Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

PUBLIC

Brussels, 13 March 2026

WK 4024/2026 INIT

LIMITE

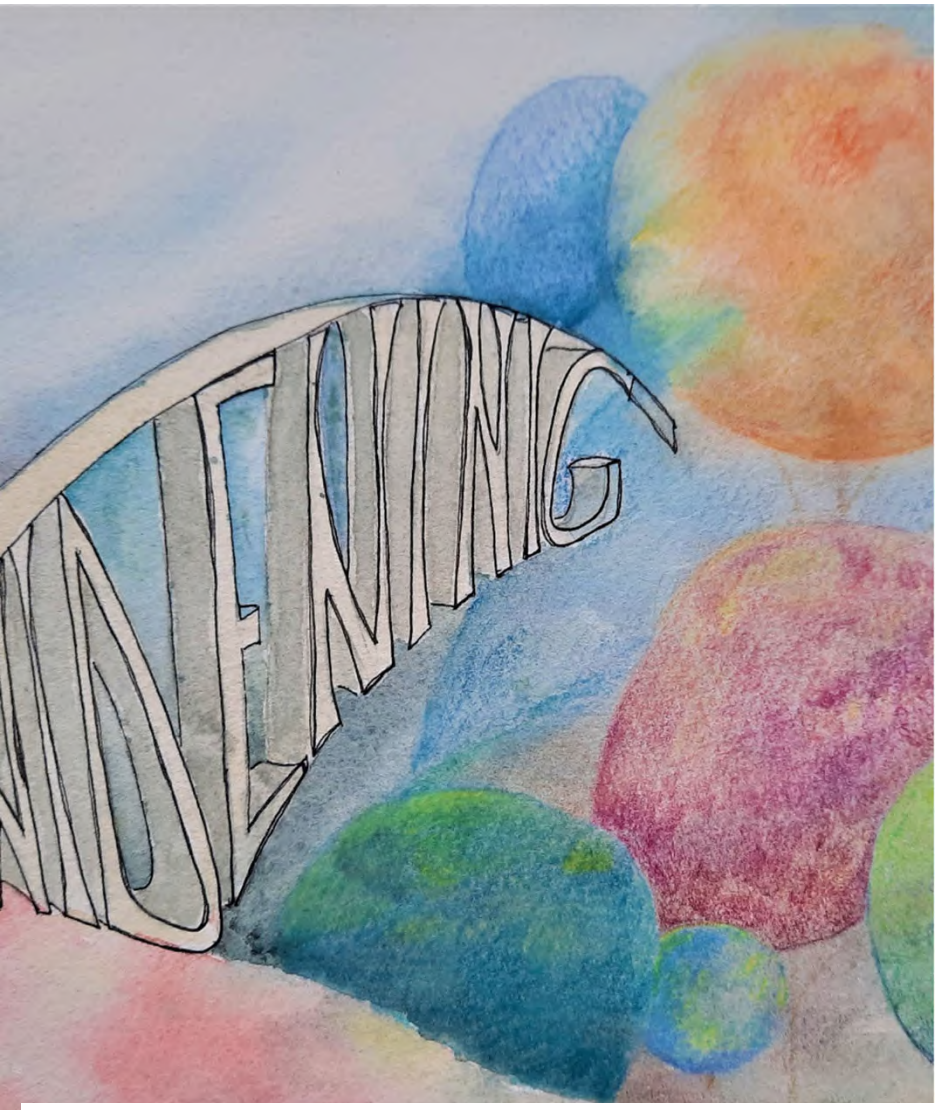
RECH

This is a paper intended for a specific community of recipients. Handling and further distribution are under the sole responsibility of community members.

MEETING DOCUMENT

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Working Party on Research
Subject:	Widening implementation under Horizon Europe 2021-2027 - PowerPoint presentation

Delegations will find attached a PowerPoint presentation from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject with a view to the Research Working Party Meeting on 16 March 2026.



Painting by B.Mester

PUBLIC

Widening implementation under Horizon Europe 2021-2027

16 March 2026

Spreading excellence and widening participation
Principles and background

PUBLIC

- **Ringfenced budget for the widening component of the programme, with eligibility as coordinator limited to legal entities from widening countries.**
- **Legal entities from other countries eligible as partners in most of the calls (except mono-beneficiary actions).**
- **The excellence principle of the framework programme applies also to the widening component:**
  - ➔ Fully competitive calls and evaluations;
  - ➔ No national envelopes or any form of geographical balancing;
  - ➔ Only exception: geographical ex-aquo criteria apply at the threshold of being funded.

European Commission

Spreading excellence and widening participation
Progress of the widening Member States

PUBLIC

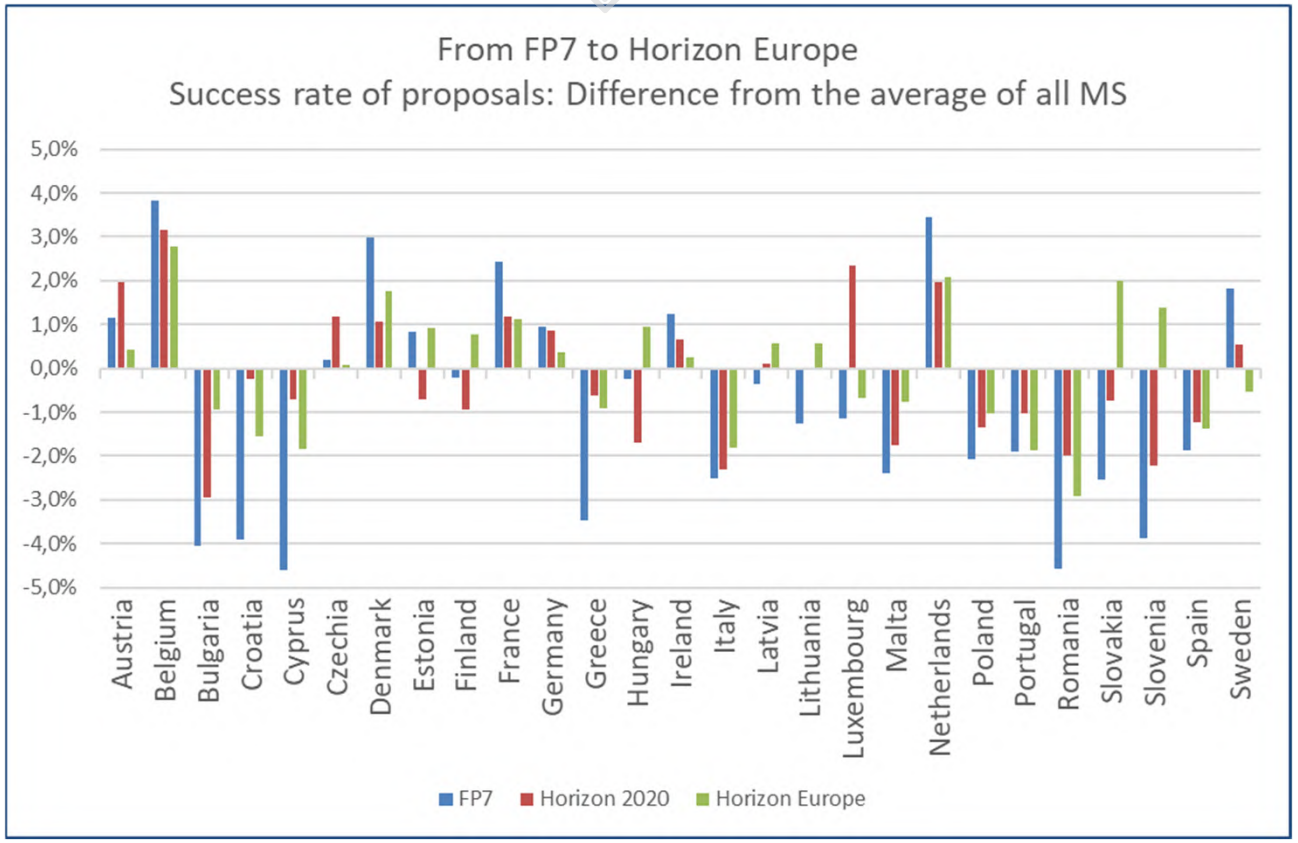
		FP7	Horizon 2020	Horizon Europe
HEU Widening Member States	Share of participation among EU27	16,6%	17,6%	24,1%
	Share of Union contribution among EU27	10,2%	12,0%	14,8%
HEU non-widening Member States	Share of participation among EU27	83,4%	82,4%	75,9%
	Share of Union contribution among EU27	89,8%	88,0%	85,2%

European Commission

Success rates are in general converging well

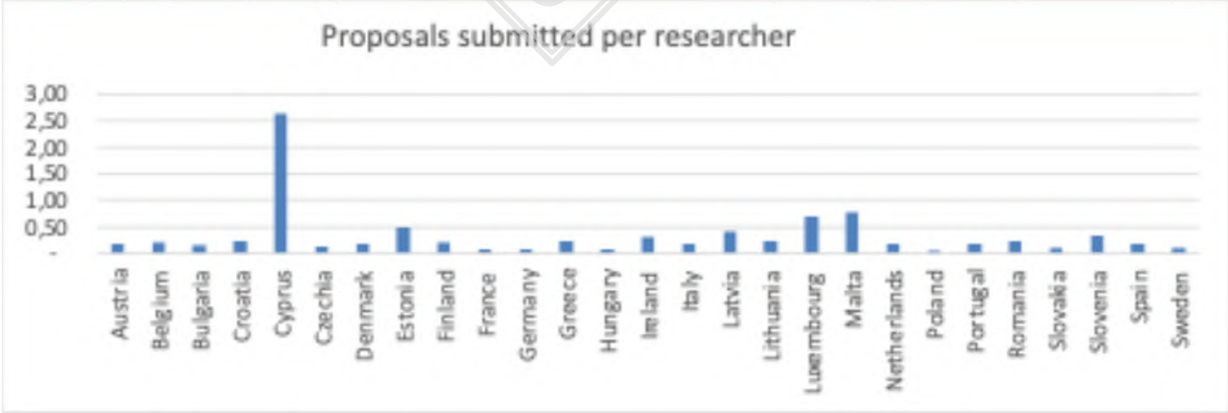
PUBLIC

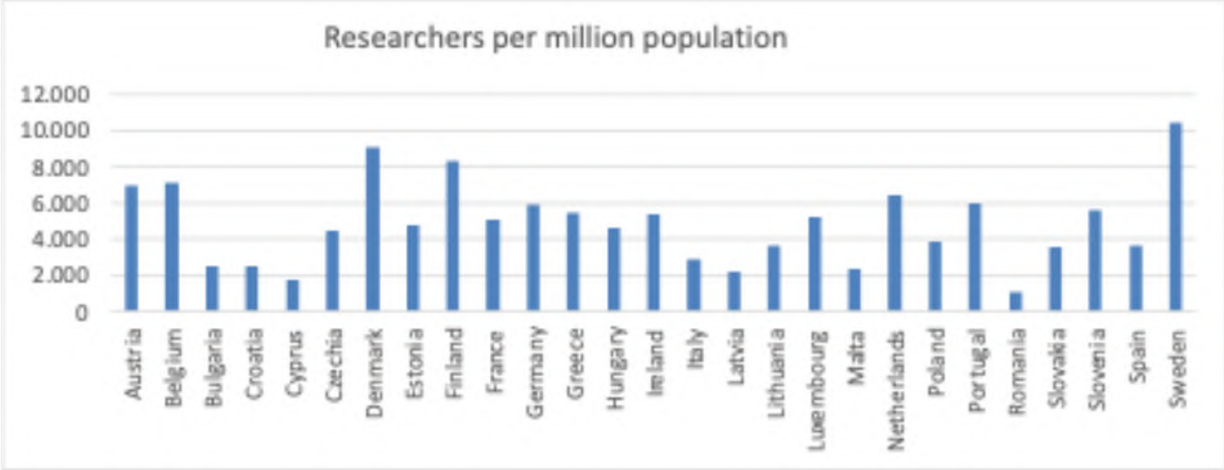
- The average success rates are converging (18,6% vs. 19,6%)
- In comparison: Success rate Widening MS under H2020: 13,1%.
- Seven of the widening MS are above the average in Horizon Europe.
- The programme parts that show the strongest difference in average success rates are the ERC (6,8% vs. 15,0%), followed by the EIC (7,9% vs. 14,2%).



More successful participation depends on increasing the number of proposal submissions, as demonstrated by several widening Member States

- Significant differences in the number of proposals submitted per researcher.
- An important number of widening Member States having low submissions.
- Share of submission from widening MS 25,2 % of all MS submissions.
- Substantially higher, with 30%, in the second pillar.
- Lowest in the ERC (13%) and EIC accelerator (16%).





Newcomers, Closed Clubs and Seal of Excellence

PUBLIC

- **Horizon Europe attracts newcomers, in particular from the widening Member States.**
  The share of newcomers from widening Member States is with 52,4% higher than the share for the non-widening Member States (48,6%). They also represent a higher share of the EU contribution allocated.

- **Closed clubs?**
  Increased participation of widening Member States in collaborative projects!
  The share of collaborative projects involving widening countries has increased significantly since FP7 and reaches now on average 80% (FP7: around 50%). Major EU member states maintain a central role in steering consortia and setting research agendas, yes, there is a clear evolving participation of Widening countries, and lower dependence on non-Widening countries to initiate collaborations.

- **Seal of Excellence facilitates synergies**
  More than 40 national and/or regional Seal support schemes,
  including ERDF programmes, having been set up in most Member States.

European Commission

Relevance of programme parts

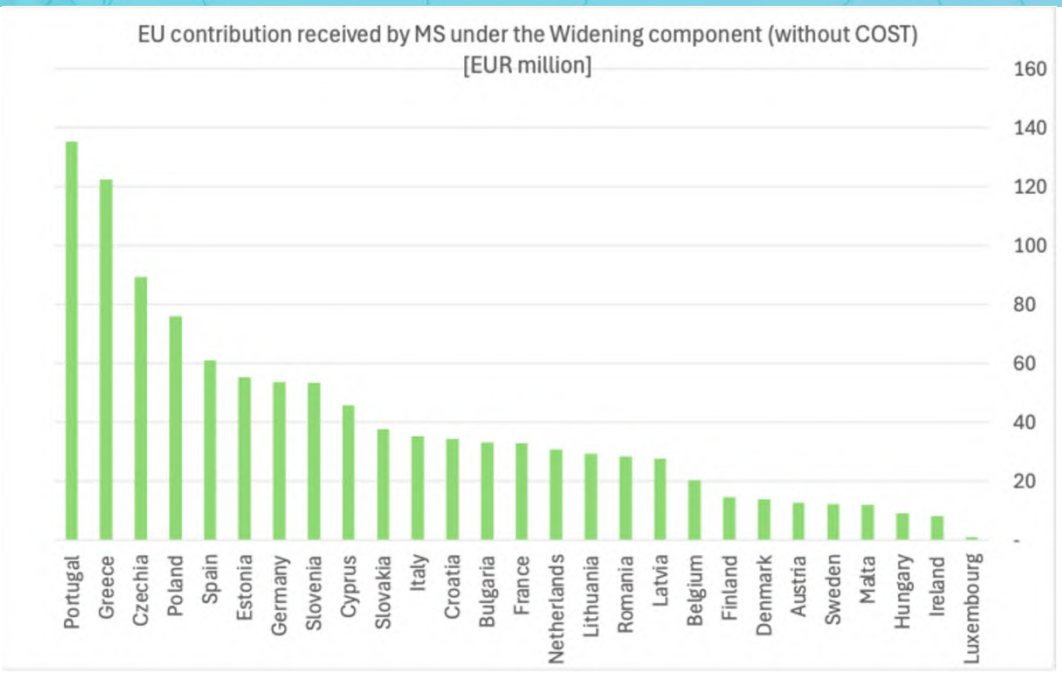
- The widening part is an important, but minor component for the participation of Widening MS.
- Pillar 2 with the collaborative projects is the main area of participation for widening MS, with 27,7% of all MS participations, and 16,8% of the Union Contribution among MS.



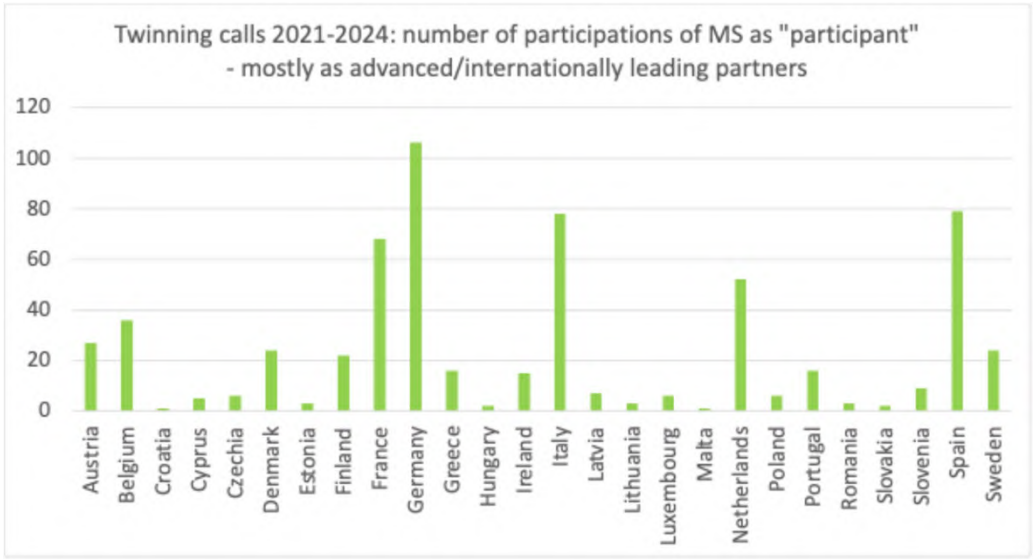
PUBLIC

Participation in the widening component

PUBLIC

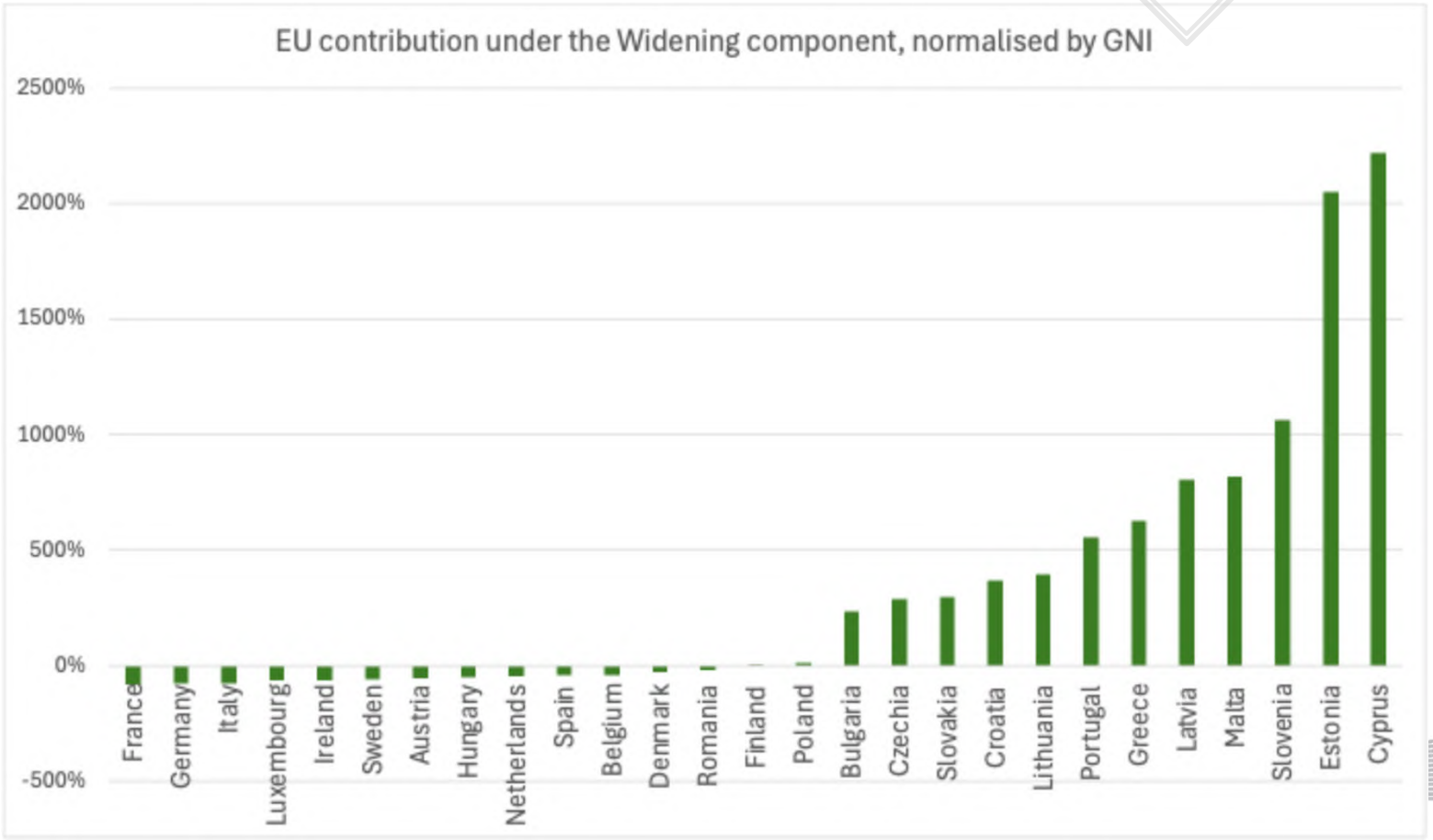


Under preparation: survey for Twinning and Teaming coordinators and participants on the contributions from and benefits for "internationally leading partners".



- All MS participate in the widening component by providing expertise and receiving funding.
- Example Twinning projects: international leading partners across all MS.

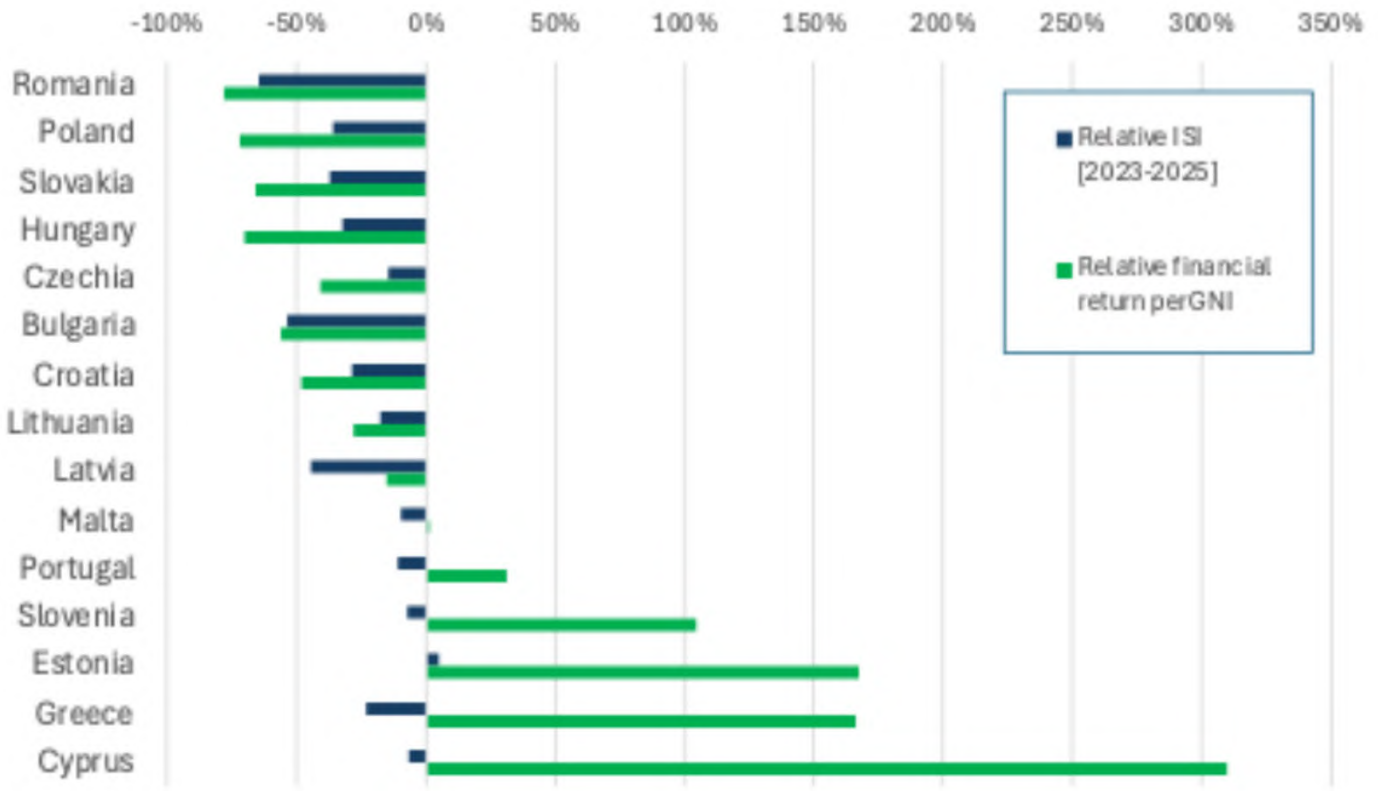
Participation in the widening component



PUBLIC

European Commission

Widening Member States: Innovation performance and participation success under Horizon Europe



PUBLIC

European Commission

Status of implementation: Widening Horizon Europe

PUBLIC

Type of action (selected, excluding NCP and smaller one-off calls)	**Estimated budget** (2021-2027) [Euro million]	**Estimated number of actions** (2021-2027)
Teaming: building/upgrading centres of excellence	624	48
Twinning: collaboration with top-class leading counterparts	554	410
ERA Chairs: Top researchers build up a research team	352	157
ERA Research Managers: Top research managers build up RM capacities	65	30
ERA Fellowships: funding MSCA Post-doc reserve list proposals	56	350
ERA Talents: supporting intersectoral mobility	64	32
Excellence Hubs: linking two ecosystems (quadruple-helix)	210	52
European Excellence Initiative: Institutional transformation HEIs	164	62
Hop-on Facility: Adding a widening partner to a collaborative project	190	390
EIC Pre-accelerator: boost innovation potential of deep-tech startups	60	150
COST: European Cooperation in Science and Technology	393	1

Teaming

PUBLIC

Objective: development of new, or the modernisation of existing Centres of Excellence (CoE), together with internationally leading partner institutions. National complementary funding is required from the outset upon presentation of the proposal.

Budget: Typically, EUR 15 million EU contribution + at least equal amounts of complementary funding (per project)

Achievements:

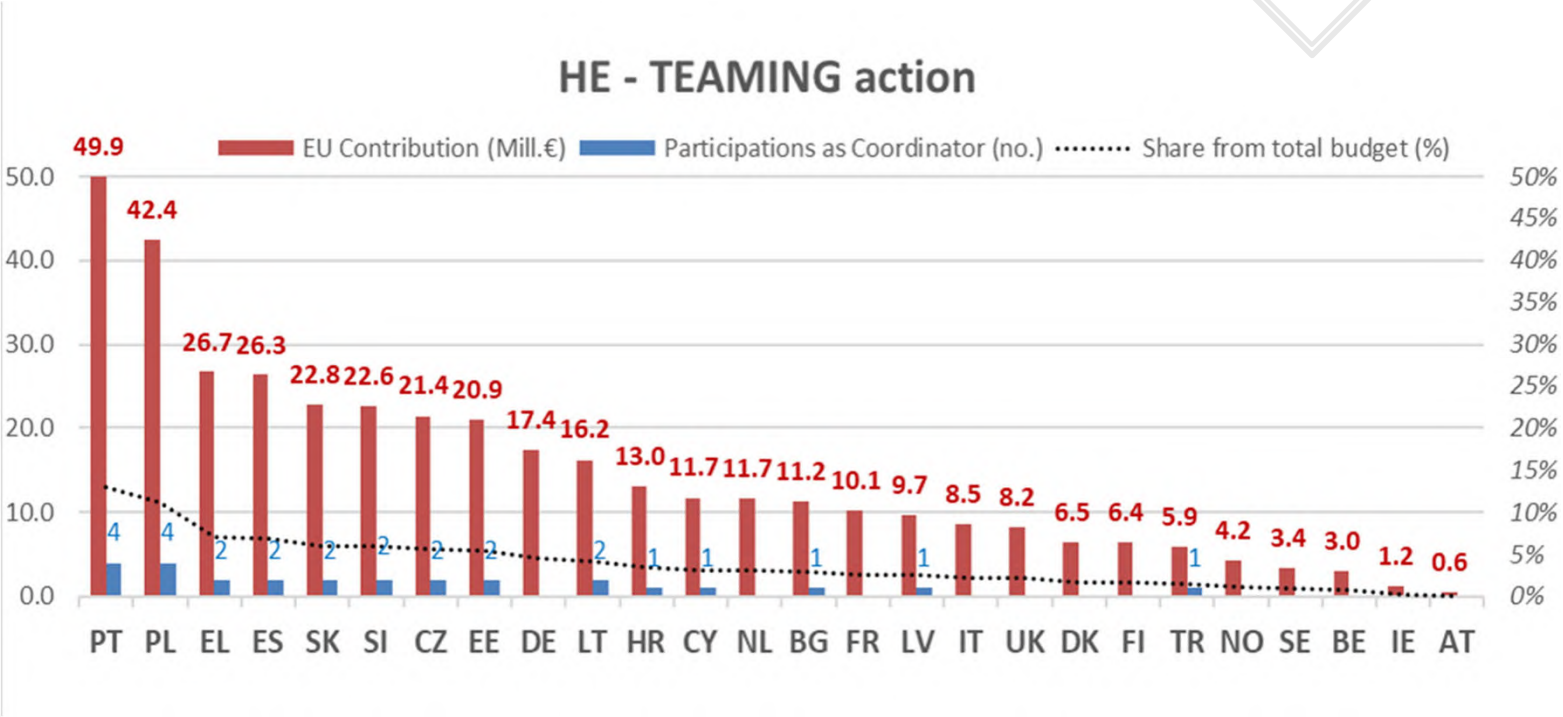
- CoE turn autonomous and sustainable, becoming main actors in their R&I system;
- Most successful measure in scale and scope to increase the R&I capacity in Widening countries;
- Strong international visibility and connectivity;
- Attracting more competitive research funding from regional, national, EU and private resources.

Calls (2-stage):
2021/2: EUR 180 million
2023/4: EUR 174 million
2025/6: EUR 270 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 48

GATE **project in Bulgaria** establishes the 'BiG DAta for SmarT SociEty' CoE in Bulgaria (2019-2026, EU contribution EUR 14,9 million First Big Data and AI CoE in Central and Eastern Europe. The business models provide stable revenue streams to ensure independence from public funding.

Teaming

PUBLIC



- Improved geographical balance: now almost all current Widening Member States have at least one Teaming project (except for Malta and Romania).
- Current call is under evaluation, results expected in April 2026.
- Participation of "transition MS" in the current call: 40% of eligible proposals stage 1, 58% of proposals invited to stage 2.

European Commission

Twinning

PUBLIC

Objective: collaboration between the research institutions of Widening countries, acting as coordinators, and top-class leading counterparts at European/international level.

Budget: EUR 0.8-1.5 million (per project)

Achievements:

- Highly effective scheme in terms of networking, knowledge transfer and acquisition of new skills in international project management by Widening partners;
- Raising the research profile of the research institution in the Widening country;
- Strong focus on emerging areas.

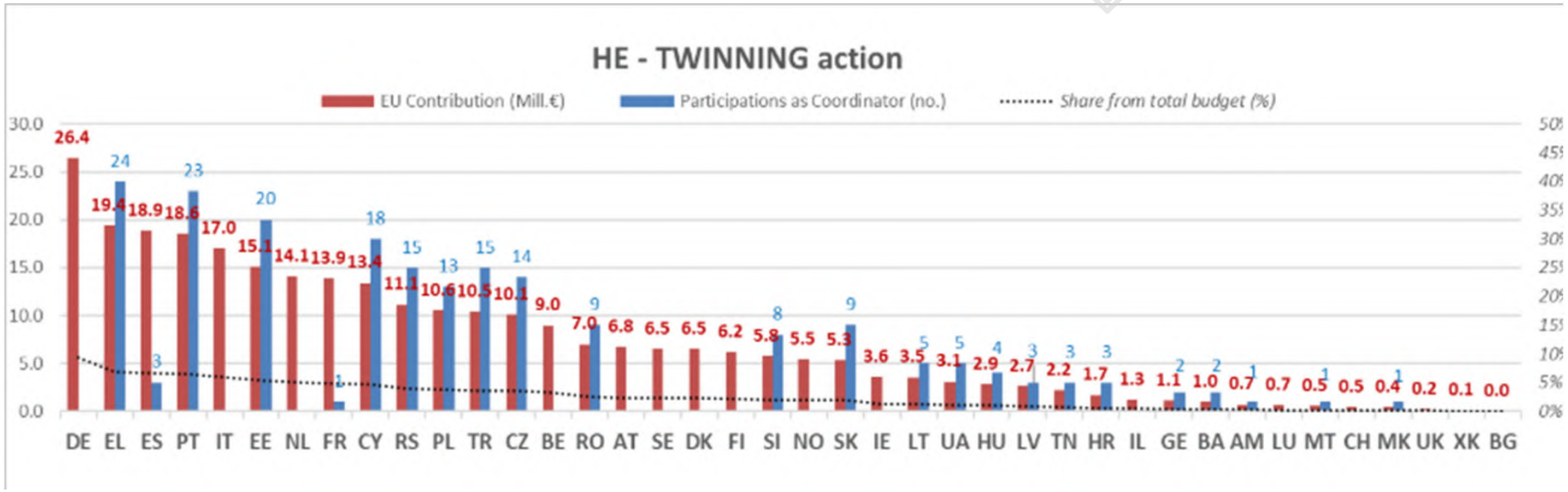
Calls:
2022: EUR 149 million
2023: EUR 140 million
2026: EUR 264,5 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 410

PREDICTOS **project in Portugal** aims at the exploration and development of innovative solutions for an improved treatment of osteosarcoma, a tumor affecting the youngest, with lower cure success (2023-2025, EU contribution EUR 1,375 million).

European Commission

Twinning

PUBLIC



- All Widening MS coordinate twinning projects.
- Current call deadline 9 April; call evaluation results by the end of July 2026.

European Commission

ERA Chairs

PUBLIC

Objective: attracting high-level researchers to Widening universities or research centres, with the objective of establishing research teams fully integrated in the coordinators' institution to significantly improve research performance in a scientific domain of choice.

Budget: EUR 1.5-2.5 million (per project).

Achievements:

- Increased level of research excellence of the local research teams: better and more impactful research results, expanded international scientific networks, raised institutional visibility.

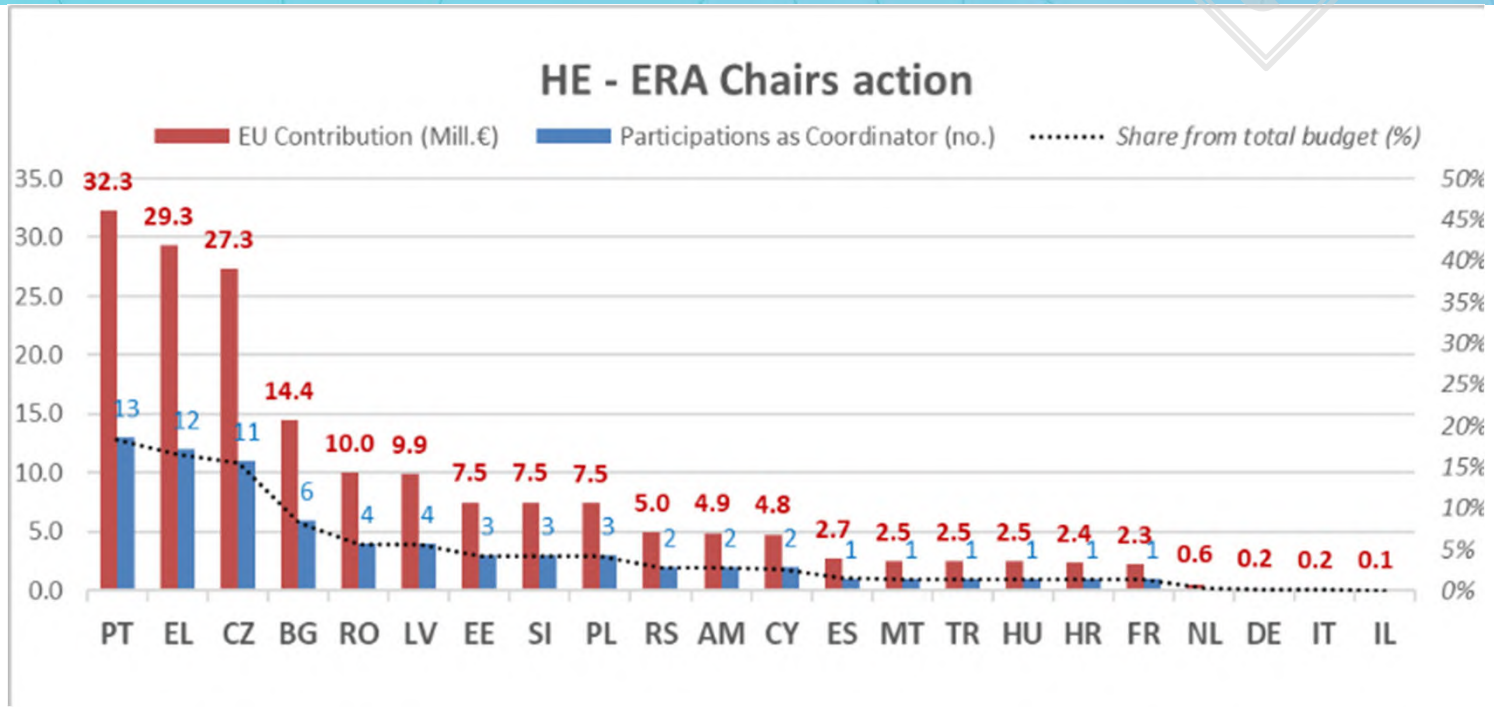
Calls:
2022: EUR 80 million
2024: EUR 97 million
2027: EUR 175 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 157

CETE-P project in Czechia establishes the Centre for Environmental and Technology Ethics in Prague (2023-2027, EU contribution EUR 2,235 million) with the mission of advancing state-of-the-art knowledge in environmental and technology ethics.

European Commission

ERA Chairs

PUBLIC



- All Widening MS coordinate ERA Chairs projects.
- Next call opening in April 2027 – two call topics (ERA Chairs and ERA Research Managers)

European Commission

ERA Fellowships

PUBLIC

Objective: builds on the MSCA PF action by focusing on host institutions in Widening countries.

Achievements:

- Simplified procedure and additional funding opportunity for applicants;
- Countering brain drain and boosting talents for R&I;
- Increased global attractiveness, visibility and reputation of host institutions;
- Noticeable improvement in the quality of proposals.

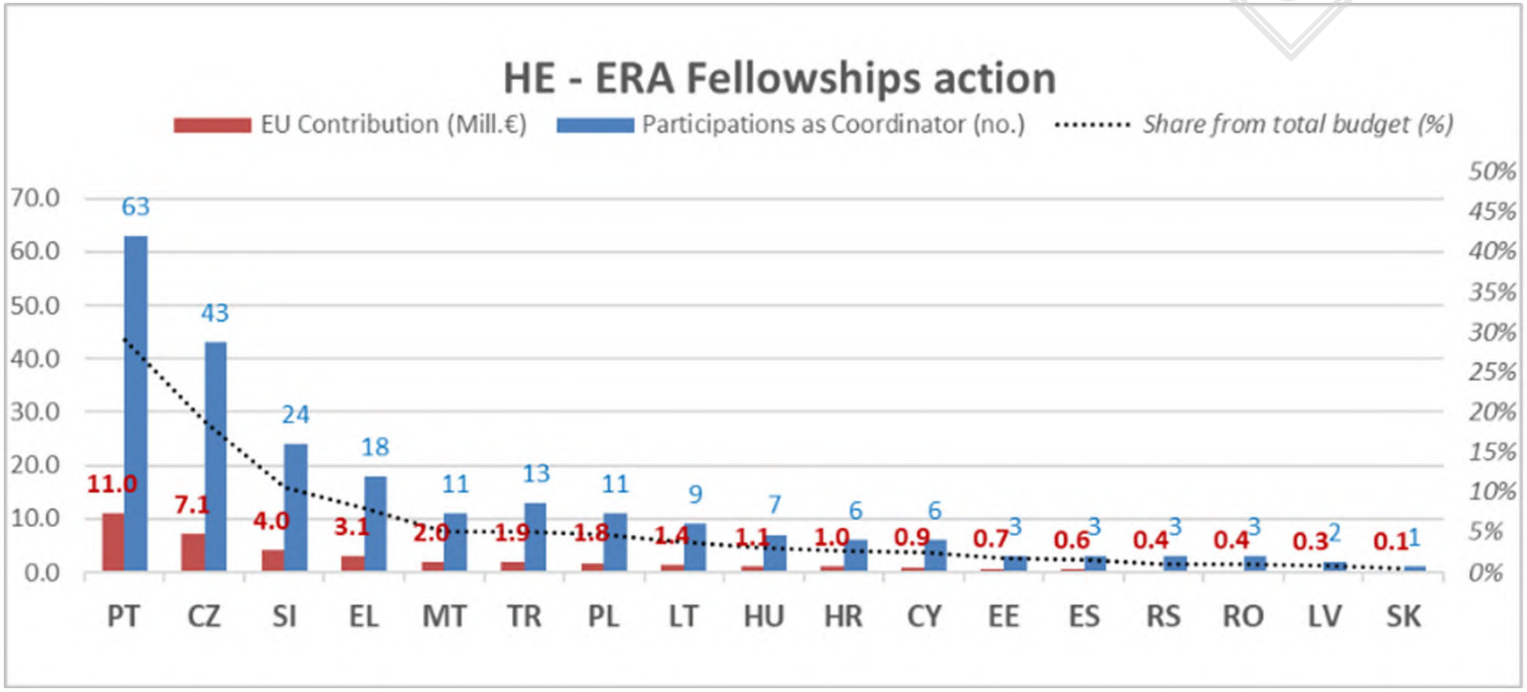
Calls:
Annual calls: EUR 8 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 350

e-gainstRapeDrugs **project in Poland** (2023-25, EU contribution EUR 140.000) responds to an alarming problem – use of Benzodiazepines (sedative drugs) for sexual assault. The project aims to develop a sensor for the detection of benzodiazepines to prevent social crimes.

European Commission

ERA Fellowships

PUBLIC



- All Widening MS, except BG, have at least one ERA Fellowship grant
- Constant increase of interest (88% increase in the 2025 call compared to 2024); 2026 call opening in April.

European Commission

ERA Talents

PUBLIC

Objective: boosting interoperability of careers and employability of R&I talents across sectors, complementing ERA Chairs with intersectoral mobility.

Budget: EUR 1-3 million (per project)

Achievements:

- Effective instrument in bridging the gap between academia and business through intersectoral circulation of talents.
- Challenges: legal, administrative, practical; risks of overlaps with MSCA.

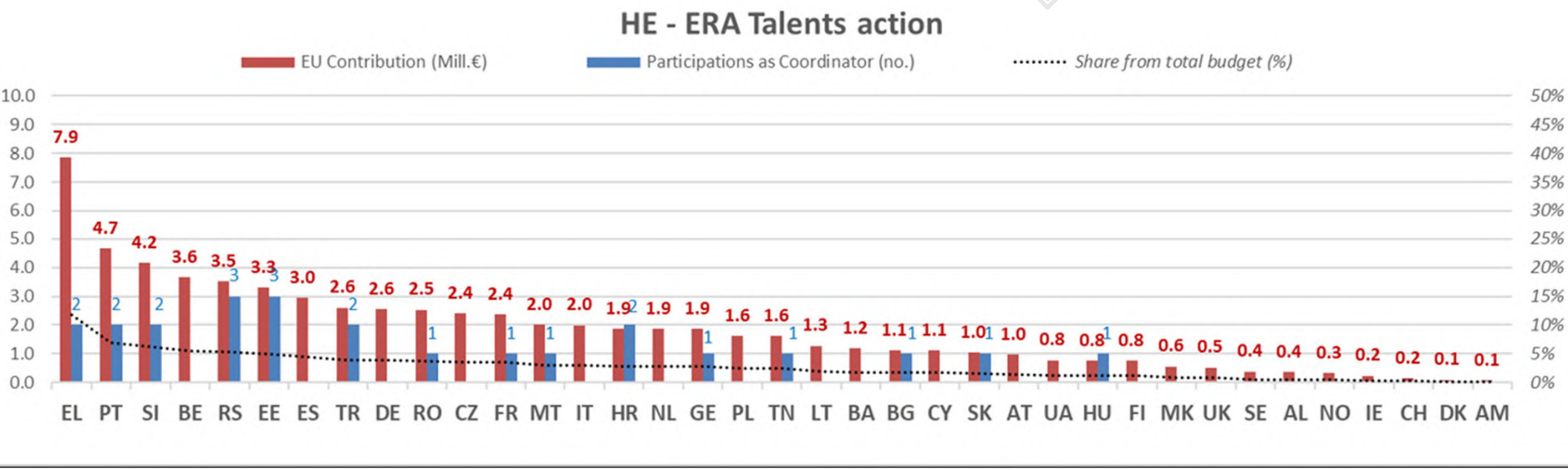
Calls:
2022: EUR 24 million
2024: EUR 40 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 32

TBrainBoost project in Slovenia (2023-27, EU contribution EUR 1,932 million) is committed to enhancing international and intersectoral mobility and fostering cooperation between academia and businesses in the field of healthy ageing.

European Commission

ERA Talents

PUBLIC



- Geographically balanced participation.
- Discontinued - no further calls in 2026-2027.

European Commission

Excellence Hubs

PUBLIC

Objective: innovation-oriented initiative; supports the development and cooperation of place-based innovation ecosystems in Widening countries and beyond, based on the quadruple helix model.

Budget: EUR 1.5-4.5 million (per project)

Achievements:

- Strengthening research collaborations
- Creating place-based innovation ecosystems

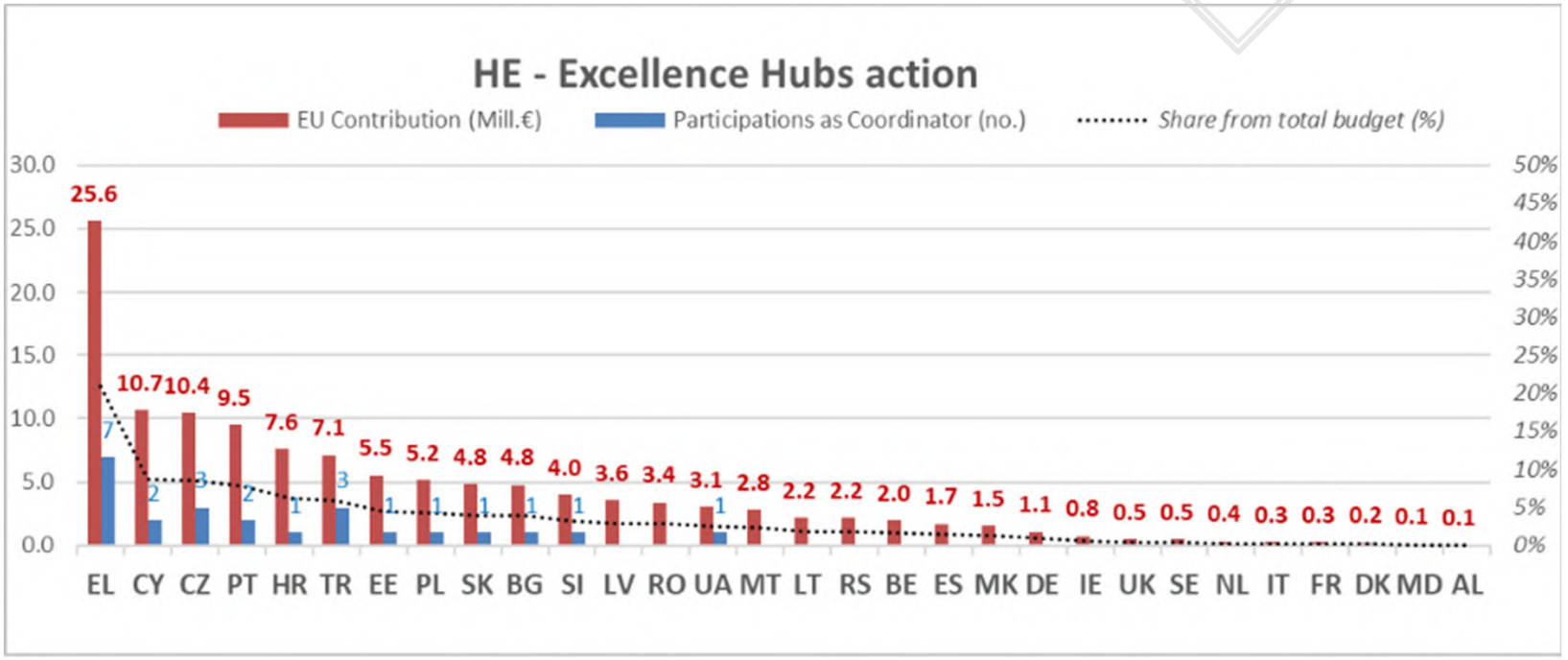
Calls:
2022: EUR 50 million
2024: EUR 60 million
2027: EUR 100 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 52

CARBONICA project in Greece establishes an Excellence Hub connecting the innovation ecosystems of CY, EL and MK (2023-26, EU contribution 4,98 million EUR) with the goal to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

European Commission

Excellence Hubs

PUBLIC



- New measure under Horizon Europe, attracts major interest.
- 2026 call opens in September, with increased budget and 70% funding rate.

European Commission

European Excellence Initiative

PUBLIC

Objective: aims at the transformation of the higher education sector and its close ecosystems, including non-university research centres

Budget: EUR 2-5 million (per project)

Achievements:

- Establishes partnerships amongst universities to foster transformation and modernisation processes, in particular for smaller institutions
- Fosters cross-border and interdisciplinary collaboration;

However

- concerns over double funding / overlaps with other programmes;
- Initially designed to support European University Alliances, but very limited uptake.

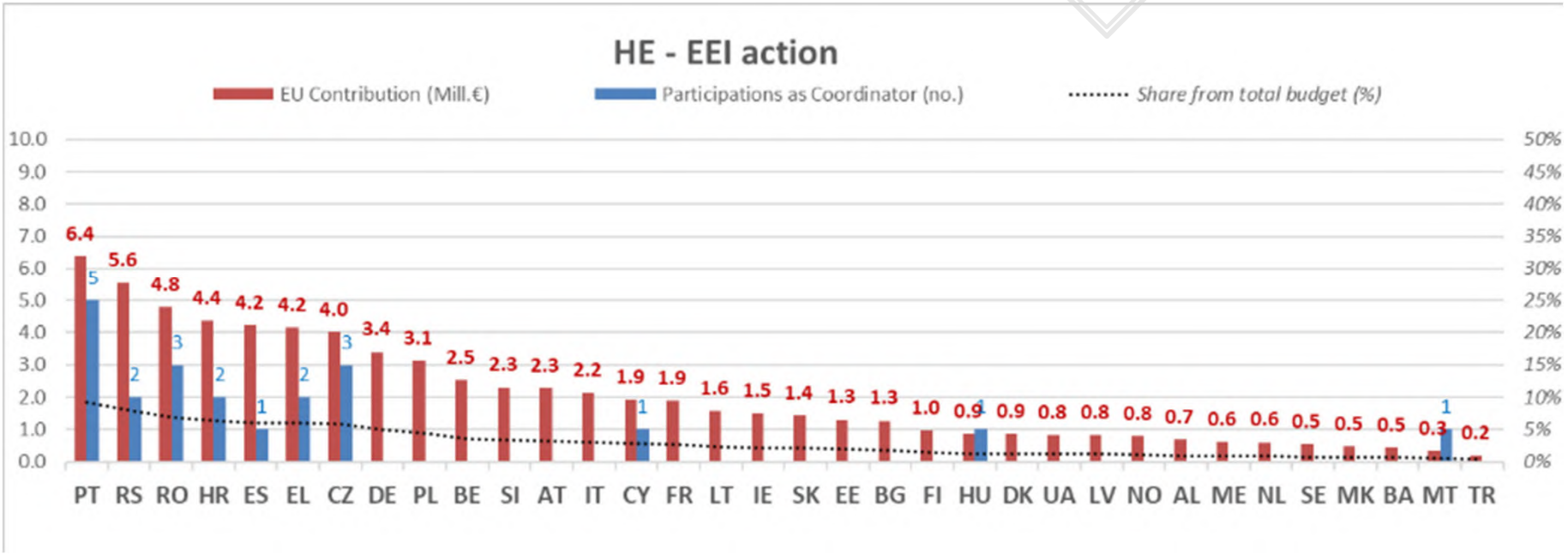
Calls:
2021: EUR 30 million
2023: EUR 54 million
2025: EUR 80 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 62

INITIATE **project in Croatia** aims to empower universities (HR, MK, PT) and transform them into dynamic hubs of R&I activity (2024-27, EU contribution EUR 4,57 million). The goal is to create a roadmap for sustainable R&I uptake, underpinned by institutional reform and a culture of scientific excellence.

European Commission

European Excellence Initiative

PUBLIC



- New under Horizon Europe;
- 2025 call oversubscribed (466% increase compared to the previous call). Results to be communicated in March.
- Discontinued – no further calls planned.

European Commission

Hop-On Facility

PUBLIC

Objective: enables a legal entity from Widening country to join ongoing collaborative RIA project under Pillar 2 or the EIC Pathfinder that does not yet have a partner from any Widening country in the consortium.

Budget: EUR 0.2 - 0.6 million (per project)

Achievements:

- Opening up networks;
- Additional benefits for the consortia (know-how);
- High interest for the EIC pathfinder (> 40%).

However

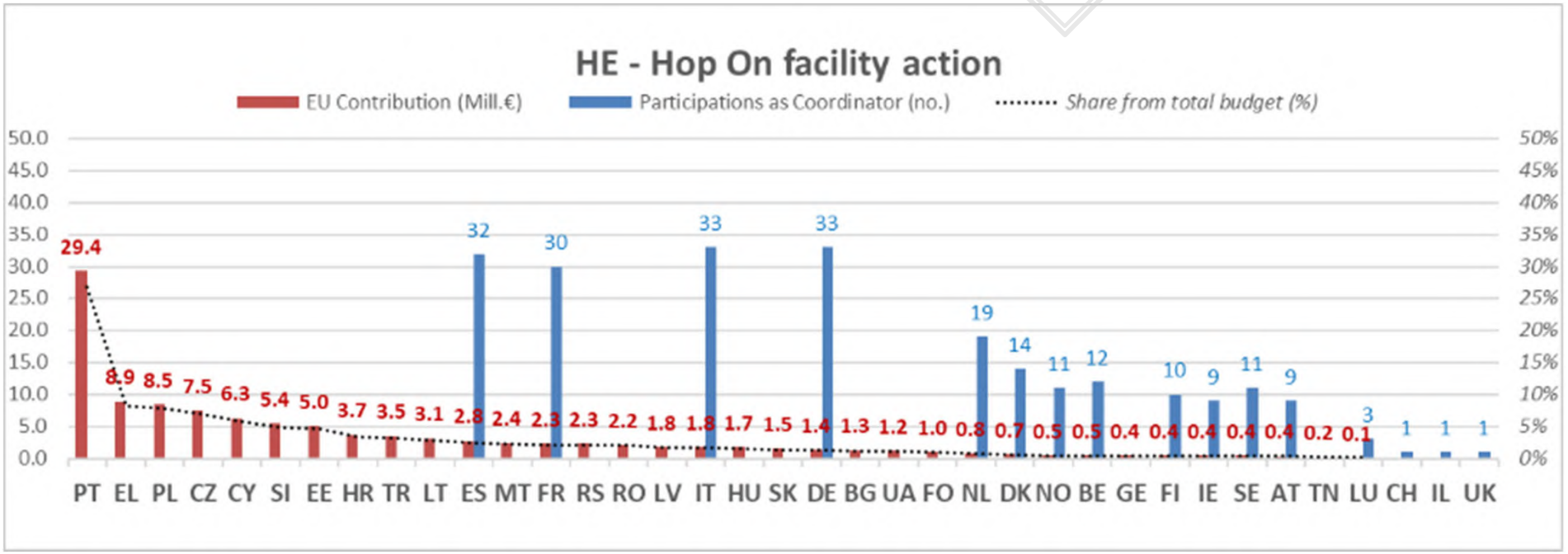
- Concerns over real *fit-for-purpose* – multiple drawbacks;
- Only 7% are newcomers to Horizon Europe;
- Most beneficiaries are already experienced under Horizon Europe, with 75% participating more than 5 times.

Calls:
2022: EUR 40 million
2023: EUR 40 million
2024: EUR 40 million
2025: EUR 40 million
2026: EUR 30 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 390

Number of legal entities	Frequency of Hop-on participations
105	1
20	2
3	3
8	4
1	5
2	6
1	7
1	8
1	15

Hop-On Facility

PUBLIC



- Geographically unbalanced – a smaller number of countries uses the scheme extensively; most beneficiaries are already experienced under Horizon Europe.
- 2026 call closing on 24 September.
- Discontinued – no further calls planned.

European Commission

EIC Pre-Accelerator

PUBLIC

Objective: Support to early-stage deep-tech startups in Widening countries. Developing the technology, business and investment readiness (TRL 4 to 6). Monobeneficiary action.

Budget: 0.3-0.5 EUR million (2025); 0.5-1 EUR million (2027)

Calls:
2025: EUR 20 million
2027: EUR 40 million
Total number of actions expected to be funded: 150

Status:

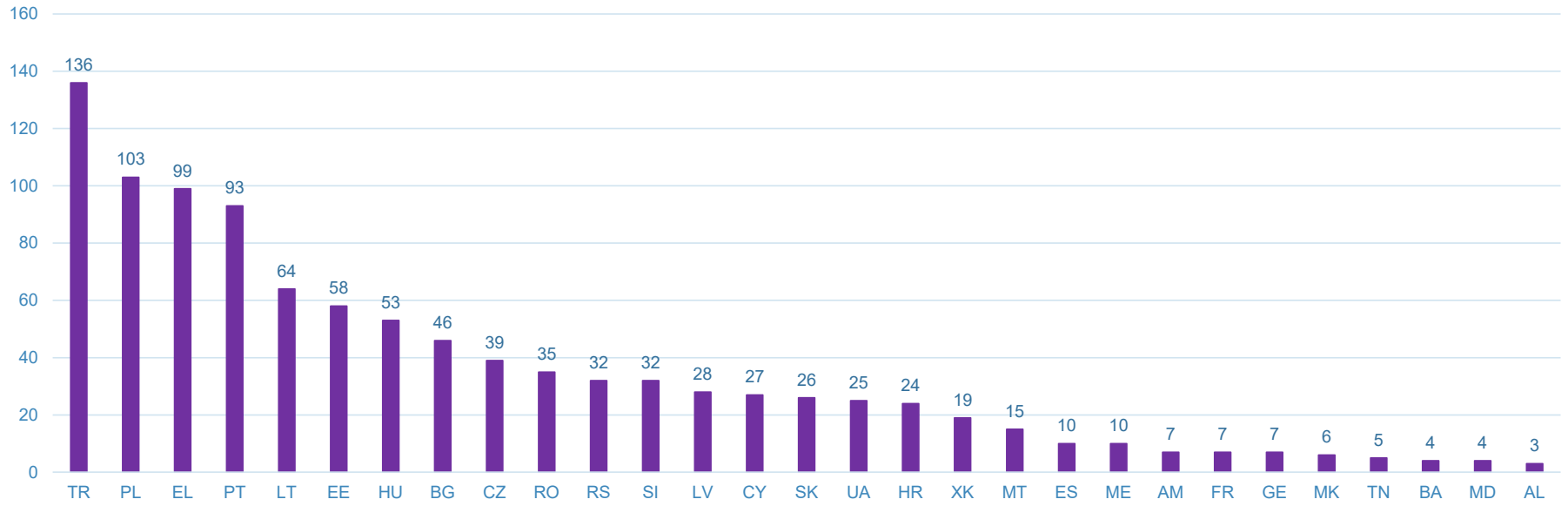
- First call closed on 18 November 2025:
  - Total No. of Submitted Proposals: **1083**
  - Total No. of Eligible Proposals: **1017**
- Total Requested Budget (Eligible Proposals): **€467,072,296.3**

European Commission

EIC Pre-Accelerator

PUBLIC

Submission Statistics: Total Applications per Eligible Country



European Commission

Other actions under the widening component

PUBLIC

- NCP_WIDERA.NET
- Teaming Synergies 2026
- Research Management Facility 2026
- Twinning Western Balkans 2022
- Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility 2023
- Pathway to Synergies 2023
- Support for R&I Policy-Making in the Western Balkans 2021
- Support for R&I Policy-Making in EU Enlargement Countries 2025
- Implementing co-funded action plans for connected regional innovation valleys in Widening countries 2025
- Presidency Conferences (WIRE)



Painting by B.Mester

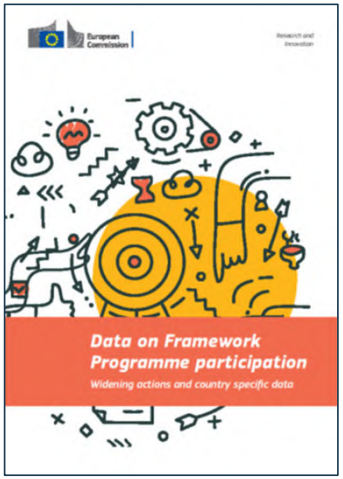
PUBLIC

Many thanks for your interest!

Data sources:

- Horizon dashboard (public version), data extraction March 2026 (slides 3-10)
- REA (slides 13-27) and EISMEA (slide 29)

Reminder: further data on widening:





European Commission