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Answer given by Mr Hoekstra
on behalf of the European Commission
(27.1.2026)

The European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) relied for the evaluation on information and data submitted by the project promoter, including both technical and feasibility studies, which include the project's relevant environmental impacts. The quality and comprehensiveness of these claims was assessed by independent experts.

The STEP Seal is awarded to projects that exceed all Innovation Fund evaluation criteria minimum thresholds. The Gama project was deemed to satisfy these criteria, based on the documentation submitted, and received the STEP Seal accordingly. Once awarded, the STEP Seal cannot be withdrawn by the Commission, except in the event that CINEA's initial positive evaluation is subsequently revised and results in a negative assessment. The STEP Seal ceases to be valid if the project has not started within five years of the award.

However, once STEP Seal projects are selected for funding by the Innovation Fund or through other support instruments, there are several project development steps including obtaining the necessary regulatory permits before implementation, to which the collected expert assessment can be of relevance.

The Commission welcomes the careful attention to the evaluated projects and is committed to maintaining rigorous evaluation standards in all European funding instruments.