

Innovation Fund

Deploying net zero technologies for climate neutrality

OCEAN ENERGY EUROPE

21 January 2026



Agenda

14:00 – Welcome & introduction –Valentin Dupont, OEE

14:05 – **Presentation of the Innovation Fund –NZT 2025 (CINEA & DG CLIMA)**

- CINEA and its funding programmes
- Policy background – brief overview
- Information on the IF2025 call and updates
- Focus on Pilots projects
- Evaluation process
- Results and learning from previous calls
- Additional Information

14:35 – **Audience questions (CINEA & DG CLIMA)**

14:55 – **Wrap up & Conclusions, OEE**



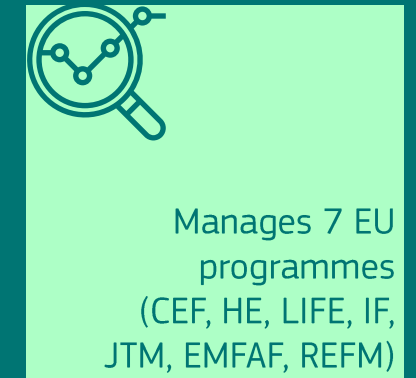
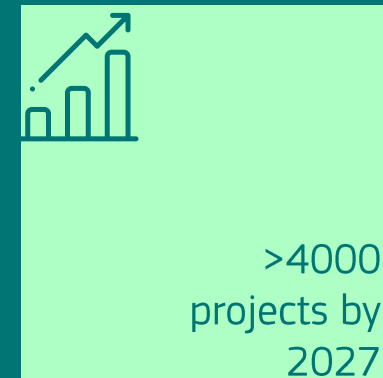
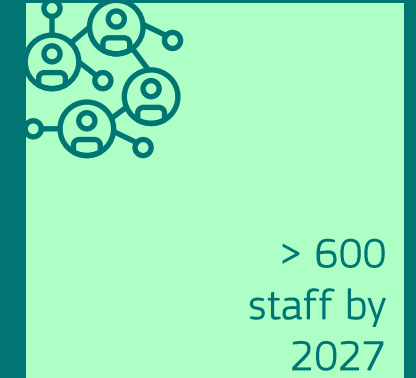
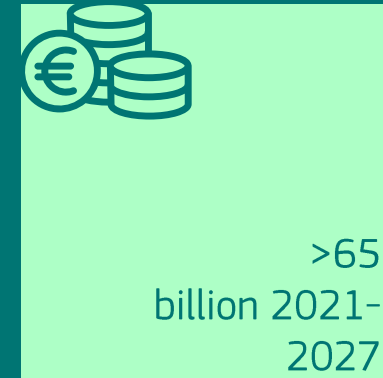
CINEA

the Agency and its funding programmes

Alessia Di Loreto
Project Adviser, CINEA



CINEA – who we are



Funding a green future for Europe



INNOVATION FUND

Deploying innovative net-zero technologies for climate neutrality

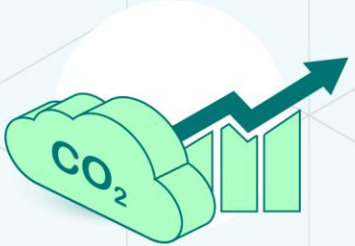
Funded by the EU Emissions Trading System



€40 billion* available between 2020-2030

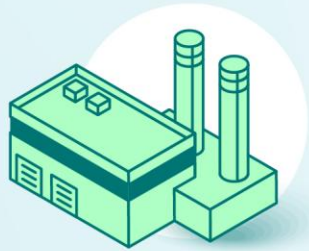


grants awarded through regular calls and auctions



avoid GHG emissions, boost competitiveness

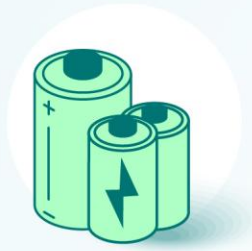
supporting innovation in:



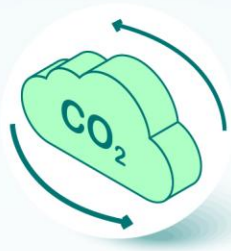
Energy-intensive industries



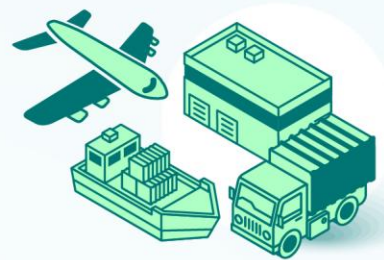
Renewable energy



Energy storage



Carbon capture, use and storage



Net-zero mobility and buildings

*based on a carbon price of €75/tonne

Policy background of IF NZT 25

Lucie Rabier
Policy Officer, CLIMA

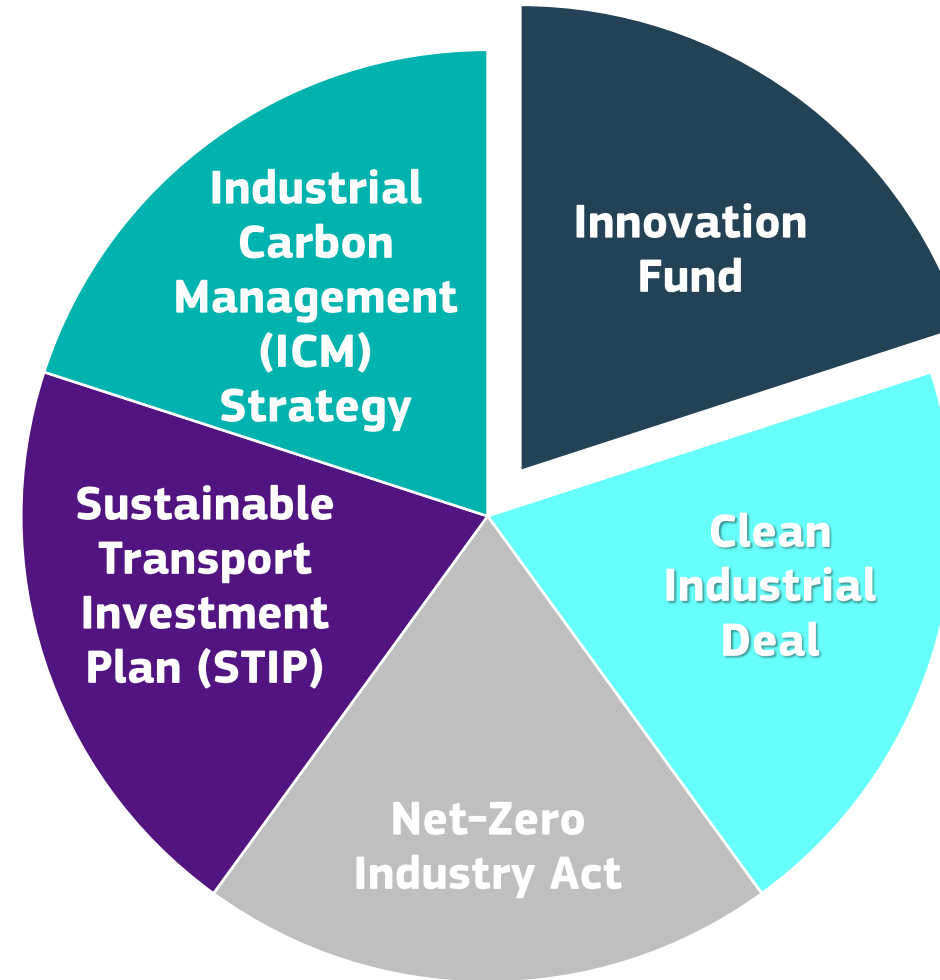


Innovation Fund 2025 - Policy Context

Slido
#IF25NZT



Accelerating political initiatives for industrial competitiveness



Evolution of the Innovation Fund

Adapting to an evolving industrial and political context

2020 - 2022

- Two calls per year
 - Small- & Large-call



Since 2023

- Net-zero call (5 topics)
 - Large, medium and small-scale projects
 - Dedicated budget for **clean-tech manufacturing** and for pilots
 - Raised CAPEX for Small-scale (€20M)
- RFNBO-H₂ auction call
 - **EU H₂ bank**



2024

- Net-zero call (5 topics)
- RFNBO-H₂ auction
 - Topic dedicated maritime
- Battery manufacturing call



2025

- Net-zero call (5 topics)
- Hydrogen Auction
 - For both RFNBO and low carbon H₂
 - Topic dedicated to maritime and *aviation*
- Heat Auction (**new**)

Innovation Fund portfolio

Ongoing projects + Projects from IF24 calls*



276 projects

197 ongoing +
79 under GAP



~€15.8 billion

€11.8 billion allocated
+ €4 billion under GAP



~1 160 MtCO₂e

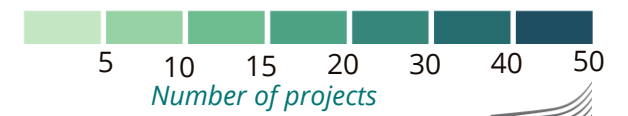
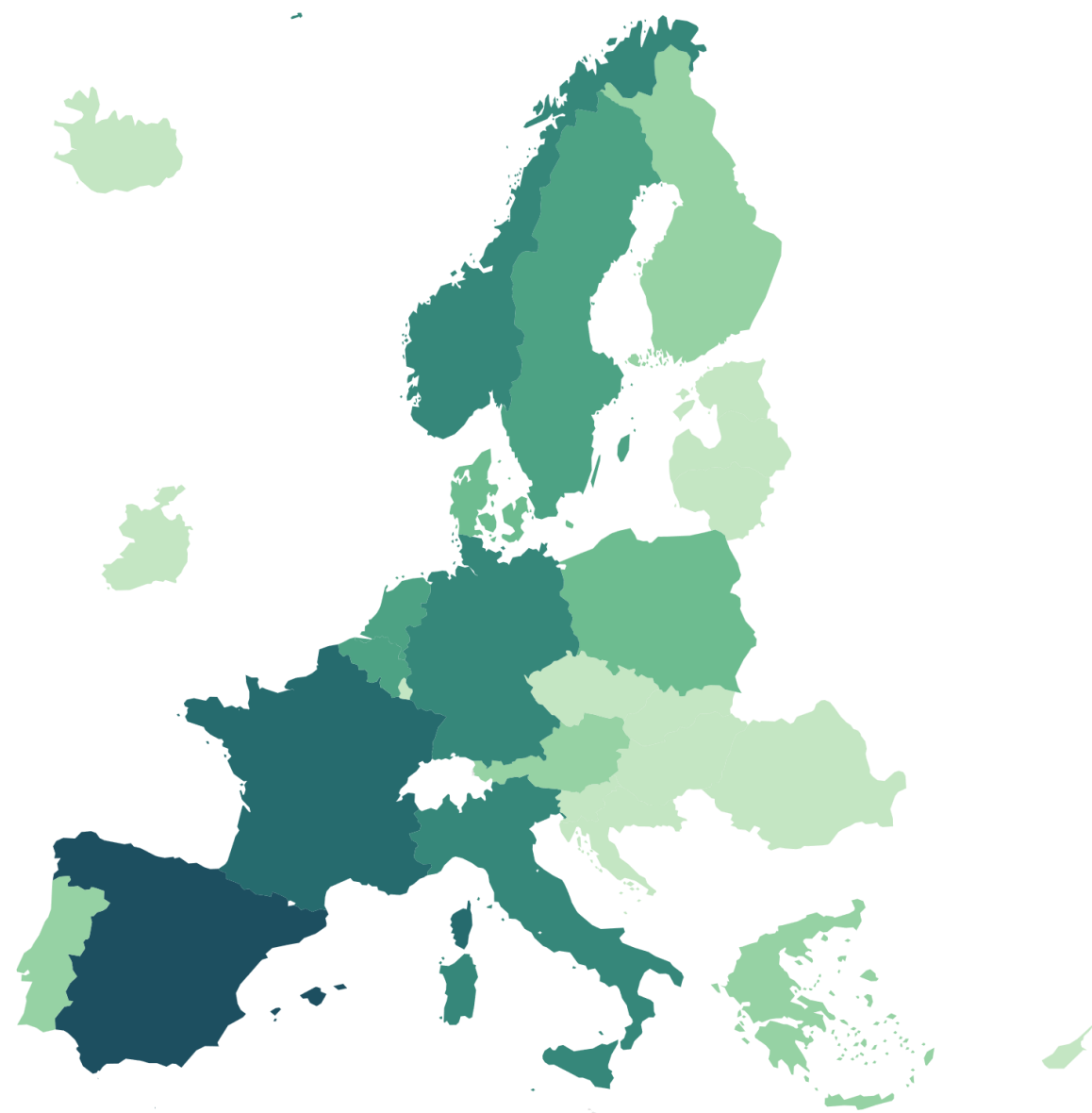
to be avoided



28

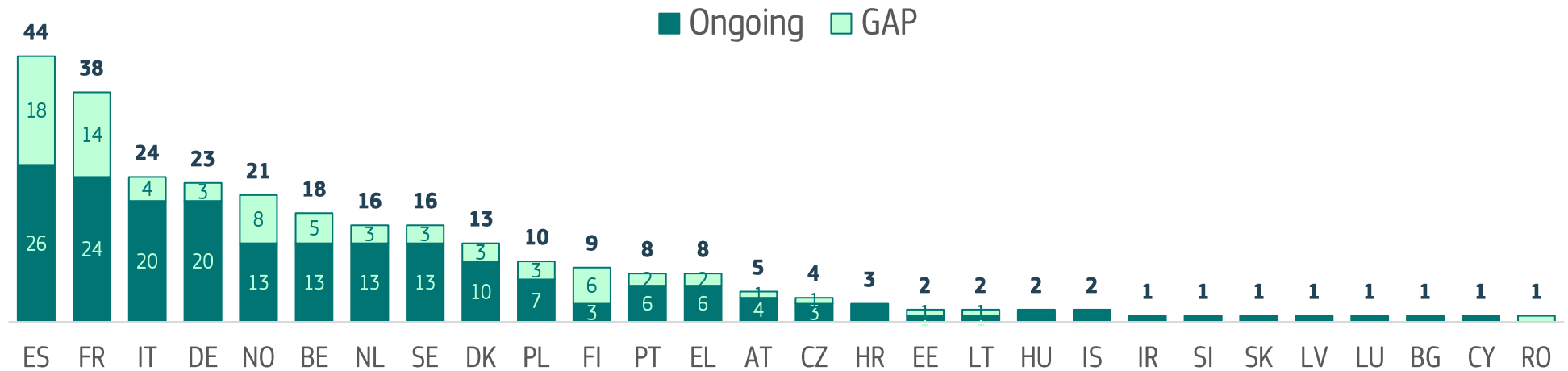
countries

New country in portfolio: Romania

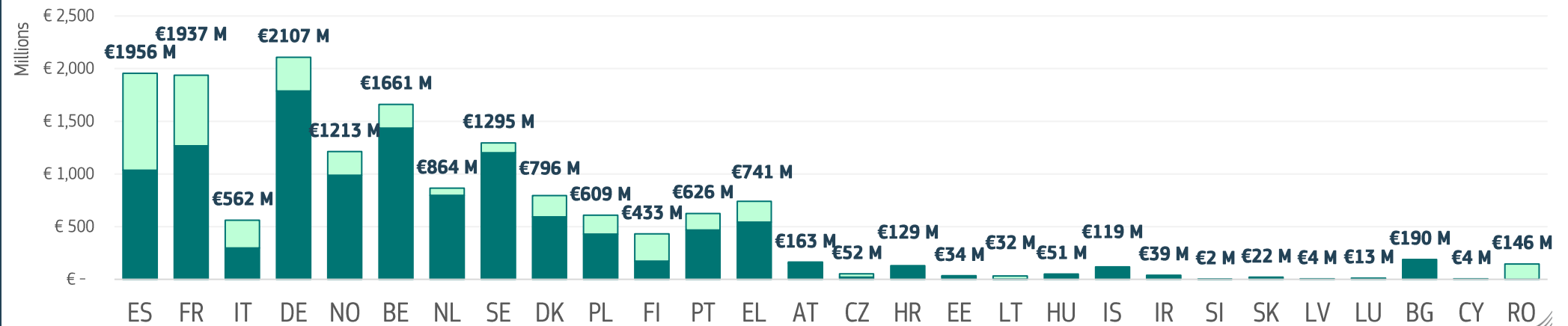


Geographical distribution of the portfolio*

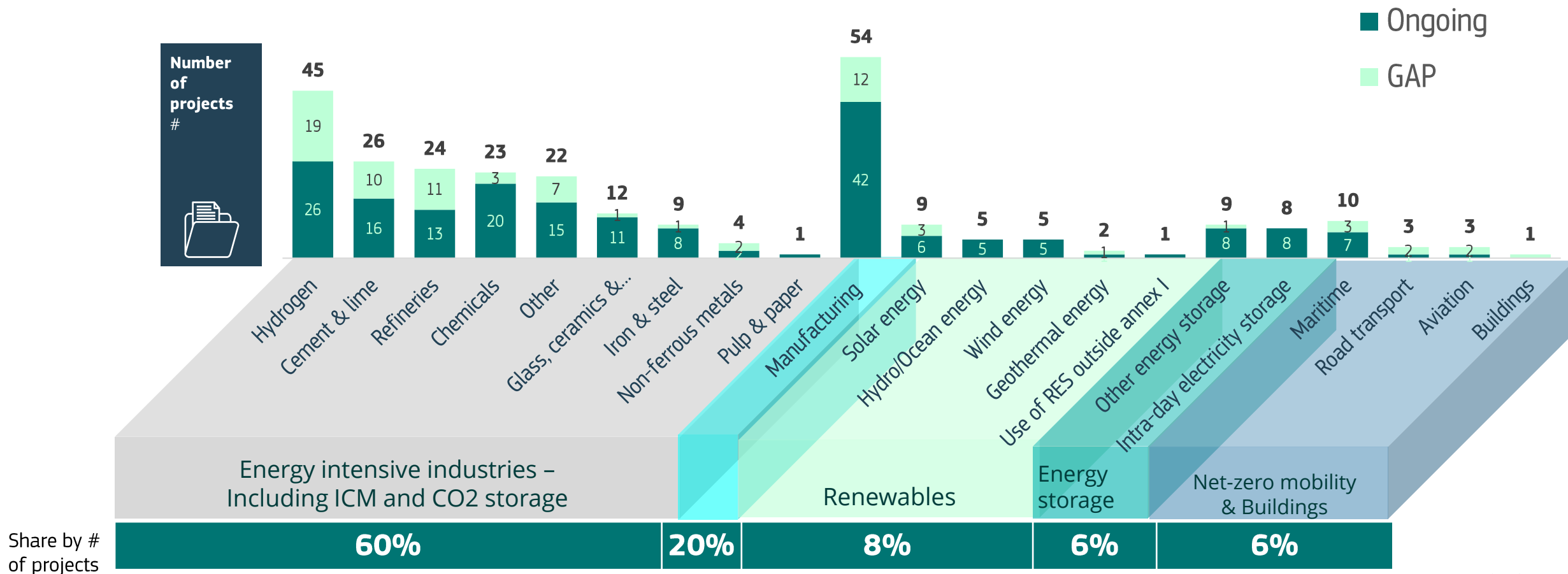
Projects per country #

Budget € Mn

Innovation Fund Portfolio by sector



Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Seal

- **STEP Seal**: Successful Innovation Fund proposals are automatically awarded the European Commissions' STEP Seal, a quality label awarded to excellent projects.
- Benefits per programme:
 - **Cohesion policy funds (ERDF, CF, ESF+, JTF)**: Possibility for Managing Authority to fast-track project (ERDF, ESF+) and grant combined support
 - **Modernisation Fund**: Project may be considered as a priority for funding
 - **InvestEU**: To be taken into account by Commission in its 'policy check', and project to be examined by implementing partners
 - **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**: Project to be considered as a priority for funding under national Recovery and Resilience Plans. As RFF is phased out at the end of 2026, IF25 NZT proposals won't be able to make use of this possibility.
 - **Other Union funds or programmes**: Project could be granted (combined) support



Information on IF NZT 25 and updates

IF25 NZT call in a nutshell



Launch 4 Dec. 2025
Deadline 23 April 2026
Results Q4 2026



- **€2.9 billion for grants**
- **Project Development Assistance**
- **STEP Seal**
- **Possibility of “Grants-as-a-Service”**



Five topics

AWARD CRITERIA

- Degree of innovation
- GHG emission avoidance potential
- Project maturity
- Replicability
- Cost efficiency

Bonus points: Net Carbon Removals, SMEs, Projects in the Maritime Sector

GRANT DISTRIBUTION

LUMP-SUM contribution grant up to 60% of relevant costs

- up to 40% of grant at financial close
- remaining amount of at least 60% after financial close
- generally, at least 10% after entry into operation

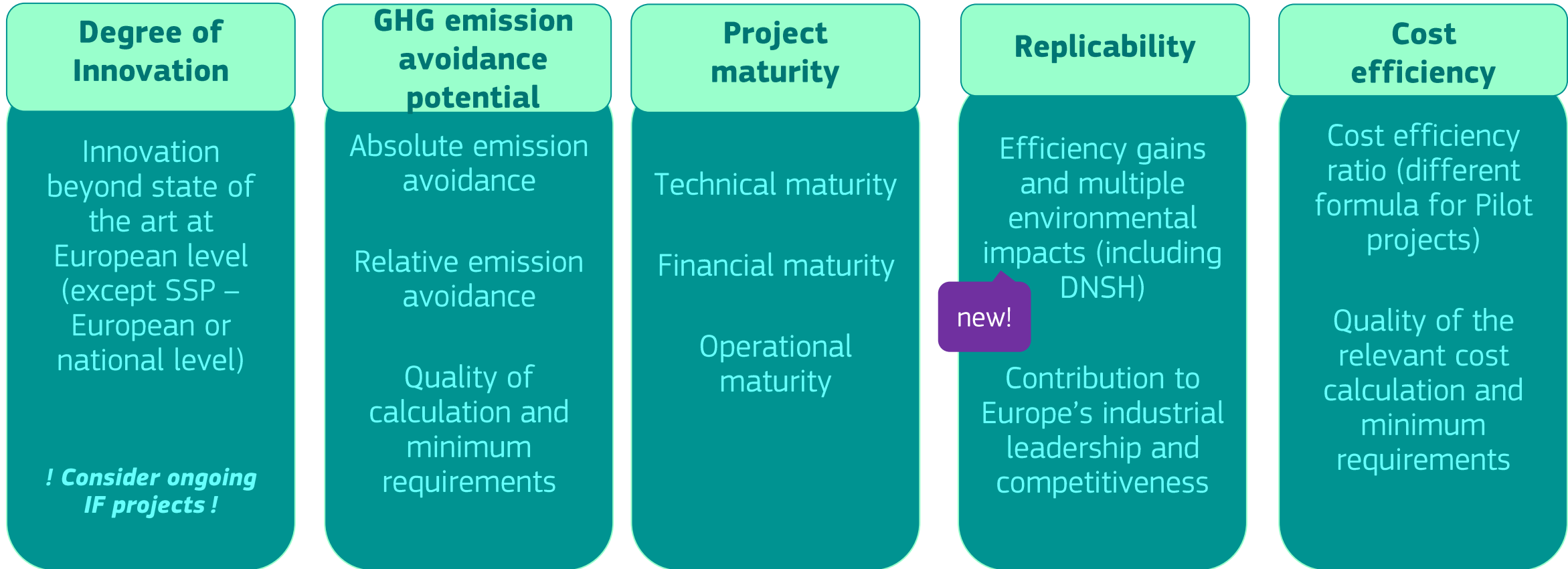


IF25 NZT call – Topics

Topic	Capital Expenditure	Topic budget	Activities that can be funded
Large-scale projects	above €100 million	€1 200 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In sectors listed in Annex I and Annex III to the EU ETS Directive <u>2003/87</u>, including CCU and development of substitute products • Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) • Innovative renewable energy and energy storage technologies
Medium-scale projects	between €20 million and €100 million	€300 million	
Small-scale projects	between €2.5 million and €20 million	€100 million	
Clean-tech manufacturing for components*	above €2.5 million	€1 000 million	<p>Construction and operation of manufacturing facilities to produce components for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy • Electrolysers and fuel cells • Energy storage solutions • Heat pumps
Pilot projects	above €2.5 million	€300 million	Validating, testing and optimising highly innovative, deep decarbonisation solutions <u>in all sectors eligible</u> for Innovation Fund support



IF25 NZT call award criteria



- Bonus points:
- 1) Net Carbon Removals
 - 2) Projects coordinated and implemented by SMEs
 - 3) Maritime sector projects

new!

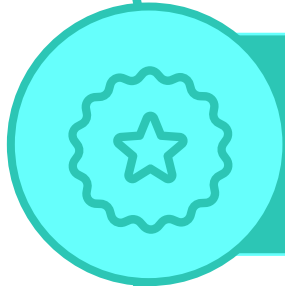


Limited changes compared to IF24 NZT call



DNSH compliance

Project activities need to comply with the “do not significant harm” principle. DNSH alignment is assessed during proposal evaluation.



Changes in the Bonus Points – New Bonus Point for SMEs

New bonus point for projects coordinated and implemented only by SMEs. Replacing previous bonus points for (a) other GHG savings, and (b) electricity from additional RES or to use RFNBOs.



Refinements and clarifications

Improved call text clarity, most notably on: (a) scope of Pilot topic and its evaluation under DoI, (b) refinement of Replicability award criterion, (c) clarifications on required supporting documents.

A focus on Pilot Projects Topic

Pilot Projects Topic

Objectives



Highly innovative, disruptive or breakthrough technologies for deep decarbonisation needed for achieving the climate neutrality goal

Activities that can be funded



Innovation in sectors listed in Annex I and Annex III to the EU ETS Directive 2003/87, including environmentally safe carbon capture and utilisation (**CCU**)



Products substituting carbon-intensive ones produced in sectors listed in Annex I to the EU ETS



Construction and operation of innovative **energy storage, CO2 storage and renewable energy installations**, including electricity/heat grid connections

Pilot Projects Topic

Important Aspects



Higher degree of innovation is expected (Degree of Innovation points have a weight of two)



Appropriate scale required, adequate to demonstrate the intended innovation at a pre-commercial stage



Possibility to addressing technical risks linked to the innovative technologies, such as **optimising process and operational parameters**, and **enhance final product characteristics**



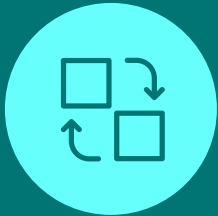
Prove an **innovative technology at pilot scale** in an operational environment, but **must not yet reach** large-scale demonstration or commercial production



Limited production/operation for testing purposes is possible but not required, including delivery to/from potential customers for validation

Pilot Projects Topic

Important Aspects



Full-scale and commercial deployment projects should not apply to this topic



Demonstrate **Project viability** rather than project profitability



Typically projects with **limited life-time (3-5 years)** but illustrating a strategy for the technology to progress to large-scale demonstration or first-of-a-kind commercial production, after demonstration at pilot scale

To be demonstrated under the replicability award criterion



Potential to be fully compatible with a 2050 climate neutrality objective, i.e., pilot installations should have minimal residual emissions or result in net carbon removals

Pilot Projects Topic



Financial close within two (2) years and entry into operation within four (4) years may earn a higher score in project maturity



Minimum operation: **three (3) years after entry into operation**



Minimum thresholds that need to be fulfilled:

- Relative **GHG emission avoidance: min 75%**
- Less stringent requirements for **cost efficiency: max 2000 €/t CO₂eq**
- Maximum grant: **€40 million**

Evaluation process

Call text and mandatory documentation

IF25 NZT Call text on Funding and Tenders Portal

Application form A

- Administrative information
- Summarised budget

Application form B

- Technical description
- Up to 70 pages

Part C

- Project's contribution to EU programme KPIs

Mandatory annexes and supporting documents

- Detailed budget table/relevant cost calculator
- Participant information
- Timetable/Gantt chart
- GHG emission avoidance calculator
- Feasibility study
- Business plan
- Detailed financial model
- Project shareholders' financial resources
- Support to project
- Terms of supply
- Extended Part C form



Admissibility and eligibility criteria

Admissibility

- Submitted **before** call **deadline 23 April 2026, 17.00**, electronically and using forms in the Submission System
- **Complete** all the application forms and **include all mandatory annexes** and supporting documents
- Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded). **Respect the page** limit indicated in the call.

Eligibility

- Participants have to be legal entities; can be established anywhere in the world
- Projects must be located in the EEA (EU Member States and Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway)
- The project must:
 - Reach **financial close within four years** after grant signature (maximum time to financial close)
 - **Operate at least** (minimum GHG emission avoidance monitoring period) **five years** after entry into operation (except PILOTS and SSP)
- SSP and PILOTS – operate at least **three** years after entry into operation
- Project budget: the maximum grant amount must not exceed **60% of the relevant costs**
- Your project must relate to **eligible activities**



Cascade approach

1. Check **eligibility** and **admissibility**

(if all requirements are not met, the evaluation is stopped)



2. Assess **Degree of Innovation** criterion

(if the score is below threshold, the evaluation is stopped)



3. Assess **GHG Emissions Avoidance** and **Project Maturity** criteria

(if GHG min. requirements are not met or score in any of the sub-criteria is below threshold, the evaluation is stopped)



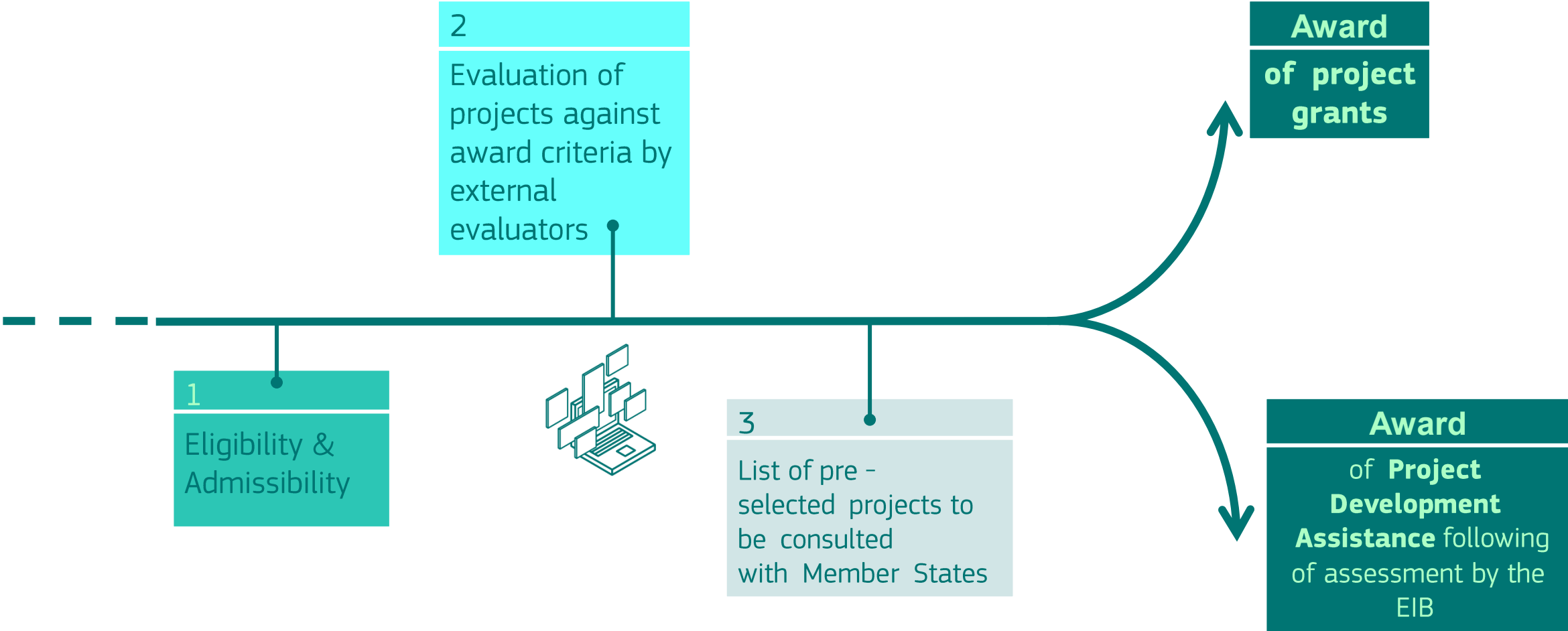
4. Assess **Cost efficiency** sub-criterion

(if the score for 'Quality of the cost calculation and min. requirement' is below threshold, the evaluation is stopped)



5. Assess **Replicability** criterion and **Bonus points**

Selection Procedure



Evaluation timeline

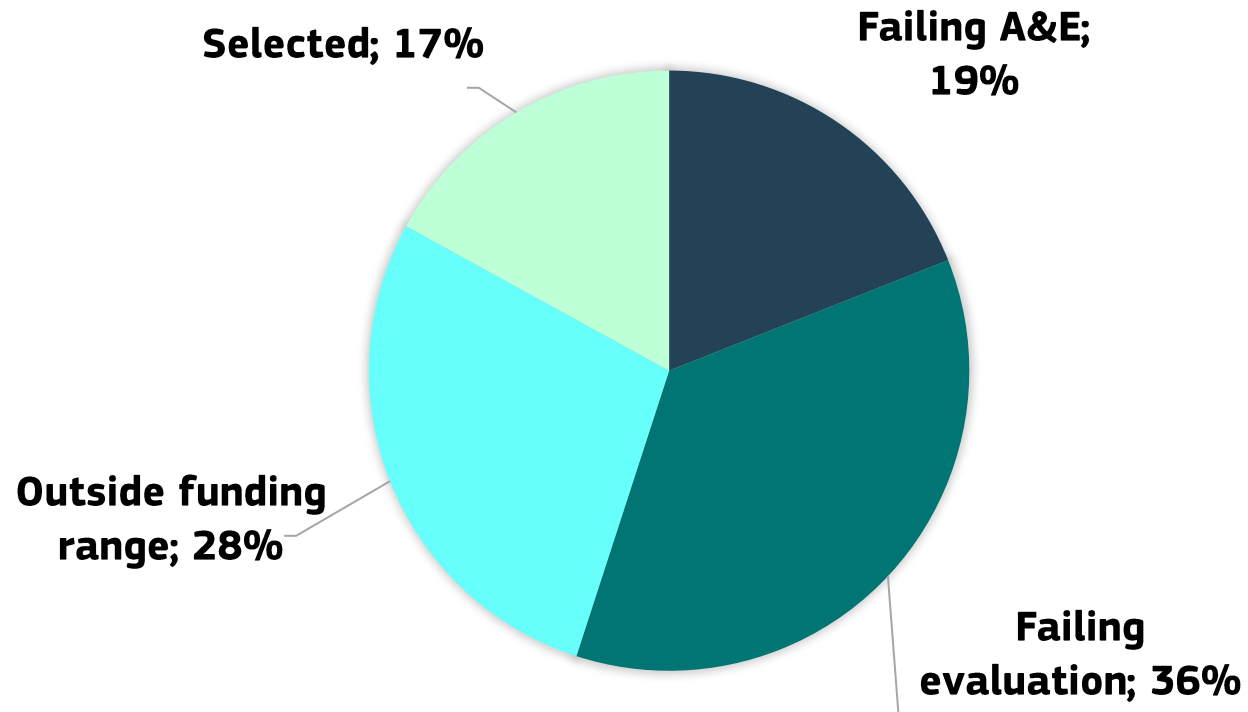


Indicative timeline

Results and learning from previous call

IF24 NZT Call Results

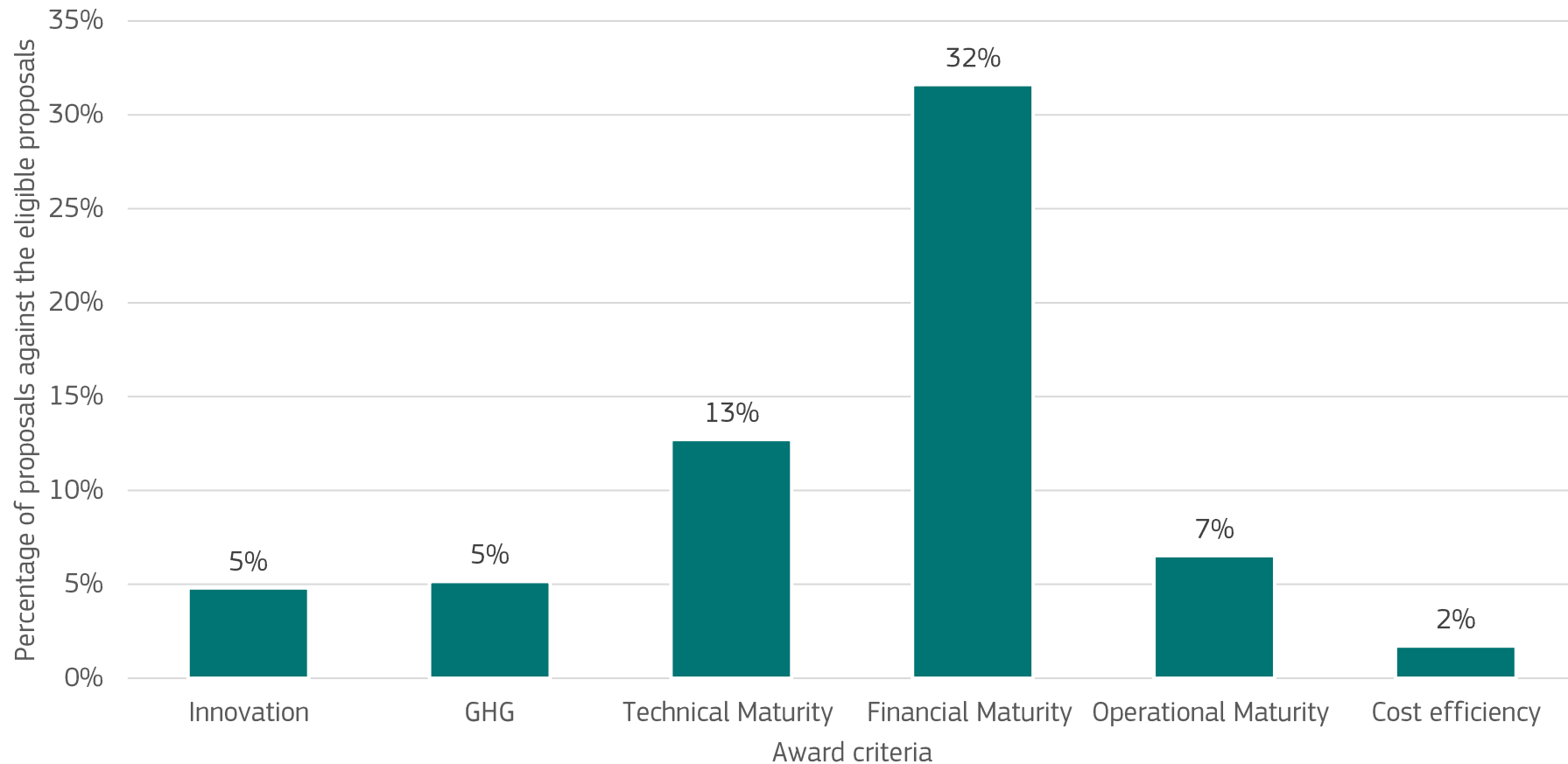
CALL RESULTS AS PERCENTAGE OF THE SUBMITTED PROPOSALS



- **359** received proposals
- **291** proposals were A&E
- **100** resubmissions
- **61** invited for Grant Agreement Preparation;
- **55%** of the evaluated proposals passed all evaluation criteria

IF24 NZT Call results: Failure rate per award criterion

Proposals failed against the eligible proposals (291)



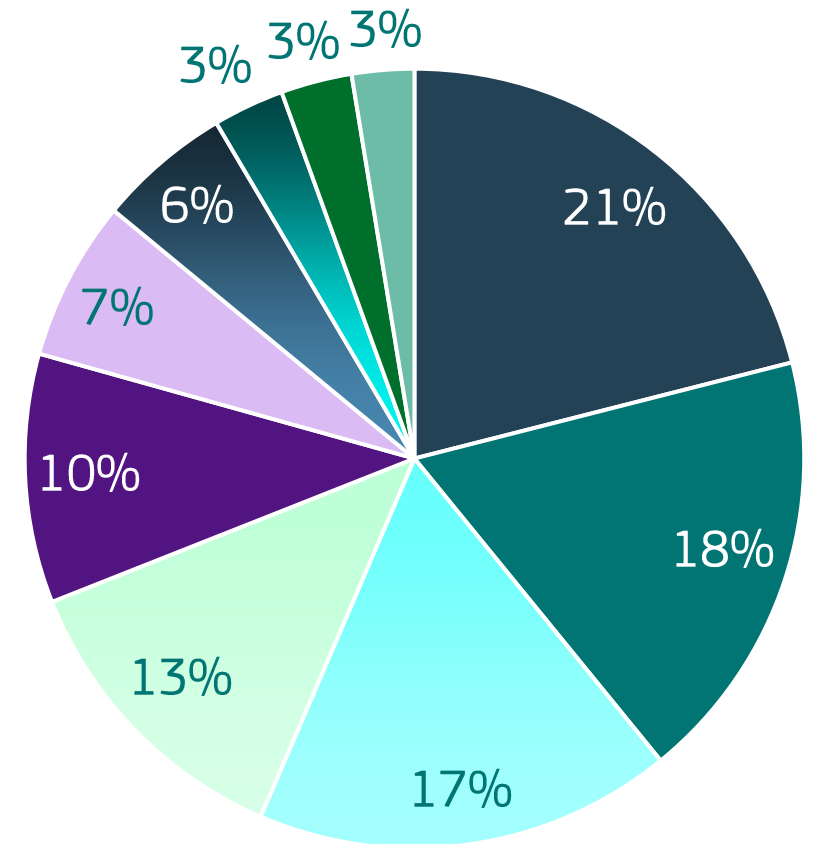
**Some proposals failed under more than one criterion*



IF24 NZT Call results: Admissibility and Eligibility (A&E)

Main reasons for not passing A&E*

- Incomplete or missing financial documents (*submitted business plan or financial model does not follow the required template and does not contain the required minimum information*)
- Incomplete or missing technical documents (*e.g. part B does not use the required template; feasibility study does not contain the required minimum information; the Gantt chart is missing*)
- Budget > 60% Relevant Costs
- Minimum operation duration not respected
- Incorrect CAPEX
- Ineligible activities (not in scope)
- Financial close after 4 years after GA signature
- Ineligible country of implementation
- Ineligible applicant
- Not readable, accessible, and printable set of documents



Lessons learned: Admissibility & Eligibility

Follow the call text guidance precisely

- Use the official Innovation Fund **templates** for the proposal, budget, and annexes
- **Respect page limits**, file formats, font and formatting rules
- Provide **all requested documents** to be admissible
- **Make sure that the information is complete**
- **Watch budget limits and submission deadline**
- **Be consistent across the call documents**
- **Be realistic and conservative**

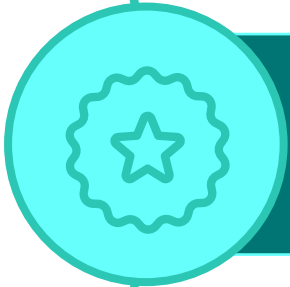


Additional information

Innovation Fund Self-check Questionnaire



Provide an early high-level orientation on potential fit and readiness of project ideas for the Innovation Fund.



Entirely independent from the official Innovation Fund application and evaluation



Available [here](#)



Additional information



Funding & Tenders portal call text



IF2025 NZT manuals and info day



Innovation Fund projects dashboard

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