.7%	**18.4%**
Total	**7.2%**	**19.5%**	**20.3%**	**20.4%**	**26.0%**	**24.3%**	**32.9%**	**17.7%**

Section 2

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Algeria	5.8%	12.9%	13.6%	12.7%	9.7%	14.3%	17.0%	**11.4%**
Croatia	5.0%	11.8%	9.7%	11.1%	25.8%	30.8%	25.0%	**15.6%**
Cyprus	3.8%	5.3%	8.2%	5.7%	12.5%	8.8%	9.4%	**6.9%**
Egypt	3.4%	10.7%	8.2%	7.2%	12.3%	9.7%	6.8%	**7.6%**
France	8.0%	11.6%	16.5%	10.5%	12.9%	18.6%	15.9%	**12.6%**
Germany	5.9%	14.3%	11.2%	9.2%	12.5%	16.3%	9.1%	**10.4%**
Greece	4.3%	8.5%	9.1%	9.4%	9.0%	9.8%	5.1%	**7.6%**
Israel	4.0%	5.4%	4.7%	8.7%	16.2%	11.5%		**7.0%**
Italy	5.1%	11.3%	10.3%	9.9%	14.3%	11.7%	12.8%	**9.8%**
Jordan	2.7%	7.2%	3.9%	2.5%	6.2%	8.6%	8.7%	**5.1%**
Lebanon	3.0%	14.8%	14.1%	15.9%	14.7%	4.8%	12.5%	**10.6%**
Luxembourg		25.0%		25.0%	20.0%	33.3%		**14.8%**
Malta	4.9%	4.2%	10.3%	3.4%	22.2%	8.3%		**7.4%**
Morocco	6.8%	10.1%	10.1%	12.6%	14.5%	15.9%	9.6%	**11.2%**
Portugal	3.8%	12.8%	10.7%	7.9%	16.3%	14.9%	16.9%	**10.2%**
Slovenia		10.7%	13.6%	12.5%	6.3%	28.6%	16.7%	**11.0%**
Spain	4.8%	13.6%	8.9%	8.8%	14.5%	13.6%	12.0%	**9.7%**
Tunisia	6.0%	12.4%	11.7%	10.8%	14.5%	14.0%	15.0%	**11.0%**
Turkey	5.9%	11.6%	8.6%	8.9%	15.4%	14.6%	10.9%	**10.3%**
Total	**4.3%**	**11.1%**	**9.8%**	**9.0%**	**12.5%**	**12.0%**	**12.4%**	**9.1%**

Sections 1 and 2 combined

Table A.8: Historical timelines to prepare and adopt PRIMA's Annual Work Programmes. Source: PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input report.

Work Plan	Date of Adoption	Start of Preparation (approximately)	Days for Preparation	Adoption Number
AWP 2018	12 January 2018	February 2017	345	C(2018) 371
AWP 2019	13 December 2018	February 2018	315	C(2018) 8734
AWP 2020	10 February 2020	February 2019	374	C(2020) 728
AWP 2021	04 March 2021	February 2020	397	C(2021) 1390
AWP 2022	14 January 2022	February 2021	347	C(2022) 49 final
AWP 2023	25 January 2023	February 2022	358	C(2023) 578 final
AWP 2024	25 January 2024	February 2023	358	C(2024) 430 final

Table A.9: Leverage of EU funding to PRIMA, based on *used* amounts. Sources: PRIMA Annual Activity Report 2024, Annex 2 and PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input report. Updated on 20/10/2025.

	S1			S2	S3			Leverage
	EU actual used amounts for projects	**EU actual used administrative amounts**	***Sub-total (a)***	**(b)**	**PSIAs**	**Others**	**Sub-total (c)**	**(b+c)/a**
2018	280,153	801,762	*1,081,915*	0	5,730,002	734,723	*6,464,725*	**5.98**
2019	11,186,367	1,269,655	*12,456,022*	7,358,862	20,054,848	415,078	*20,469,926*	**2.23**
2020	16,652,199	1,177,862	*17,830,061*	11,230,136	13,959,921	72,842	*1,468,763*	**1.42**
2021	26,404,183	1,330,637	*27,734,820*	12,122,019	33,881,474	4,000	*33,885,474*	**1.66**
2022	27,188,356	1,430,355	*28,618,711*	28,455,284	18,351,949	5,363	*18,357,312*	**1.64**
2023	27,076,195	1,460,129	*28,536,324*	25,528,338	2,209,020	0	*2,209,020*	**0.97**
2024	32,683,085	1,589,187	*34,272,272*	29,250,100	20,232,917	13,552	*20,246,469*	**1.44**
Total	***141,470,538***	***9,059,587***	***150,530,125***	***114,130,866***	***114,420,131***	***1,245,558***	***115,665,689***	***1.53***

Note: The EU contribution is based on the amounts that the EU has provided to PRIMA, *actually* used for administrative costs, evaluations and monitoring, and payments to projects. This includes operational cost disbursed for monitoring and evaluation of projects and all the payments done (within the natural year) to all the beneficiaries involved, and the administrative budget which are the running cost of the foundation for its daily activities (e.g. salaries, missions, offices supplies, external services). Therefore, subtotal (a) means that PRIMA has spent EUR 150,530,125 out of the EU financial contribution received until 31/12/2024 (EUR 157,587,000). The leverage for 2018 is misleading: there were no payments to projects yet, but costs to carry-out the first evaluations and to build the PRIMA-IS administration.

Table A.10: Matchmaking EU vs. PRIMA-PS contributions, in-kind and in-cash, based on disbursed amounts. Sources: PRIMA Annual Activity Report 2024 - Annex 2, and PRIMA Interim Evaluation Input report. Updated on 20/10/2025.

AWP	Financial contributions EU	Financial contributions PS	In-kind contributions S2 + additional costs	In-kind contributions S3
2018	19,150,000	23,921,554.63	410,149.34	6,464,725.30
2019	29,900,000	21,920,366.96	445,527.00	20,469,926.00
2020	31,747,000	24,080,980.95	697,579.25	14,032,763.10
2021	31,585,000	20,519,299.84	877,518.48	33,885,474.00
2022	21,685,000	14,685,819.84	706,069.73	18,357,312.00
2023	21,685,000	9,002,843.22	811,756.20	2,209,020.00
2024	1,835,000	-	468,235.04	20,246,468.61
Sub-Total in cash or in-kind 2018-2023	**155,752,000**	**114,130,865.44**	**3,948,599.98**	**95,419,220.40**
Sub-Total in cash or in-kind 2018-2024	**157,587,000**	**114.130.865.44**	**4,416,835.02**	**115,665,689.01**

Note: The financial contribution of PRIMA-PS in 2024 will only be reported in the financial cycle 2026 once certified by national authorities. Until 2024, included, and under Section 3, which is devoted to Participating State Initiated Activities (PSIAs) and complementary national efforts aligned with PRIMA objectives, PRIMA-PS contributed with EUR 115.67 million in certified in-kind support, monitored by the PRIMA Secretariat and external evaluators. In addition, PRIMA-PS supported the establishment and early functioning of the PRIMA Secretariat with EUR 1.06 million in cash (membership fees and office rent) and EUR 212,000 in in-kind staff secondments, prior to the availability of EU administrative funding. (Source: PRIMA, *Interim Evaluation Input Report*, *op.cit*, p. 16).