



Internal report

RESULTS of the first questionnaire

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1. Executive Summary

SCREEN is an H2020 coordinating and supporting action participated by 11 European regions, 6 further regions are going to join the project. SCREEN aims at the definition of a replicable systemic approach towards a transition to Circular Economy in EU regions within the context of the Smart Specialization Strategy, also through the identification and implementation of operational synergies between R&I investments from H2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds.

With reference to the envisaged synergies, a first questionnaire was sent on 12/12/2016 to the participating regions in order to have a first overview about this issue within the SCREEN partners; to this purpose, the queries were general not referring yet to Circular Economy nor Smart Specializations. Specific questions will be submitted at a more advanced stage.

Partner regions were asked to forward the questionnaire to their offices in charge of the management of structural funds. It was required that the person who answered should be engaged in the decision-making process about the procedures and calls of structural funds.

The questionnaire was anonymous and studied to collect general information only, through a set of few preliminary questions. 11 answers to the questionnaire depicted the following preliminary scenario that will be further investigated during the project lifetime.

- No regional tools are available for looking at H2020 results that can be used for innovation purposes by SMEs and other applicants for regional funds: a proper tool allowing entrepreneurs to easily surf among such results will be beneficial at European level..
- Despite a good knowledge of the EC “seal of excellence” initiative” in the regional offices, this initiative is currently leading to few practical results: an action is needed to the possibility of having advantages for SMEs having achieved the “seal”.
- The majority of the answers has shown an “in principle” availability to use their structural funds to finance their own partners in well ranked, but not financed H2020 projects. Such opening, even if “in principle” could lead to an effective synergy between different funds, if properly supported by a continuous dialogue among the concerned actors.
- The large majority of the region’s structural funds do not foresee any “shortcuts” for funding proposals that are a follow-up of H2020 projects.

The SCREEN Policy Lab that is going to be launched aims at becoming the specific discussion table between regions and the concerned Commission services, in order to analyse the issues above and find a common agreed solution

2. Introduction

SCREEN (www.screen-lab.eu) is an H2020 Coordinating and supporting action aiming at the definition of a replicable systemic approach towards a transition to Circular Economy in EU regions within the context of the Smart Specialization Strategy, through the identification and implementation of operational synergies between R&I investments from H2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds, thus contributing to novel future eco-innovative and horizontal business models across different value chains.

The concepts of SCREEN concern:

- Sustaining the regional actors' participation at H2020;
- Encouraging the entrepreneurial initiatives based on H2020 project's results;
- Investigating the possibility of maximizing the H2020 investment through a "recovery" (full or partial) of well ranked unfinanced proposals dealing with circular economy.

With reference to the last item above, a first questionnaire was sent on 12/12/2016 to all the participating regions in order to have a first overview about this issue in the SCREEN partners. For this purpose, the queries were general not referring yet to Circular Economy nor Smart Specializations. Specific questions will be submitted at a more advanced stage.

Partner regions were asked to forward the questionnaire to their offices in charge of the management of Structural Funds. It was required that the person who answered should be engaged in the decision-making about the procedures and calls of structural funds.

The questionnaire is anonymous and studied only to collect general information.

2.1 Target

The following regions participate in SCREEN Consortium:

- Regione Lazio (Italy)
- Regione Lombardia (Italy)
- Comunidad Foral De Navarra – Gobierno de Navarra (Spain)
- Comissao de Coordenacao e Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro (Portugal)
- Wojewodztwo Lodzkie - Lodzkie Region (Poland)
- Kriti (Periferia), Greece (Greece)
- Agence Regionale de Developpement d'investissement et d'innovation –NEXA (France)
- Knowledge Transfer Network Limited -The KTN (United Kingdom)
- Limburg Province (Netherlands)
- Provincie Fryslan (Netherlands)
- Pirkanmaan Liitto – Tampere (Finland)

The following regions are going to join the Consortium:

- Extremadura (Spain)
- Ile de France (through its agency ORDIF) ,

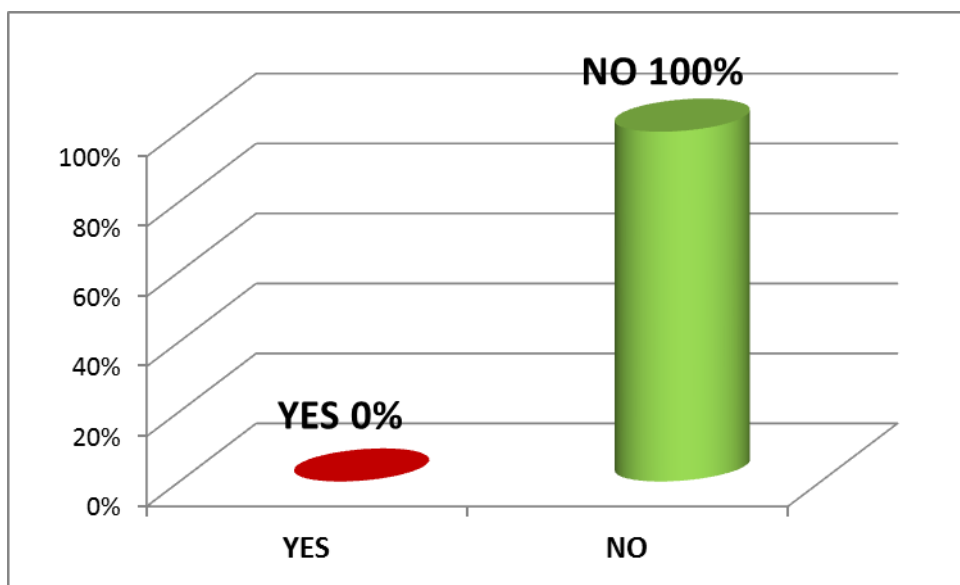
- Flanders (Belgium),
- Nord Est Romania,
- Azores (Portugal),
- Primorje-Gorski (Croatia)

At the date of 28/02/2017 11 answers have been sent by 10 regions; one of the participants forwarded two responses: one from the office managing structural funds and the other from their Unit in charge of Research and Development.

3. Results

Question 1

When a subject in your Region decides to apply to your Structural Funds for Innovation, is there any tool available for looking at the results of H2020 (or previous FP7) projects that may be used for their innovation purposes?



All the participants report the absence of an instrument that can be used to look at the outcomes of H2020 (or previous program) by subjects applying for their Structural Funds for Innovation.

Questions 2 and 3

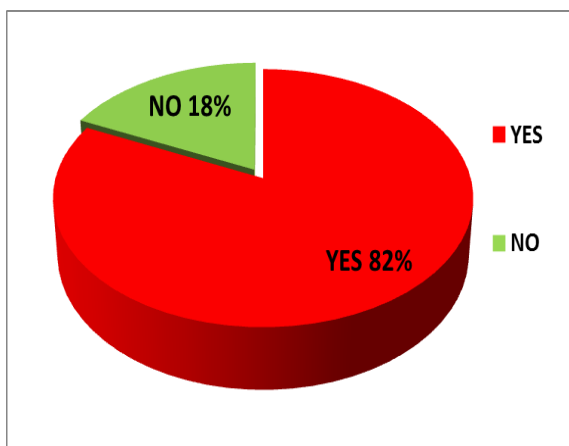
If the previous answer is YES, did you receive any application linked to the results of a previous H2020 or FP7 project? If yes, please indicate the number of applications.

If the previous answer is YES how many of the above applications were financed?

None of the participating regions received applications linked to the results of previous H2020 or FP7 project, thus such projects were not financed.

Question 4

“Seal of Excellence” is an initiative of EU Commission, it is a quality label awarded to projects submitted to Horizon 2020 which, due to budget limits, did not receive funding even if they were evaluated as worthy. The Commission “recognizes” the value of the proposal and supports the search for alternative funding since the competition in Horizon 2020 is very strong and the overall success rate is around 14%. EC launched this initiative in order to help SMEs in their Research and Innovation activities, considering the noticeable investment made by applicants to prepare an H2020 proposal.



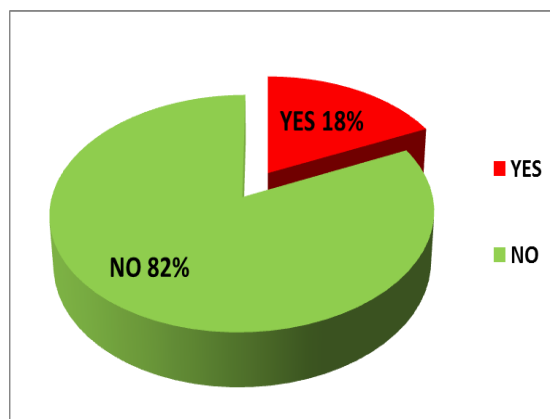
Question: are you aware about the “Seal of Excellence” initiative?

9 out of 11 participants are aware about the “Seal of Excellence” initiative.

Question 5

If the previous answer is YES, did you receive any application for funding by a SME showing its “Seal of Excellence”?

Two partners received application for funding by SME that gained the “Seal of Excellence” label.



Question 6

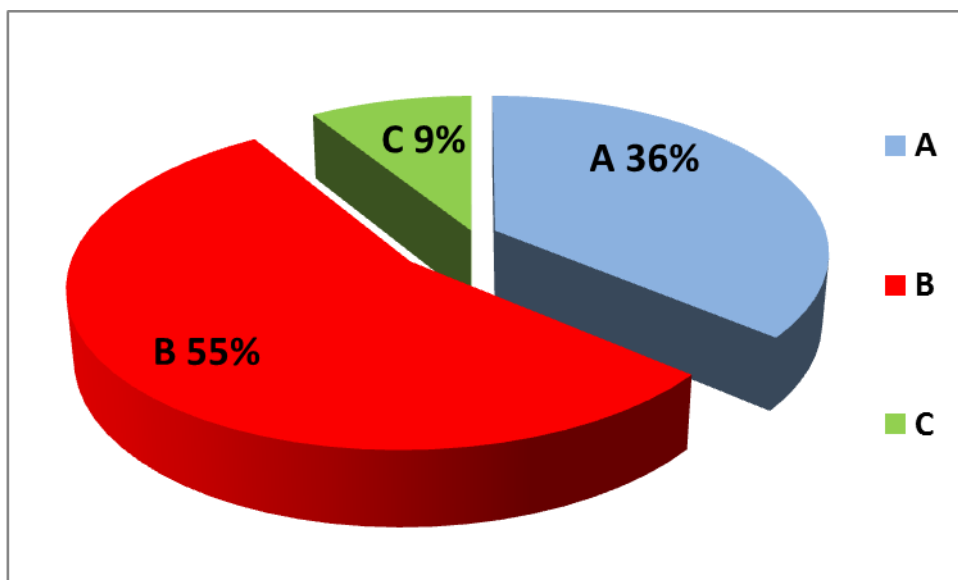
How many of the above applications were financed?

There were 2 “Seal of Excellence” applications financed among the 10 considered regions. The two applications were financed by one participant.

Question 7

Please give your opinion about the “Seal of Excellence”.

- a. *It is a good initiative, because we can use the Seal of Excellence to trust a proposal already well evaluated by the Commission Services, thus saving efforts and time for the evaluation of the proposals*
- b. *Nice initiative, but we in any case will follow our procedures, eventually increasing the score of the proposal*
- c. *We do not consider in any case the Seal of Excellence: the proposal will be managed like the others*

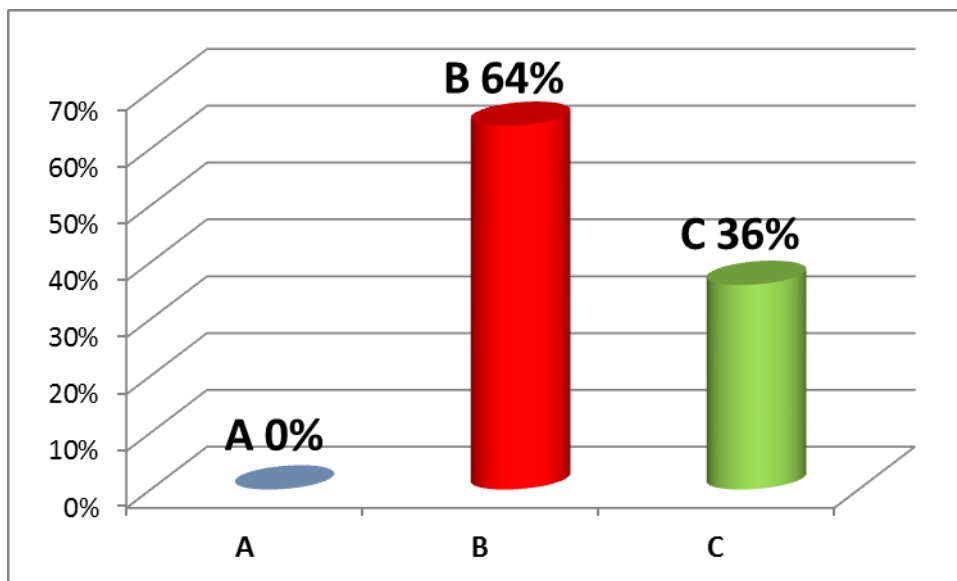


The great majority of the participants (91%) considers positively the “Seal of Excellence” award. Meanwhile one region states that its management does not consider the label prized by the European Commission. Although the high frequency of favorable opinion, only 3 members declare that they are available to trust the abovementioned award, thus saving efforts and time for evaluating proposals again. Quite half of the region, despite their affirmative consideration about the “Seal of Excellence”, are solely available to increase the score of the prized SMEs, while they are willing to continue in following their usual procedures.

Question 8

In case one H2020 proposal presented by a consortium having one or more partners coming from your region receives a score of 12 or 13 points out of 15, but it is not financed due to budget limits, could the specific part assigned to subjects belonging to your region be in principle financed by your structural funds? (Please give your answer "in principle", without taking into consideration any practical barrier)

- a) *In principle yes*
- b) *In principle yes, under the condition that the proposal complies with the axis/measures of our Structural Funds and all the other partners of the consortium guarantee their own budget*
- c) *In principle no*



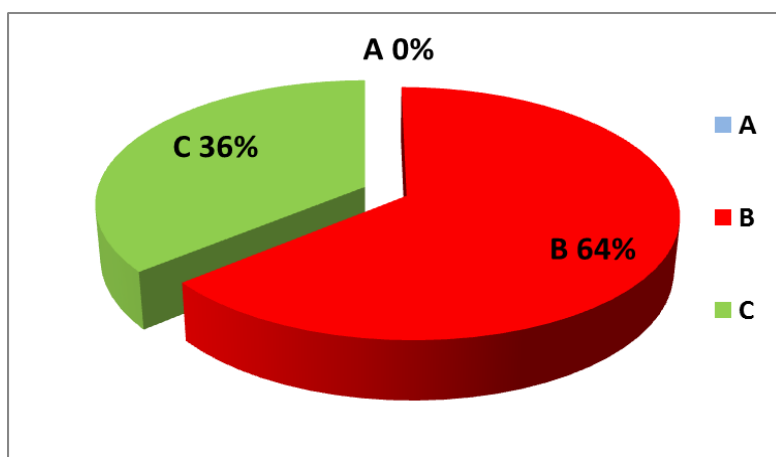
In relation to the possibility of financing through Regional Structural Funds the H2020 proposals assessed with high score, the majority of the participants agrees in principle. They set two conditions: the proposal must comply with the measures of their structural funds and the other partners of the Consortium should guarantee their own budget.

4 Regions reported their unwillingness to finance this type of option.

Question 9

The H2020 proposal called “Innovation Actions” (IA) are the one closest to the market approach and are financed by the European Commission at 70%. In case of an IA selected for financing and having one partner belonging to your region, could such a partner be in principle financed for the remaining 30% by your structural funds? **(Please give your answer “in principle”, without taking into consideration any practical/normative barrier)**

- a. In principle yes
- b. In principle yes, under the condition that the proposal complies with the axis/measures of our Structural Funds and all the other partners of the consortium guarantee their own budget
- c. In principle no

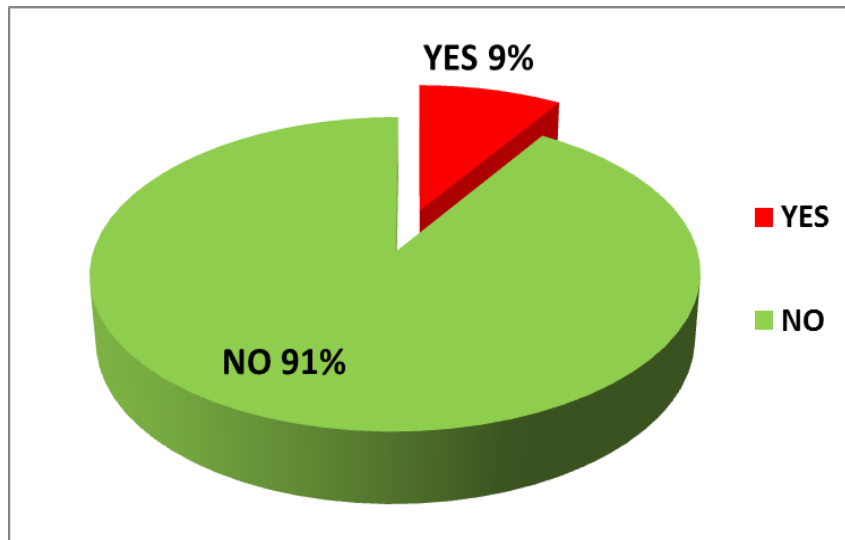


Referring to the “Innovation Actions - IA”, in particular to the actors selected by the European Commission that belong to the considered region, that are awarded the 70% financing, the majority of the participants accomplish, in principle, to give the remaining amount of 30% by usage of their own structural funds. These members agree under the request that the other partners forming the Consortium have to guarantee their budget.

4 regions disagree in principle with this proposal.

Question 10

When a H2020 project is terminated, their results are in general not yet “ready to the market”; do your Structural Funds procedures foresee any “shortcut” for proposals that are the follow up of a H2020 project just terminated?



10 Regions do not provide for any “shortcut” to proposals following up of a terminated H2020 project. Only one participant declares the existence of the chance for the abovementioned proposals to further develop the innovation begun under H2020.

Question 11

If the previous answer is NO, do you think that such a shortcut could improve the quality of the innovation proposal financed by your Structural funds?

Only six answers were submitted: 3 positive and 3 negative.

Optional comments to Question 11

The four positive comments submitted are reported hereinafter.

- One region comments that its own territory suffers due to a lack of tools in order to permit the transformation of the research results into concrete innovations project. For this reason it declares that the shortcut could improve horizon2020 research uptakes.
- One region agrees that, considered the efficacy of the Commission’s evaluation, a project funded under H2020 must have the right characteristic for being further implemented under Structural Funds.
- Another partner underlines that H2020 projects present very strong quality furthermore the shortcut could benefit research and development in the area.
- One of the region addresses that potential benefits can result from financing H2020 project under ERDF (or other program) both for dissemination of knowledge and for the creation of new products and processes for the market.

Three regions replied adding a negative note.

- One region comments that the shortcut could lead to the opposite result, leading to a reduction of the standard in the innovation proposal.
- Another participant underlines that H2020 proposal can apply in the ERDF tender but without any special treatment. The shortcut is considered as priority processing therefore not in line with the principles that the regional evaluation committee apply. Moreover they mention that the usage of ERDF funds for awarding H2020 proposal would lead to a quicker spending of resource, considering the bigger amount of money required for the research actions.
- Another annotation reminds that the abovementioned method could not “per se” improve the quality of the innovation proposal meanwhile it could lighten the burden of the submission process.

4. Conclusions

A first set of preliminary questions was circulated among the regions participating at the SCREEN project: 10 regions answered through their offices dealing with Structural Funds, one region sent also answer from its office dealing with Research.

No tools available for looking at the results of H2020 that can be used for innovation purposes by SMEs and other applicants for regional funds: this means that the majority of innovation results provided by the European Research Programme do not find a proper exploitation way by industries and SMEs. There is a clear need of a proper tool allowing entrepreneurs to easily surf among the H2020 results, that should be designed by the Commission (R&I) after a consultation with the regions.

Good knowledge of the EC “seal of excellence” initiative”, that is generally well appreciated. However, there were but very low practical results. An action is needed to ensure that such initiative is better connected to the possibility of having advantages for SMEs, that at the present seems jeopardized. A more pro-active dialogue between regions and Commission (R&I, EASME) should be initiated.

The majority of the target is available “*in principle*” to use their structural funds to finance their own partners in well ranked, but not financed H2020 projects. Such availability is also extended to the 30% of Innovation Actions non financed by H2020, (in principle, because it is not currently allowed). Such opening, even if “*in principle*” could lead to an effective synergy between different funds, if properly supported by a continuous dialogue among the concerned actors

The large majority of the region’s structural funds do not foresee any “shortcuts” for funding proposals that are a follow-up of H2020 projects. Different comments about advantages/disadvantages of such a shortcut were provided, almost equally divided in negative and positive ones (the latter with a little plus). This results appears to be contradictory respect to the stated appreciation of the “Seal of Excellence” initiative and need to be better investigated.

The SCREEN Policy Lab that is going to be launched is the adequate discussion table for all the items above.