Innovation Fund - Key statistics from the first Call for Large-Scale Projects

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1. Introduction

The Innovation Fund (IF or the Fund) supports new investments in the next generation of technologies needed for the EU's transition to climate neutrality, empowering companies with a first-mover advantage to become global clean technology leaders and supporting innovative zero and near zero-carbon technologies in all Member States to be successfully demonstrated and reach the market, enabling widespread replication.

The objective of this paper is to consolidate the most relevant statistics on proposals from the first Call for Large-Scale Projects (referred to as “Large-Scale Call” in this paper) to inform future applicants and other stakeholders of the Fund.

Section 2 provides an overview of the proposals submitted and pre-selected for grant preparation, including details on geographical coverage and technological pathways.

Section 3 includes statistics on scoring achieved by the proposals in relation to the five award criteria of the Large-Scale Call, and their respective sub-criteria.

DISCLAIMER: *It is important to note that the statistics included in this paper are based on a review of the proposals as submitted by applicants under the 2020 Innovation Fund Call for Large-Scale Projects. The results therefore need to be interpreted based on the related call text and criteria and might not reflect some updates applicable for the 2021 Call (ongoing at the time of the publication of this document).*

2. Statistics on overall results

2.1. Overall results on the First Call for Large-Scale Proposals

Overall results from the First Call for Large-Scale Projects

311 proposals were submitted for the 1st stage
70 best-ranked applicants were invited to the 2nd stage

66 applications were submitted, 65 were eligible
48 proposals met all minimum requirements

7 top-ranked proposals were pre-selected for a grant
requesting €1.1 billion
with potential to avoid 72.8 $MtCO_2e$ over 10 years

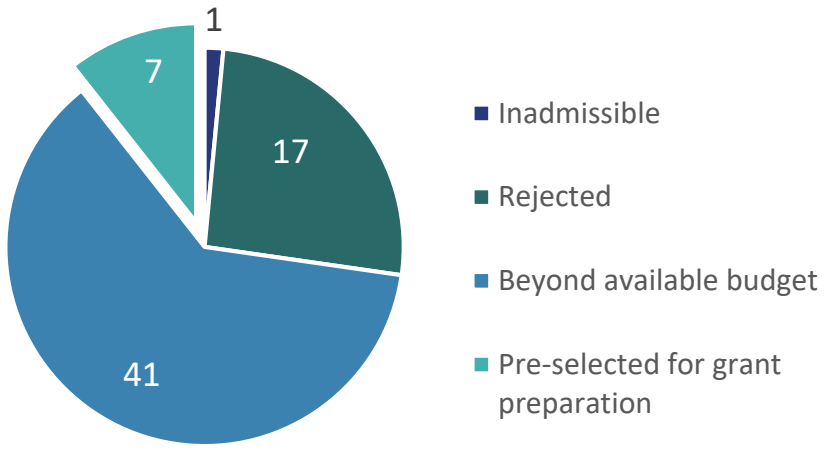
The 1st stage of the Large-Scale Call opened on 3 July 2020 with a budget of EUR 1 billion for projects with a capital expenditure above EUR 7.5 million. At the closing date, in October 2020, 311 projects had been submitted. After all the projects were evaluated, the top 70 best-ranked applicants were invited to participate in the 2nd stage in March 2020.

At the same time, 15 proposals, out of those that were not invited to the 2nd Stage of the Large-Scale Call, were invited for project development assistance (PDA), as they were considered by evaluators with the potential for improving their maturity through specific support and satisfied all other specific requirements (meet the minimum requirements under greenhouse gas emissions avoidance and degree of innovation criteria, and be awarded at least 50% of total points under the project maturity criterion). 14 proposals signed a project development support agreement with the European Investment Bank (EIB).

66 proposals were submitted during the 2nd Stage of the Large-Scale Call. One proposal was deemed inadmissible (because it presented significant changes in the project description compared to the 1st stage application), thus leading to 65 eligible proposals being assessed.

Almost three quarter, 48 of the 65 proposals, met all requirements of the 2nd Stage of the Large-Scale Call (see Figure 2.1 for an overview of the submitted proposals in the 2nd Stage LSC). Among the 48 proposals, the 7 top-ranked projects (whose grant fell into the available budget) have been pre-selected and invited for grant preparation. Those 7 pre-selected proposals are requesting over EUR 1.1 billion and have the potential to avoid 72.8 $MtCO_2e$ over the first 10 years of operation. The proposals that met all the requirements but were beyond the available budget threshold amount to more than half of the submitted proposals (41, that is 62% of the submitted proposals).

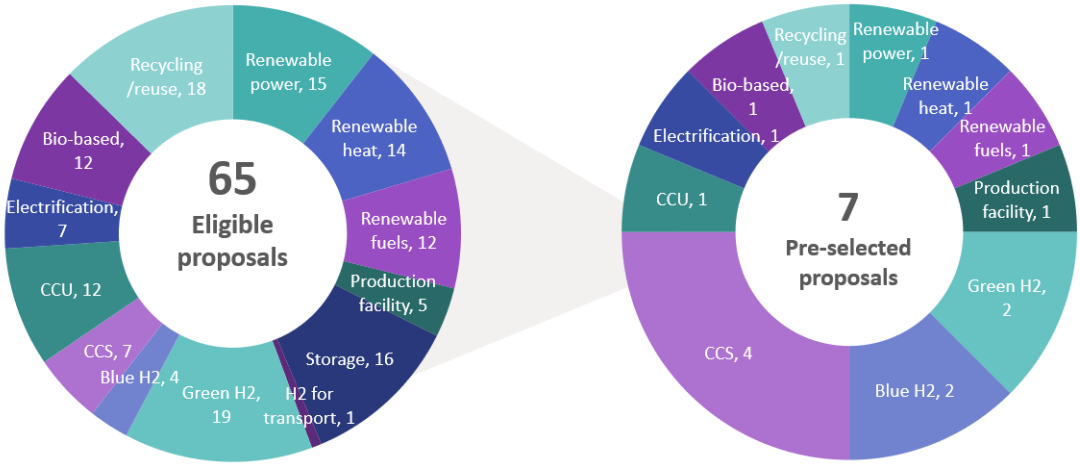
Figure 2.1. Overview of submitted proposals to the 2nd Stage



2.2. Proposals per technological pathways for climate mitigation

Technological pathways for climate mitigation indicate the technologies in the scope of the Fund that corresponded most closely to the main innovation included in the project descriptions. Figure 2.2 shows the number of proposals that are planning to implement one or several of the Fund's technological pathways for both eligible proposals (48) and pre-selected proposals (7). The classification of proposals can be overlapping as one project could apply multiple pathways.

Figure 2.2. Technological Pathways for eligible and pre-selected proposals



Note: Results are based on selected technological pathways by applicants in Form C and further aggregation as necessary. The illustrative outcome gives equal weight to each pathway, whereas their actual relative importance in the projects might differ and would require much deeper analysis.

The results show that eligible proposals covered all the main technological pathways, where pre-selected proposals covered a wide portfolio of technological pathways that have potential to reduce emissions in the IF sectors and beyond. Only storage (including all forms of storage) is not covered by pre-selected proposals, but many proposals which fell beyond the budget threshold covered a storage dimension.

2.3. Proposals per country

The scope of the Large-Scale Call was covering all EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. Figure 2.3 shows the geographical distribution of pre-selected proposals and proposals invited for project development assistance (PDA).

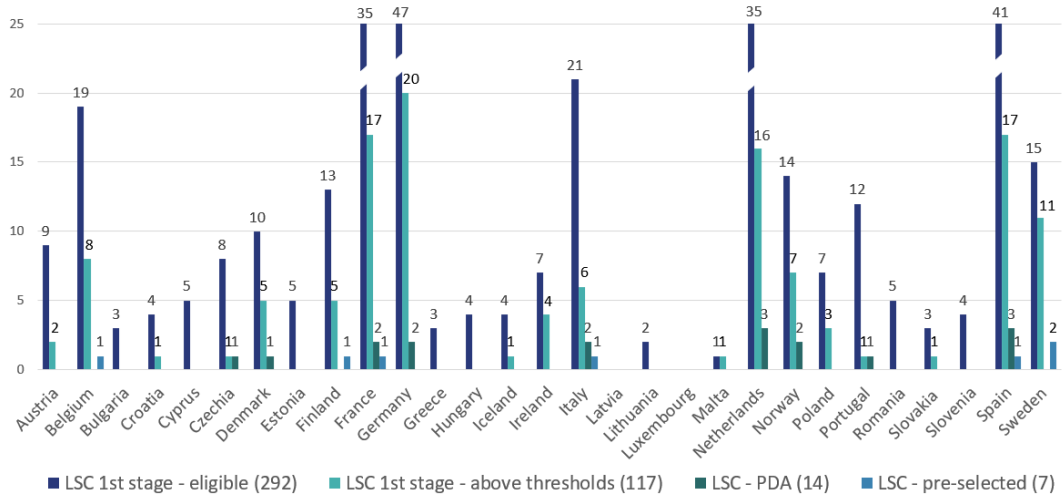
Figure 2.3. Geographical distribution of pre-selected proposals and proposals invited for PDA

The seven pre-selected proposals are distributed mostly in Western, Southern and Northern Europe. They are located in Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Spain, and Sweden. One project also indicated planned CO_2 storage located in the Netherland and in Norway. No pre-selected projects are located in Eastern Europe, but quite a few proposals which fell beyond the budget threshold were. Proposals invited for PDA are located in Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Spain, with some projects located in more than one country.

Figure 2.4 shows an overview of proposals per country, focussing on the following categories:

- The proposals deemed eligible in the 1st stage (292)
- The proposals that met all thresholds in the 1st stage (117)
- The proposals that signed project development assistance - PDA (14)
- The proposals that were pre-selected in the 2nd Stage (7)

Figure 2.4. Large-Scale Call proposals per European country



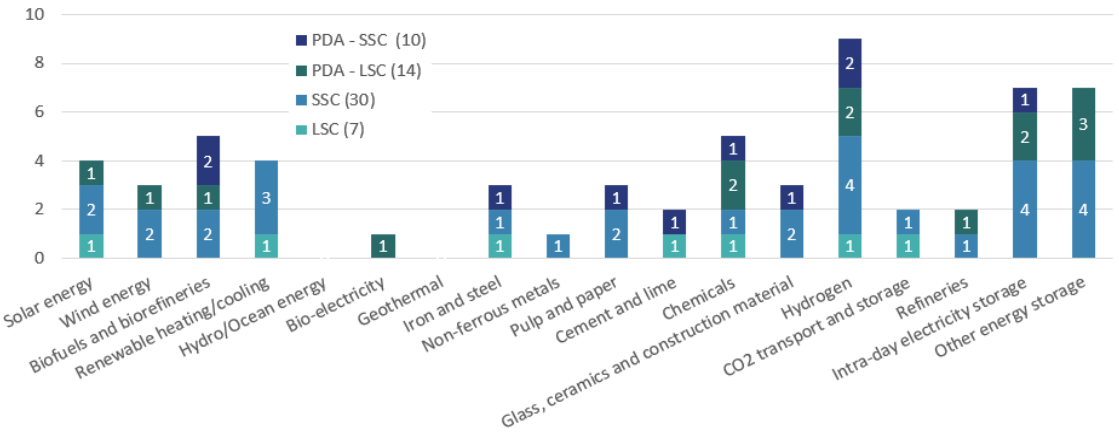
Note: Some proposals are located in more than one country. Results are based on countries for implementation selected by applicants in Form C, adapted as necessary.

Eligible proposals are spread in nearly all Member States, Iceland and Norway. The countries with the highest number of eligible proposals are Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and Belgium. The countries with the least number of eligible proposals are Malta (1 proposal), Lithuania (2 proposals), Greece, Bulgaria and Slovakia (3 proposals). Only two countries did not have eligible proposals, Latvia and Luxembourg.

2.4. Proposals per sectors

Each proposal is allocated to one of the eighteen sectors in the scope of the Fund. Figure 2.5 presents an overview of sectors covered by pre-selected proposals and proposals selected for PDA in the 2020 calls. Pre-selected and PDA proposals cover 16 different sectors (out of 18). Most projects are from the Hydrogen sector, followed by Intra-day electricity storage sector and Other energy storage sector. There have been no pre-selected nor PDA proposals covering the Hydro/Ocean energy sector and the Geothermal sector.

Figure 2.5. Overall IF programme impact by sector



3. Statistics on award criteria

3.1. Introduction

Five criteria have been set to select the best projects to reach the objectives set for the Fund (note that for small-scale projects, the selection criteria are simplified). The projects were assessed on their ability to:

- ✓ demonstrate highly innovative technologies, processes or products;
- ✓ significantly reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions;
- ✓ guarantee sufficient maturity;
- ✓ demonstrate high scalability potential; and,
- ✓ present high cost-efficiency.

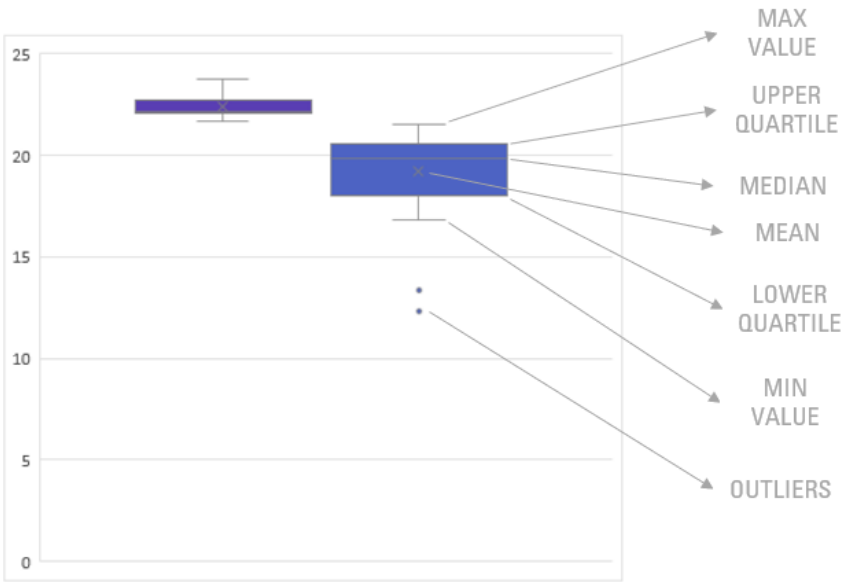
In the 2nd Stage of the Large-Scale Call, each proposal meeting all requirements – that is to say, presenting no errors in the Cost Efficiency and GHG Emissions Avoidance criteria – was assigned a score from 0 to 5, in each of the five award criteria and their respective sub-criteria. Figure 3.1 summarises the award criteria and their respective sub-criteria.

Figure 3.1 Overview of criteria and sub-criteria for the 2nd Stage LSC

Criteria	Sub-criteria
GHG emission avoidance potential	• Absolute GHG emission avoidance • Relative GHG emission avoidance *(Scores derived as per the mathematic formula set in the call text)*
Degree of innovation	• Innovation in relation to the state-of-the-art • Contribution to further EU policy objectives
Project maturity	• Technical maturity • Financial maturity • Operational maturity
Scalability	• Scalability at the level of the project and the regional economy • Scalability at the level of the sector • Economy-wide scalability
Cost efficiency	*(Score derived as per the mathematic formula set in the call text)*

In the sub-sections below, we present the scores received by pre-selected proposals and compare them with the scores received by proposal that met all the requirements, but were beyond the available budget threshold. To do such a comparison, we show the distribution of the scores received by proposals in each category. Figure 3.2 illustrates a graph showing the distribution of scores and how to read the results.

Figure 3.2 Illustration of the distribution of scores

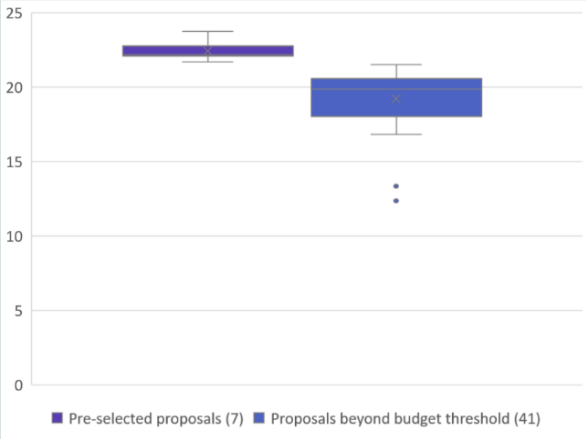


3.2. Total Score

The Total Score was the sum of the five award criteria scores and gave the final raking of all proposals of the 2nd Stage of the Large-Scale Call. The total score reflects a cumulative score for each project and aims to balance-out the differences in proposals between the five key criteria of the Fund. While some proposals may score worse on one criterion, in others they may excel and still be successful.

The distribution of the Total Score for the pre-selected proposals and for those not selected because beyond the budget is shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Distribution of Total Score of proposals meeting all requirements



Key messages

- All pre-selected proposals scored highly on most award criteria
- Proposals beyond the budget performed well. They could potentially be successful in future IF calls

The distribution shows that all pre-selected proposals have high quality consistency and scored highly on all award criteria. Many proposals which fell beyond the budget threshold also performed well, demonstrating an opportunity to improve their results and potentially be successful with a future application to the Fund's calls. Statistics on each award criterion are shown in the next sections.

Proposals with manifest errors are not included in the graphs with scores, however results on non-failed criteria show the potential for proposals to be improved and for applicants to consider resubmission in future calls.

3.3. GHG Emission Avoidance

GHG emission avoidance has been defined as the difference between the emissions from the project activity and a reference scenario over a defined period of 10 years of operation.

With the purpose of assessing the potential GHG emissions savings (or avoidance) that the innovative project will achieve, two sub-criteria have been defined:

- ✓ absolute GHG emissions avoidance
- ✓ relative GHG emissions avoidance

The **absolute GHG emission avoidance** is calculated as the difference between the GHG emissions in the reference scenario, i.e. emissions that would occur in the absence of the project activity; and the expected GHG emissions associated with the project activity during 10 years after entry into operation.

The **relative GHG emission avoidance** represents the extent to which the emissions potential of the project has been leveraged and shall be calculated dividing the absolute GHG emission avoidance by the GHG emissions in the reference scenario, over the same period (i.e. 10 years from the entry into operation).

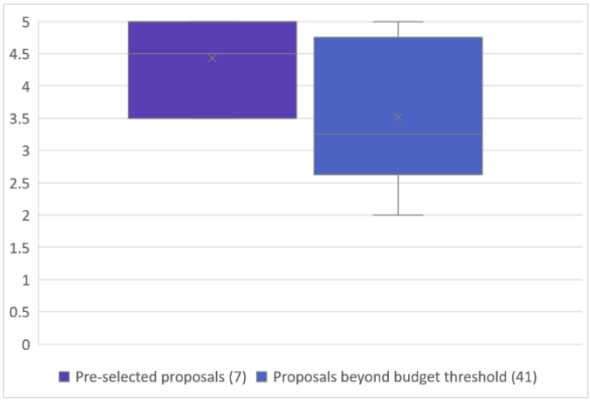
Box 1 Changes in the methodology for the 2nd Call for Large-Scale Projects

It is important to note that the methodology has been updated in the 2nd Call for Large-Scale projects. The GHG emission avoidance criterion in the 2021 LSC includes a sub-criterion covering the following elements: (1) quality and credibility of the calculations, (2) potential to deliver net carbon removals and (3) other GHG savings. The latter two sub-criteria were previously taken into account under Degree of Innovation criterion.

3.3.1. Score on GHG Emission Avoidance

The seven pre-selected proposals scored high in the total score for GHG emission avoidance (see Figure 3.4), with an average result of around 4.5, a minimum of 3.5 and a maximum of 5. Proposals beyond the budget threshold received also high scores, with an average result of around 3.5, a maximum of 5 and a minimum of 2.5.

Figure 3.4 Distribution of GHG Emission Avoidance Score



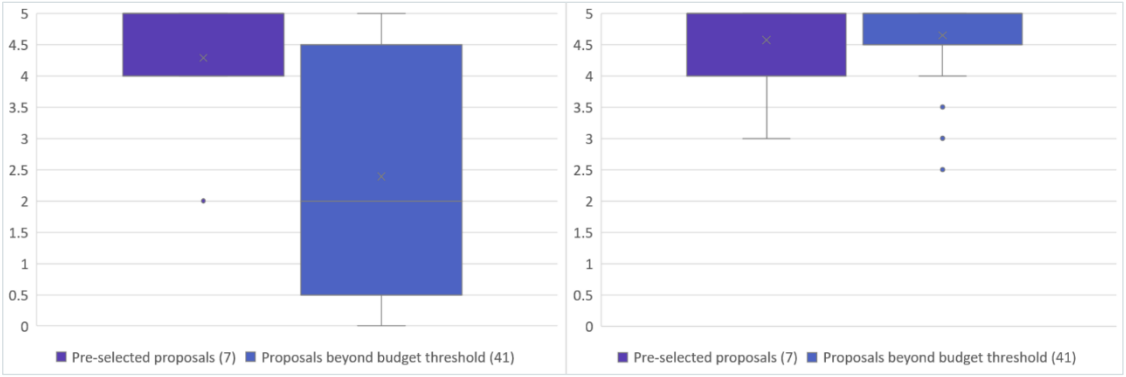
Key messages

- Pre-selected proposals achieved GHG avoidance scores from 3.5 to 5
- Many proposals beyond budget threshold also had high GHG avoidance scores

3.3.2. Scores on Absolute and Relative GHG Emission Avoidance

Pre-selected proposals received high scores in both Absolute and Relative GHG Emission, with the lowest scores being respectively 2 and 3 for the two sub-criteria. Proposals beyond budget threshold show a broader distribution of scores for the Absolute GHG Emission Avoidance Score, ranging from 0 to 5, while showing a more concentrated and relatively higher distribution of Relative GHG Emission Avoidance scores, with some proposals identified as outliers with a lower score (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Distribution of Absolute and Relative GHG Emission Avoidance Score



Key messages

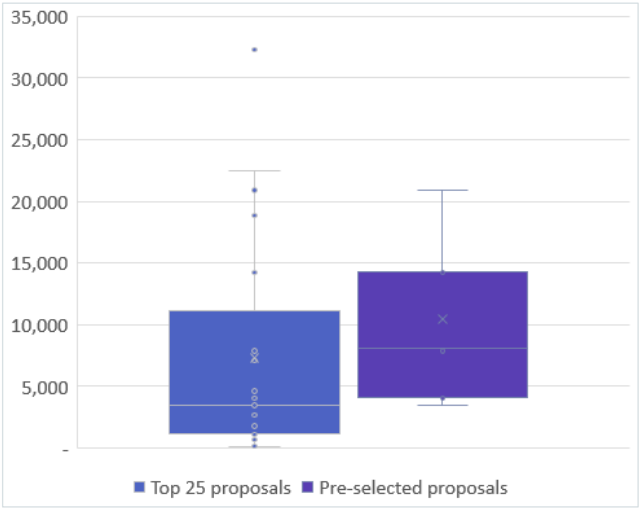
- Pre-selected proposals all achieved relatively high scores on absolute avoidance
- Proposals beyond budget threshold achieved relatively high scores on relative avoidance

3.3.3. Absolute GHG emissions avoided

The distribution of absolute GHG emissions avoidance over 10 years of operation for pre-selected proposals and the top 25 projects is shown in Figure 3.6. The results show that pre-selected proposals had absolute avoided GHG emissions that range from around 4 000 to above 20 000 kt CO_2e (from 4 Mt to 20 Mt), with a median value of around 8 500 kt and an average around 10 000 kt CO_2e.

The top 25 proposals had absolute avoided GHG emissions ranging from 115 kt CO_2e to 32 500 kt CO_2e. Around one third of all proposals meeting all minimum requirements (16) had absolute avoided GHG emissions below 1 Mt CO_2e. Half of the 25 top-ranked proposals were smaller (in term absolute avoided GHG emissions) than the smallest pre-selected proposal.

Figure 3.6 Distribution of absolute avoided GHG emissions (kt CO_2e)



Key messages

- Proposals with smaller amount of absolute avoided GHG emissions would have also been funded if the call had had a larger budget
- Some proposals beyond the budget had very high avoided GHG values

3.4. Degree of Innovation

The Innovation Fund aims to support technologies that are not yet commercially available but represent breakthrough solutions or are sufficiently mature to be ready for demonstration at pre-commercial scale. Thus, a project may consist of a first-of-a-kind commercialisation or large-scale commercial size demonstration of processes previously proven at pilot, smaller scale or large-scale demonstration plants. A second or more of a kind commercialisation can also be considered innovative under certain conditions. In particular, where the relevant costs remain a significant share of total costs that prohibit commercialisation without further public support. Smaller demonstrations or pilot plants are also eligible for support, especially if this is the right scale at which technology needs to be proven before moving to a larger scale demonstration.

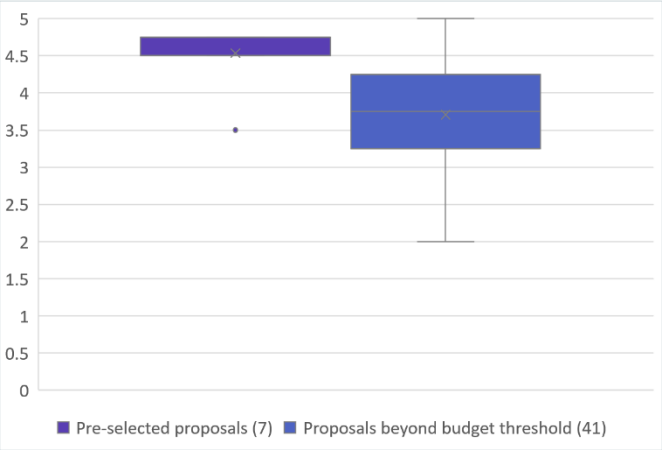
The evaluation is based on two sub-criteria, namely “innovation in relation to the state of the art” and “contribution to further EU policy objectives”. The sub-criterion **“innovation in relation to the state of the art”** assesses the degree to which the proposed actions (technologies and products) are innovative compared to the state-of-the-art and go beyond incremental innovation on a scale from intermediate to breakthrough innovation. The sub-criterion **“contribution to further EU policy objectives”** assesses the contribution to the following EU policy objectives for a climate-neutral economy. It includes (1) energy efficiency (as a main objective of the EU and the first building block of the Long-term Strategy), and (2) circularity (as a further essential part of a wider transformation of industry towards climate neutrality and long-term competitiveness). If relevant, contribution to the deployment of additional renewable electricity is also assessed.

The evaluation also considers the quality, soundness and reliability of the information provided in the proposal. Both score for the two sub-criteria “innovation in relation to the state of the art” and “contribution to further EU policy objectives” range from 0 to 5. Projects with a score lower than 3 on “innovation in relation to the state of the art” are considered as only incremental innovation and thus not to be selected. The “contribution to further EU policy objectives” does not include a threshold. Also, the score of both sub-criteria is divided by two in the calculation of the overall score for the sake of an equal weighting of all criteria.

3.4.1. Score on Degree of Innovation

The distribution of scores on Degree of Innovation received for the LSC pre-selected proposals and proposals beyond budget threshold is shown in Figure 3.7Figure 1.7. Beside one pre-selected proposal scoring 3.5 in the Innovation criteria, all the other pre-selected proposals received very high scores of at least 4.5 points. Some proposals which were beyond the budget threshold also scored very high, with the maximum received score being 5.

Figure 3.7. Distribution of Degree of Innovation Score



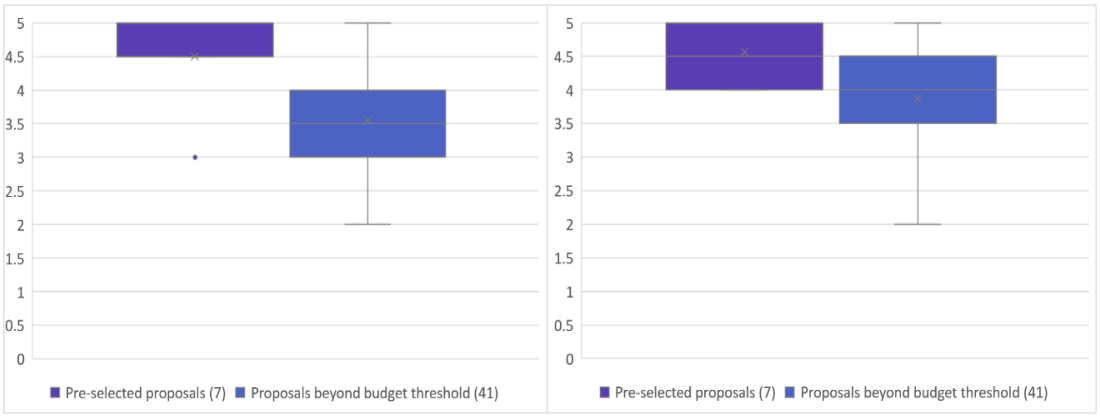
Key messages

- Most pre-selected proposals scored high, 4.5 or above
- Some proposals which fell beyond budget threshold also demonstrated strong degree of innovation

3.4.2. Scores on Contribution to EU- policy and State-of-the-Art

The distribution of scores on Contribution to EU- policy received for the LSC pre-selected proposals and proposals beyond budget threshold, as well as the distribution of scores in relation to the State-of-the-Art are shown in Figure 3.8. Pre-selected proposals received high scores in both sub-criteria, almost all above 4.5 in EU-Policy Contribution and all above 4 in State-of-the-Art. A higher overlap of scores for proposals below and above the budget threshold exists for the State-of-the-Art Score. The lowest score achieved corresponds to 2 in both sub-criteria.

Figure 3.8. Distribution of Contribution to EU-Policy and State-of-the-Art Scores



Key messages

- Most pre-selected proposals achieved very high scores on their Contribution to EU Policy
- Larger overlap in the distribution of advancement over the state-of-the-art criteria across all eligible proposals

3.5. Project Maturity

One of the main objectives of the Fund is to support large-scale demonstration and first of its kind commercial innovative projects to contribute towards removing remaining technological and financial risks. The award criteria “project maturity” is defined as the ability of a proposal to demonstrate credible planning, business model, financial and legal structure as well as of prospect of reaching the financial close within a predefined period of time not exceeding four years after the award decision.

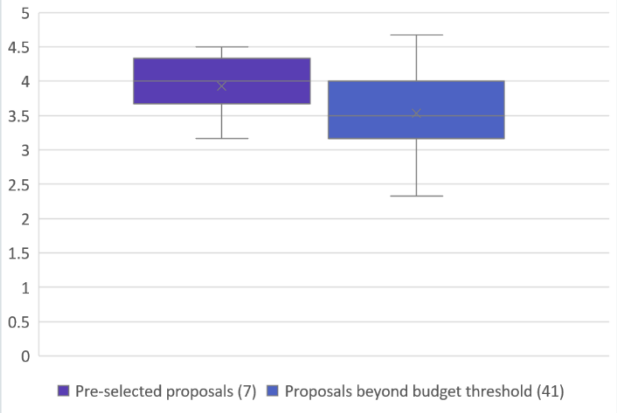
Therefore, the evaluation assesses the proposals in accordance with the following three sub-criteria:

1. **Technical maturity** - to assess the degree of technology readiness and technical feasibility of achieving the GHG emissions avoidance within the project’s operational environment, including the applicant’s degree of understanding of the technology and related technical risks and proposed risk mitigation measures which would be followed.
2. **Financial maturity** - to assess the financial and business viability of the project, including:
   - ✓ Credibility of the project business model and expected project profitability;
   - ✓ Soundness of the financing plan along the project milestones, financial structure and expected sources of financing;
   - ✓ Solidity and level of the commitment of project funders and investors; and,
   - ✓ Level of understanding of the project expected financial risks and quality of proposed mitigation measures.
3. **Operational maturity** - to assess the prospects for successful commercial deployment or demonstration of the project, including:
   - ✓ Credibility and level of detail of the project implementation plan covering all project milestones
   - ✓ Relevance and track record of the project management/team and soundness of the project organisation
   - ✓ State of play and credibility of the proposed plan for obtaining required permits, intellectual property rights or licences and other regulatory procedures
   - ✓ Soundness of the strategy for ensuring public acceptance
   - ✓ Robustness and credibility of the strategy for securing the key supply and off-take contracts
   - ✓ Level of understanding of the project’s implementation risks and credibility of proposed mitigation measures.

3.5.1. Score on overall Project Maturity

The distribution of scores on the Project Maturity criterion is shown in Figure 3.9 for pre-selected proposals and proposals beyond budget threshold. The highest score, 5 out of 5 points, was not achieved by any of the proposals. Pre-selected proposals received scores ranging from 3.2 to 4.5. This is the criterion in which pre-selected proposals received the lowest points compared to the other criteria. Proposals that were not pre-selected received scores ranging from 2.3 to 4.7.

Figure 3.9. Distribution of Project Maturity Score



Key messages

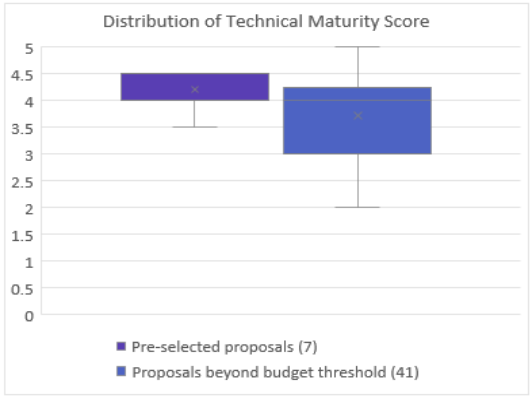
- No proposal received top marks
- Pre-selected proposals achieved the lowest level of scores among all criteria
- Spread of scores is very wide across proposals beyond budget threshold

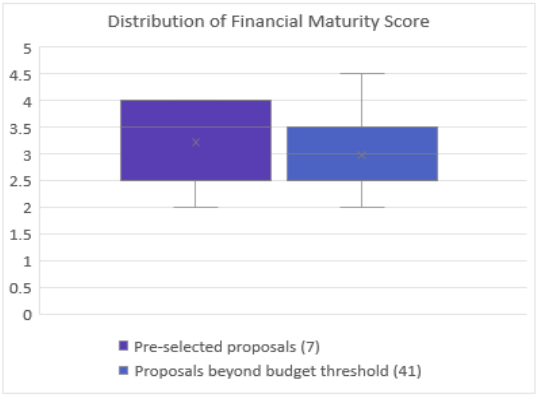
3.5.2. Scores on Technical, Financial, and Operational Maturity

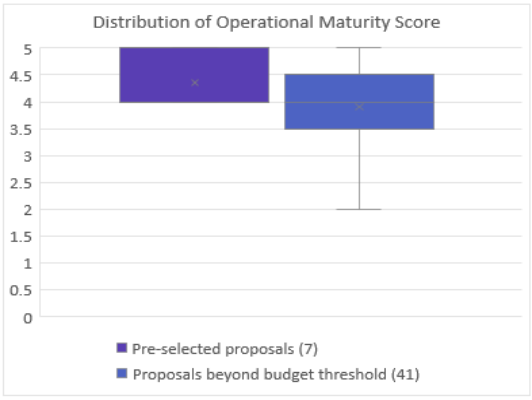
The distribution of scores for the Project Maturity sub-criteria, that cover Technical Maturity, Financial Maturity and Operational Maturity, are shown in Figure 3.10. The spread of the scores is very large in all three sub-criteria, especially for proposals beyond the budget threshold. These proposals received scores ranging from 2 to 5 in Technical Maturity and Operational Maturity, and from 2 to 4.5 for Financial Maturity. This latter sub-criterion is the one in which proposals received the lowest scores for the overall distribution, having scores ranging from 2 to 4.5.

As far as pre-selected proposals are concerned, proposals within the budget received scores ranging from 2 to 4 in Financial Maturity, while the score of pre-selected proposals in Technical Maturity ranges from 3.5 to 4.5, and in Operational Maturity, range between 4 and 5. Operational Maturity represents the sub-criterion of Project Maturity in which pre-selected proposals received the highest values, compared to the two other sub-criteria, Technical Maturity and Financial Maturity.

Figure 3.10. Distribution of Technical, Financial, Operational Maturity Scores







Key messages

- Spread of scores in all sub-criteria is very large, especially for proposals beyond budget threshold
- Financial Maturity shows lowest values for overall distribution (from max to min)
- Operational Maturity shows the highest values for pre-selected proposals

3.6. Scalability

The IF aims to select projects with technical and market potential for widespread application or replication, or for future cost reduction.

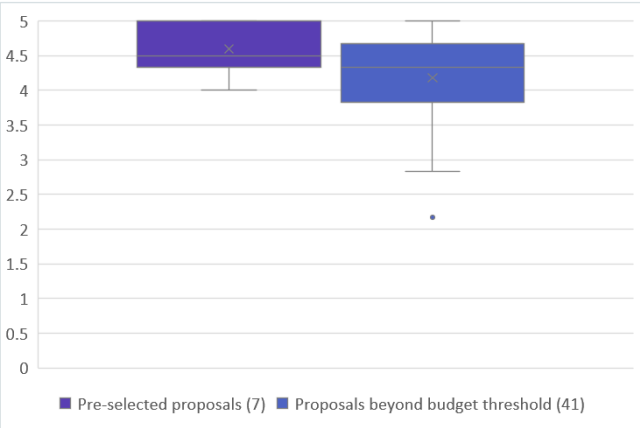
Therefore, the evaluation assesses the proposals in accordance with the following three sub-criteria (and also takes into account the quality, soundness and reliability of the information provided in the application):

1. **Scalability at the level of the project and the regional economy**, including:
   - ✓ Plans for further expansion at the project site and the project's possible technology transfer to other sites;
   - ✓ Cooperation with other relevant actors in the regional economy; and,
   - ✓ Impacts of the project on regional economic growth and jobs.
2. **Scalability at the level of the sector**, including:
   - ✓ Extent to which the technology of the project can be applied within the sector and the expected emissions avoidance; and,
   - ✓ Expected cost reductions and resource constraints.
3. **Economy-wide scalability,** including:
   - ✓ Extent to which the technology of the project can be applied across the economy;
   - ✓ Potential to create new value chains or reinforce existing ones in Europe, in particular with regard to the contribution to the development of strategic autonomy in industrial supply chains, as defined in the New Industrial Strategy for Europe, its 2021 update and the Communication Recovery plan for Europe; and,
   - ✓ Quality and extent of the knowledge-sharing plan. The knowledge-sharing plan must contain knowledge sharing, communication and dissemination activities initiated by the project at the various project stages.

3.6.1. Score on Scalability

The distribution of scalability score for pre-selected proposals and proposals beyond the budget is shown in Figure 3.11. Pre-selected proposals received high scores, ranging from 4 to 5 points, while projects beyond the budget have a broader spread of scores, ranging from 2.2 to 5, with most scores within 3.8 and 4.7. This means that many proposals beyond budget showed high potential for scalability.

Figure 3.11. Distribution of Scalability Score



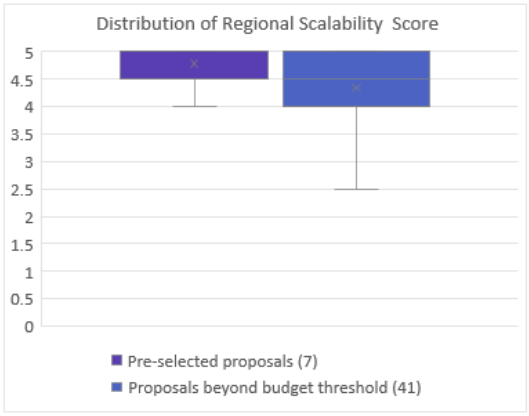
Key messages

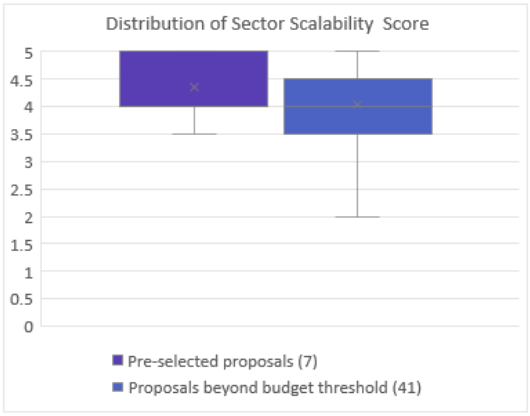
- Pre-selected proposals achieved high scalability scores
- Many proposals beyond budget threshold also demonstrated high potential for scalability

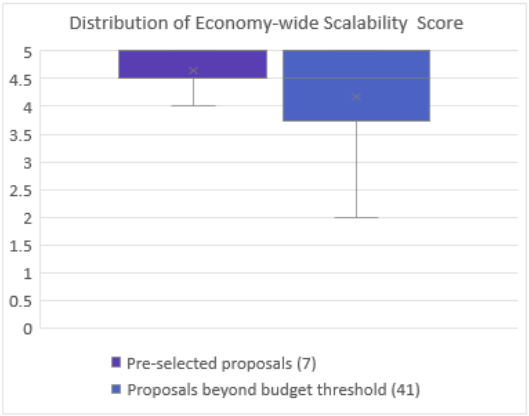
3.6.2. Scores on Scalability at the level of the project and the regional economy, at the level of the sector, Economy-wide

Pre-selected proposals reached high scores in all sub-criteria of Scalability, which are Scalability at the level of the project and the regional economy, Scalability at the level of the sector, and Economy-wide Scalability. However, proposals beyond budget received a wide range of scores, ranging from 2 to 5 for Scalability at sector lever and Economy-wide Scalability, and from 2.5 to 5 for Scalability at the level of the project and the regional economy (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12 Distribution of Regional, Sector and Economy-wide Scalability Scores







Key messages

- Pre-selected proposals achieved high scalability scores in all sub-criteria
- Proposals beyond budget received a wide range of scores
- Regional and Economy-wide Scalability received overall higher scores compared to Sector Scalability

3.7. Cost Efficiency

The Innovation Fund aims to select projects that can demonstrate efficiency in the costs of abatement of GHG emissions over their lifetime.

Cost efficiency is therefore calculated as the relevant costs of the project minus any contribution to those costs from the project proponent, divided by the total projected amount of GHG emissions to be avoided or energy to be produced or stored or CO_2 to be stored in the first 10 years of operation.

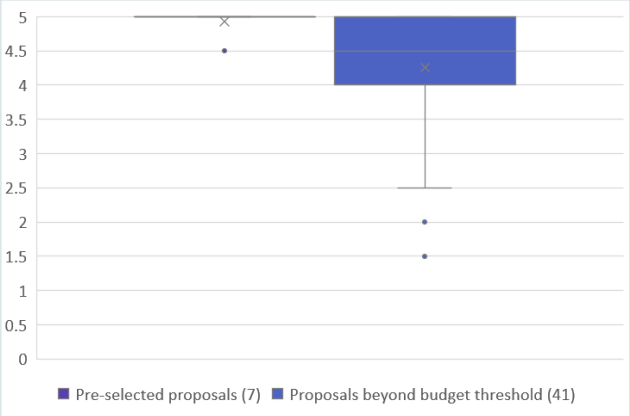
$$Cost\ efficiency\ ratio = \frac{Relevant\ costs\ minus\ contribution\ by\ applicant}{Absolute\ GHG\ emission\ avoidance}$$ [1]

[1] Please note updated formula for 2021 Large-scale call.

3.7.1. Score on Cost Efficiency

The distribution of Cost Efficiency Score of pre-selected LSC proposals and proposals beyond the budget is represented in Figure 3.13. Almost all pre-selected proposals achieved the highest score in cost-efficiency. Proposals beyond the budget had a wide distribution of scores, ranging from 1.5 to 5. Most of the proposals beyond budget threshold received scores between 4 and 5.

Figure 3.13 Distribution of Cost efficiency Score



Key messages

- Most pre-selected proposals achieved the highest cost efficiency score
- There is high spread in cost efficiency score for proposals beyond budget threshold
- Most proposals beyond budget threshold achieved high scores

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INNOVATION FUND

All (past) call documents available on the Funding and Tenders Portal including:

- Guidance and calculation tools on GHG emissions and relevant costs

- Frequently asked questions

https://europa.eu/!QB67by

Innovation Fund helpdesk:

https://europa.eu/!uT46jh

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https://europa.eu/!rx34Dt

Innovation Fund - YouTube

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