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Answer given by Mr Hoekstra
on behalf of the European Commission
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Regarding applications from the Netherlands, there have been 119 applications for Innovation Fund (IF) support, with a 16% success rate. Additionally, 11 projects have been awarded the STEP (Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform) Seal. In Horizon Europe (HE), there have been over 22 000 eligible proposals, with a 21% success rate.

Regarding smaller companies, 825 unique Dutch small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been granted nearly EUR 800 million in EU contributions in HE. Feedback during implementation dialogues and reality checks indicates no major concerns from SMEs regarding administrative costs¹. Efforts are underway in HE to simplify processes, e.g. through using lump sums across the board, which is expected to reduce the reporting burden and save 14-30% in administrative costs.

In the Innovation Fund, considering the nature of the investments in the eligible sectors and the required scale, fewer applications from SMEs can be observed. To limit burden and costs, small-scale projects can benefit from project development assistance provided by the European Investment Bank and support from the national contact points.

The application costs reflect the larger scale and greater complexity of IF requirements. They are commensurate to the size of the support, the average IF grant is EUR 53 million. The average EUR 85 000 cost for application represents 0.15% of the average EU Contribution.

Continuous improvements in IF application processes are reflected in applicant surveys, with 70% reporting positive changes.

More generally, the 'EU funding & me' mobile app enhances access to funding opportunities, while simplifying procedures and work programmes and further aid to participants.

¹ Making Horizon Europe work smarter: dialogue on implementation and simplification with Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva (https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/implementation-dialogues/making-horizon-europe-work-smarter-dialogue-implementation-and-simplification-commissioner-ekaterina-2025-09-16_en) and Reality Check on Implementation of Horizon Europe (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/other/event250923.htm>).