

Vademecum Survey Analysis

1 Respondent profile

A total of 155 (once removing duplicates and void answers) responses were received on the survey- with a range of stakeholders providing inputs- as shown in the figures below.

Figure 1-1 Stakeholder types who provided responses

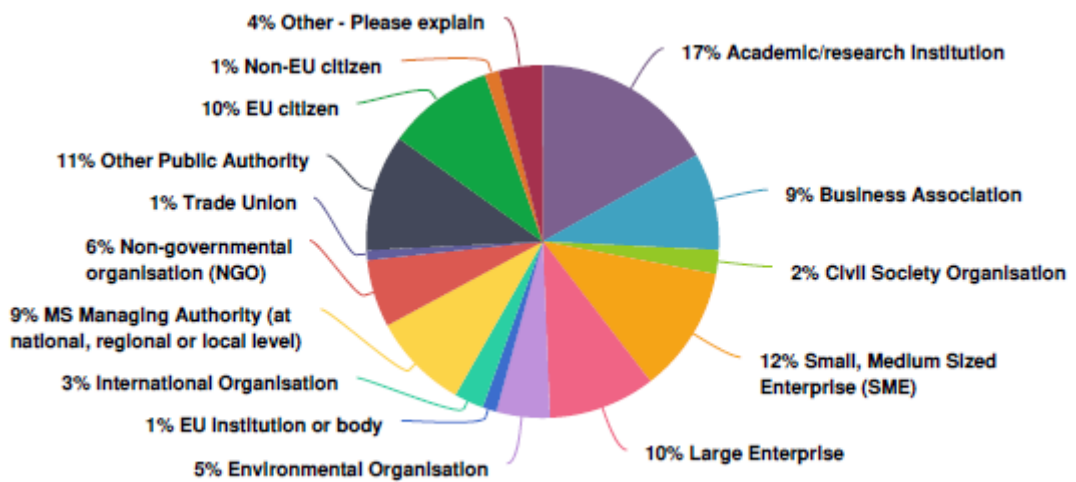
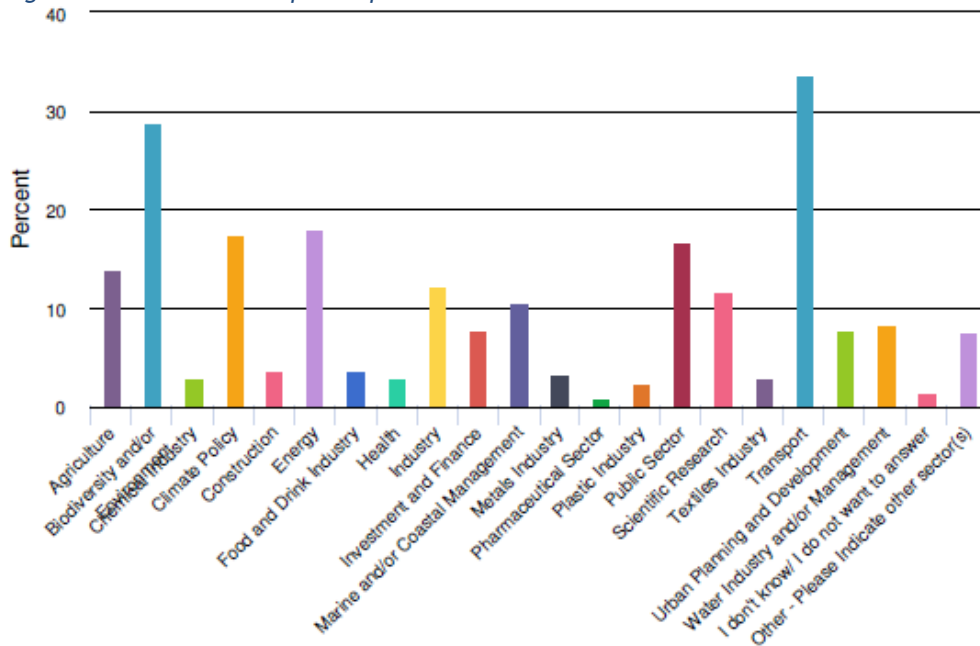


Figure 1-2 Stakeholder responses per sector



2 Preliminary questions

2.1 Key information sources used by project promoters

Very few key information sources were provided by respondents which could assist in the integration of environmental considerations in projects. Stakeholders noted the use of fund/financing program-dedicated websites and associated newsletters which prompt subscribers to relevant updates. Links included:

- Dedicated fund/finance programme websites:
 - Cohesion fund - https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/
 - European Regional Development Fund-
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/
 - European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) -
https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/funding/emfaf_en and associated newsletters https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/european-maritime-fisheries-and-aquaculture-fund/emfaf-newsletters_en
 - <https://keep.eu/>
 - <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>
- National sites:
 - https://www.interreg.de/INTERREG2014/DE/Home/BBSR/bbsr_node.html
 - <https://www.rvo.nl/>
 - <https://kik.ee/et>
 - <https://life.envir.ee/>
- Other:
 - <https://www.welcomeurope.com/en/programs/erdf-european-regional-development-fund/>
 - <https://www.fi-compass.eu/funds/erdf>
 - <http://www.newslettereuropean.eu/>
 - <https://auroraresearch.eu/about/>
 - <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>
 - https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals_en
 - <https://www.fchobservatory.eu/index.php/observatory/financial-support>

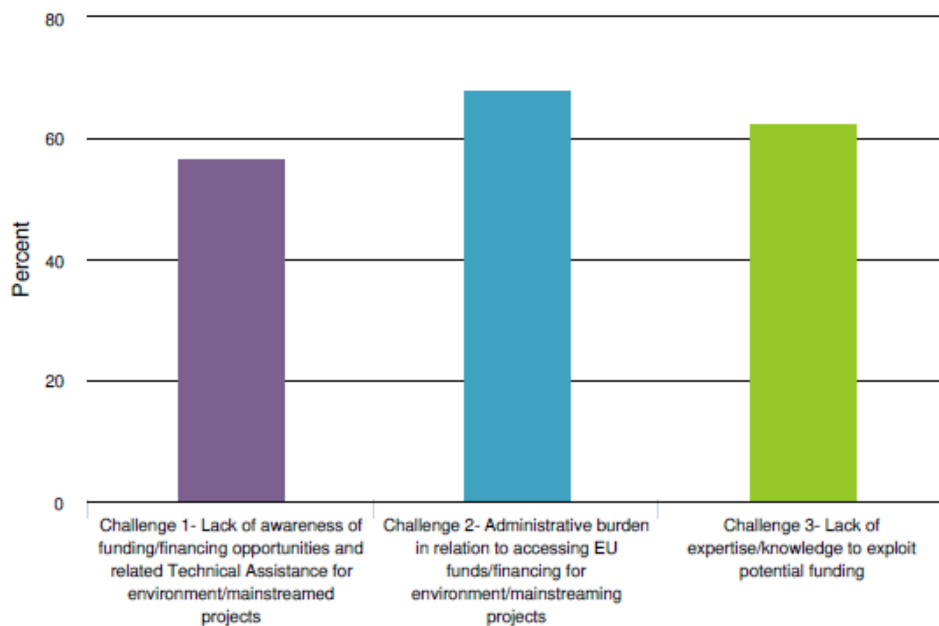
2.2 Information requests by project promoters Mainstreaming, technical assistance, needs of promoters

Few responses were received outlining stakeholder views on how information on how mainstreaming could be enhanced, or on the utilization of technical assistance. Stakeholders noted that better coordination and exchange of information between the bodies involved in the relevant funds (examples provided included the Commission, DG MARE and DG ENV) would be beneficial. Very few responses were also received which outlined which key information project promoters and other stakeholders regularly seek. The response outlined that further information on selection criteria, eligibility rules, timelines, and financing were often requested.

3 Challenges

The survey asked respondents which challenge they would like to provide responses to, which can be interpreted as a proxy for the occurrence of the challenge encountered by stakeholders. A relatively similar spread of responses was received for each challenge- with challenge 2 identified as the most common challenge.

Figure 3-1 Challenge category where stakeholders provided responses



A summary of the responses received per challenge are presented below.

3.1.1 Challenge 1- Lack of awareness of funding/financing opportunities and related Technical Assistance for environment/ mainstreamed projects

Broad challenges encountered:

- The main themes that emerged from the issues related to challenge 1 is that there is not enough information regarding eligibility and relevance of projects to specific EU funds; some respondents found that the lack of centralization of this information posed the greatest obstacle to understanding eligibility, while others cited better cooperation between national contact points and EU fund managing entities as a solution to this problem. Another found that the conditions of different fund are so transversal that project promoters cannot know whether they actually qualify.
- Most respondents found that the calls for project proposals were not transparent and/or easily accessible.
- Information of costs (eligible vs actual), the coverage of financing (does it cover full project costs/ partial coverage).
- Broadly, the complexity of application was commonly noted (recommendations are outlined below).

The challenges listed above were often listed as an issue with multiple fund/financing programmes. On the whole, challenge 1 issues were most commonly encountered with Horizon Europe (48%), CEF Transport (44%) and the Innovation Fund (38%). Similarly, the sectors where these challenges generally occurred were not as: transport (47%), energy (25%), agriculture and biodiversity (both 20%).

Recommendations stressed the need for a centralized platform- including information on:

- Main funds available for environmental protection (stakeholders noted that they are often not aware of alternative funds to those previously used- which may result in certain funding/financing opportunities being overlooked when they are indeed more appropriate sources of funds/financing);
- Cost information per fund/financing programme (including max. and min. budgets available; eligible vs actual costs, co-financing information, type of costs covered by the fund/financing programme);
- Explicit information on what projects are eligible for each fund/financing programme;
- Clear (national) contact points for technical assistance provided for each call for proposal- more advertisement needed;
- Summarise the often lengthy documents related to each funding programme- presenting a shorter, condensed informational section to save time in the assessment of each fund's relevancy to each project (possibly allowing users to view information relevant on a sector-by-sector basis);
- Case study examples of successfully funded projects;
- Weblinks to programme deadlines and basic documents.

3.1.2 Challenge 2 - Administrative burden in relation to accessing EU funds/financing for environment/mainstreaming projects

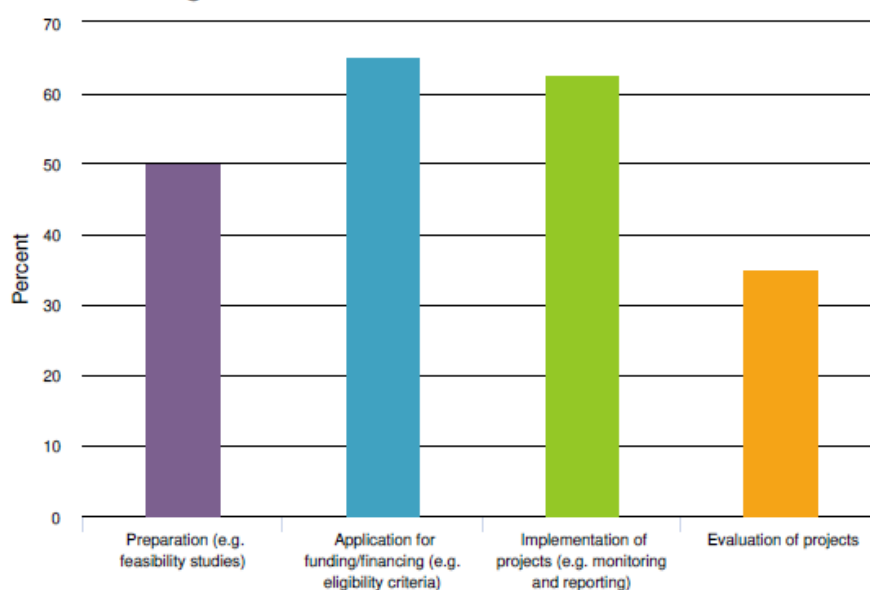
Broad challenges encountered in relation to administrative burden included:

- Time and cost of applying for funding is too high, especially for small projects, SMEs and start-ups;
- A lack of flexibility, late notification of cost eligibility are cited as too risky for project promoters to even consider applying for funding. The delay in notification is particularly problematic for projects who need funding for particular, often more costly, aspects of their project, for which they do not receive a reply until it is too late for them to implement the project;
- English language requirements can prove to be a challenge for some MS departments when completing administrative requirements.

As with Challenge 1, stakeholders listed these challenges across a range of fund/financing programmes- notably: Horizon Europe (48%), CEF transport (43%), Interreg (41%) and LIFE (38%) - most commonly impacting transport (40%) biodiversity/environment (31%) and climate policy sectors (31%).

Stakeholders indicated that the aforementioned challenges occurred throughout the process chain of projects- as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3-2 “Responses to Where in the process chain of an environmental/mainstreamed project do challenges related to “administrative burden” occur?”



Recommendations included:

- To overcome burdens associated with obtaining funding, a clear, unambiguous overview of requirements and eligibility criteria is needed, in addition to a clearly defined list of documents needed;
- Providing guidance on MS bodies which have experience in the management of funds would be beneficial;
- Informative webinars when a call is released were noted as useful for business associations/ international organisations who represent a sector- acknowledging there is a clear need for MS/language specific events to reduce the burden on SMEs (for translation services).

Case studies/interesting examples:

- One respondent (Belgian Public Authority) outlined that they had established an in-house funding desk to deal with projects- resulting in a large increase in submitted and awarded projects, and in compliance with EU funding rules/eligibility of costs.

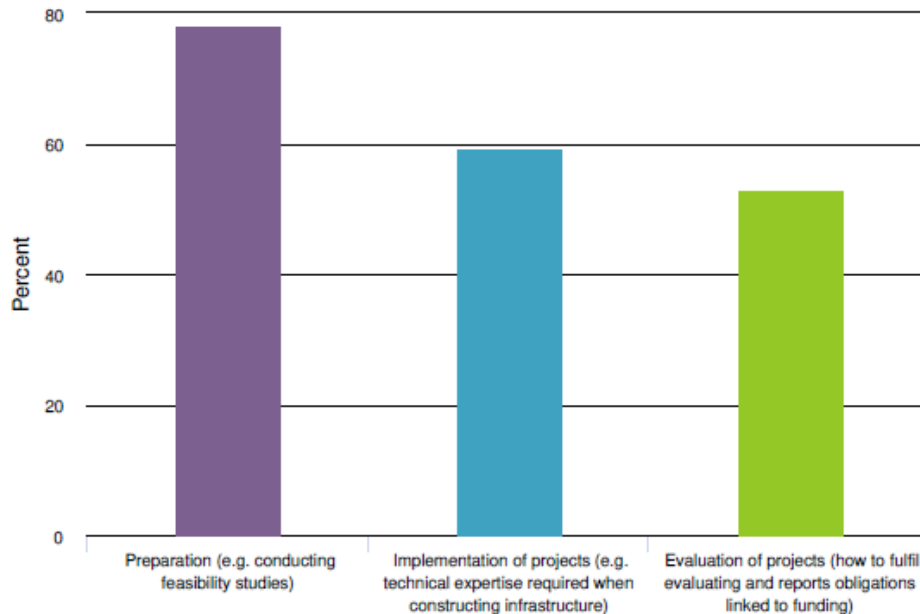
3.1.3 Challenge 3 - Expertise/knowledge to fully exploit potential EU funding/ financing for environmental/mainstreamed projects

The main themes that emerge from this challenge concerned:

- the strictness of the budget and deliverables in each fund. Some respondents also found that there was a lack of expertise in terms of understanding award criteria and predictability of future calls/timing to get selected/rejected;
- Participants also mentioned a lack of support tools for the implementation of comprehensive environmental projects and programs, particularly in terms of integrated environmental projects that have divergent procedures for funding opportunities;
- One participant noted that Horizon Europe thematic calls are very problematic and results in project promoters facing challenges aligning their project within such calls.

The aforementioned challenges were noted as commonly occurring in Horizon Europe and ERDF (both 42%), in addition to Interreg, Innovation Fund and CEF Transport (all 36%), and predominantly concerned the preparatory stages of projects (see figure below).

Figure 3-3 Responses to question “Where in the process chain of an environmental/mainstreamed project do challenges related to “expertise/knowledge” occur?”



The majority of respondents (74%) noted that a lack of training in relation to the EU funding processes/ information sources was a significant challenge they had experienced. Specific examples given by respondents included- a lack of knowledge on how to complete certain sections of proposals, and a lack of notification by national contact points on upcoming trainings.

71% of respondents also noted that it was difficult to obtain an overview of results from previous projects implemented.

Recommendations included:

- Providing a database of partners for the implementation of projects;
- Provide an overview of which funds can be combined with each other, i.e. finding additional sources of funding;
- Provide clear overview on budget related processes and legal settings;
- Centralised database of previously implemented projects;
- Examples of projects and documents completed during projects that could be relied upon when writing your project;
- Details on expenses and budget flexibilities, potential maladaptation within project design and implementation, useful evaluation indicators.

Interesting examples/case studies:

- Hydrogen Europe, through their Funding and Financing Working Group, provide presentations and answer questions about EU funding processes to our members constantly;
- The Horizon Results Platform could be used for inspiration across other programmes (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/horizon-results-platform>)








3.1.4 Other challenges

No additional challenges were noted by respondents.

4 Conferences

Only one response as to why a respondent would not attend a conference was given- that such events tended to be too 'general' and do not address issues efficiently/effectively. Overall, 89% of respondents stated they would be interested in attending.

An overview of stakeholder interest in topics to be covered are shown below.

Value		Percent	Responses
Identifying the relevance of my environmental project to specific EU funding/financing		58.7%	27
Identifying relevant documentation/information required to fulfil eligibility criteria of EU funding/financing		71.7%	33
Identifying information on learnings from previous successfully implemented environmental/ mainstreamed projects		63.0%	29
Identifying relevant financial instruments to support an environmental/ mainstreamed project		69.6%	32
Identifying cooperative structures within MSs to assist in the implementation of an environmental/ mainstreamed project		45.7%	21
Identifying Technical Assistance to assist in delivery of an environmental/ mainstreamed project		41.3%	19
Other - Write In (Required)		4.3%	2

Regarding the online conferences it was cited as potentially helpful by one respondent if they were co-created with the relevant support structures (National Contact Points, Enterprise Europe Network....) and as a second steps after having fostered collaborations between National Contacts of different programmes. Another noted that it would be helpful for conference to include tips for implementation, how to limit admin burden in the implementation/reporting phase, how to optimise application and how to ensure that the calls match your project characteristics.