

ESTEP SPRING DISSEMINATION EVENT

17-18 FEBRUARY 2026 - BRUSSELS (BELGIUM)

Research Fund for Coal and Steel:
state of play & future funding
opportunities

Sebastiano Fumero (Head of Unit, REA)





Research Fund for Coal and Steel:

RFCS 2025 Annual Call results & RFCS Next steps in 2026

RFCS 2025 Annual Call

RFCS 2025 Annual call: budget and objectives

RFCS 2025 Annual call: submission statistics

RFCS 2025 Annual call: evaluation process

RFCS 2025 Annual call: experts statistics

RFCS 2025 Annual call: Independent Observers report

RFCS 2025 Annual call: evaluation outcome

RFCS 2025 Annual Call: budget and objectives

RFCS 2025 Annual call



EUR 40.000.000 (Steel 72.8%)

RFCS-2025-02-AM Steel Accompanying Measures	EUR 1,000,000
RFCS-2025-02-RPJ Steel Research Projects	EUR 20,500,000
RFCS-2025-02-PDP Steel Pilot and Demonstration Projects	EUR 7,620,000

RFCS 2025 Annual call: Steel research objectives

STEEL

Article 8. New, sustainable and low-carbon steelmaking and finishing processes;

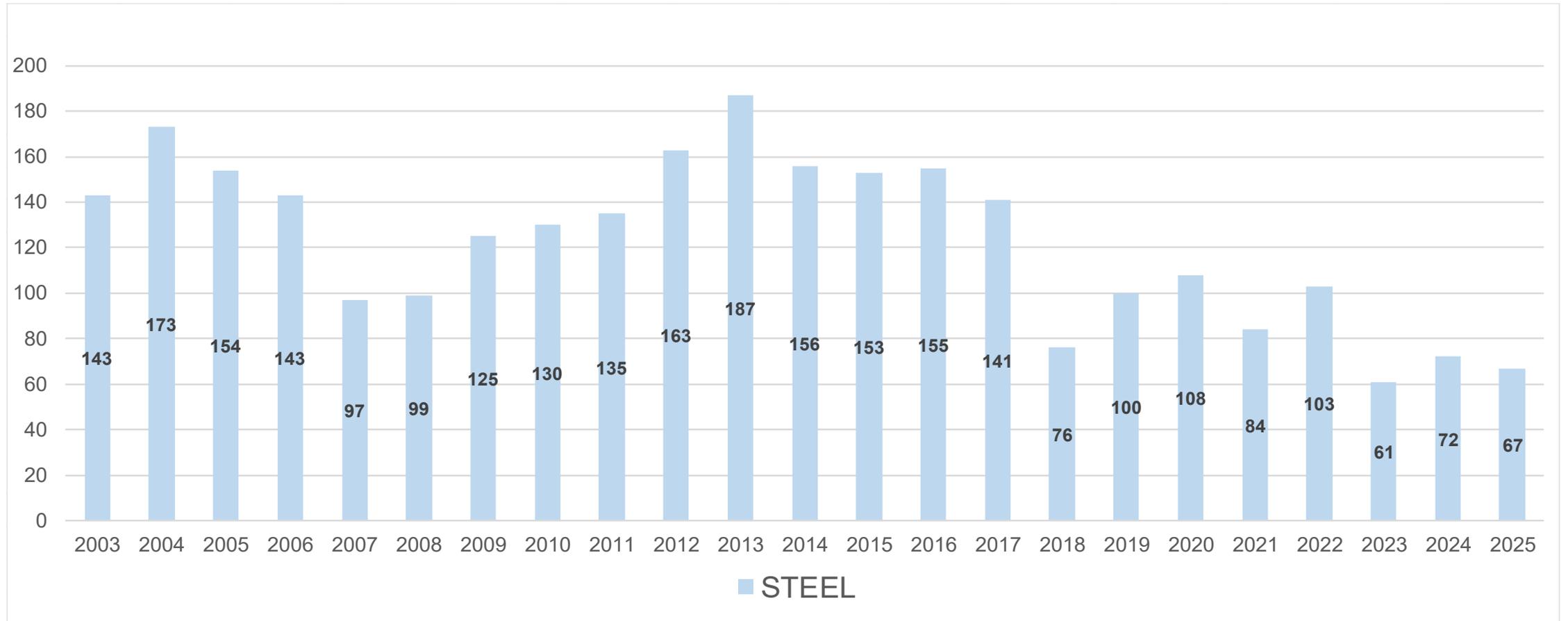
Article 9. Advanced steel grades and applications;

Article 10. Conservation of resources, protection of the environment and circular economy;

Article 10a. Management of work force and working conditions.

RFCS 2025 Annual Call: submission statistics

Evolution over the years of the number of Steel proposals received (annual call)



STEEL: submission statistics



Proposals submitted
67

5 Am
59 RPJ
3 PDP



Call budget

1 MEUR for AM
20,5 MEUR for RPJ
7,6 MEUR for PDP



Requested EC contribution
129 MEUR

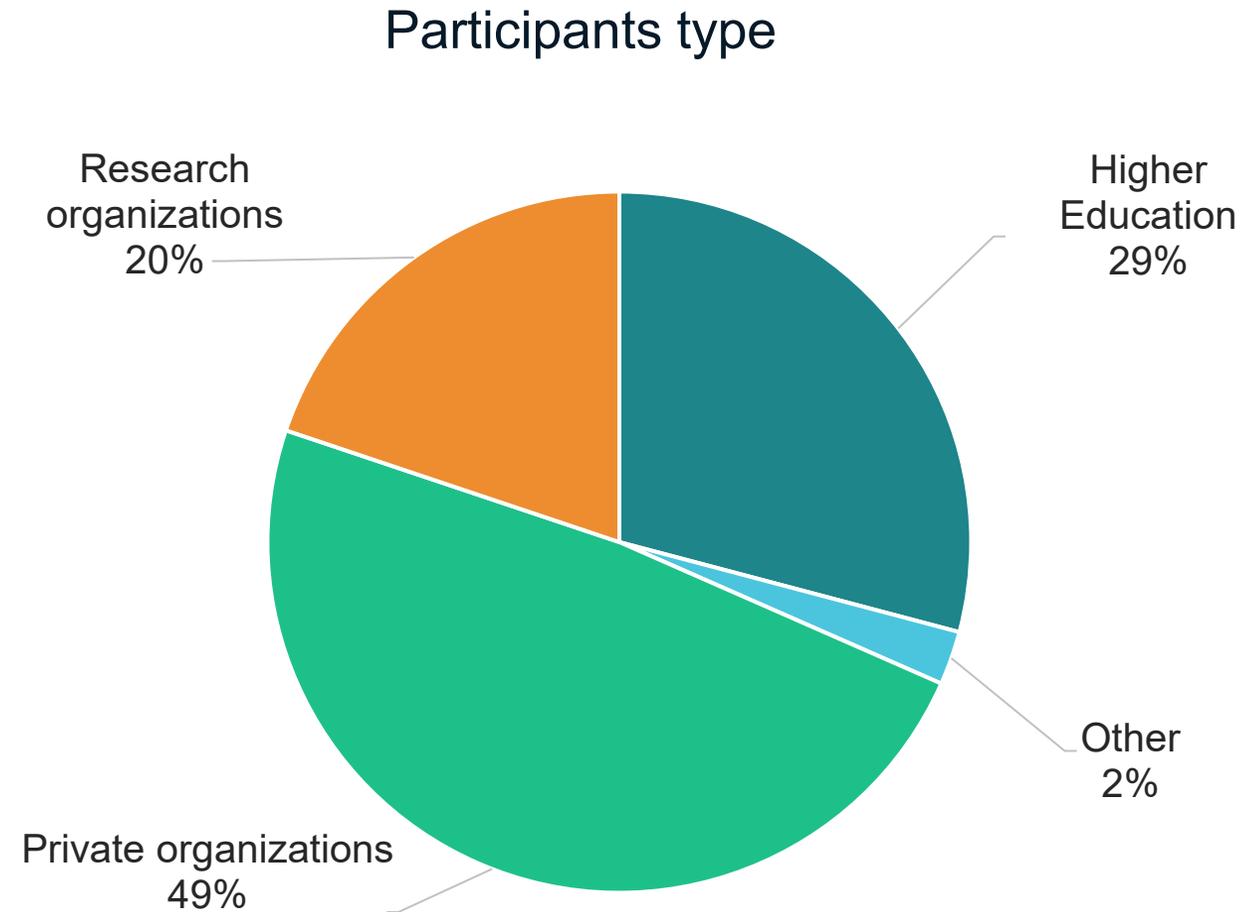
12,4 MEUR AM
97,1 MEUR RPJ
19,7 MEUR PDP



Applicants in total
484

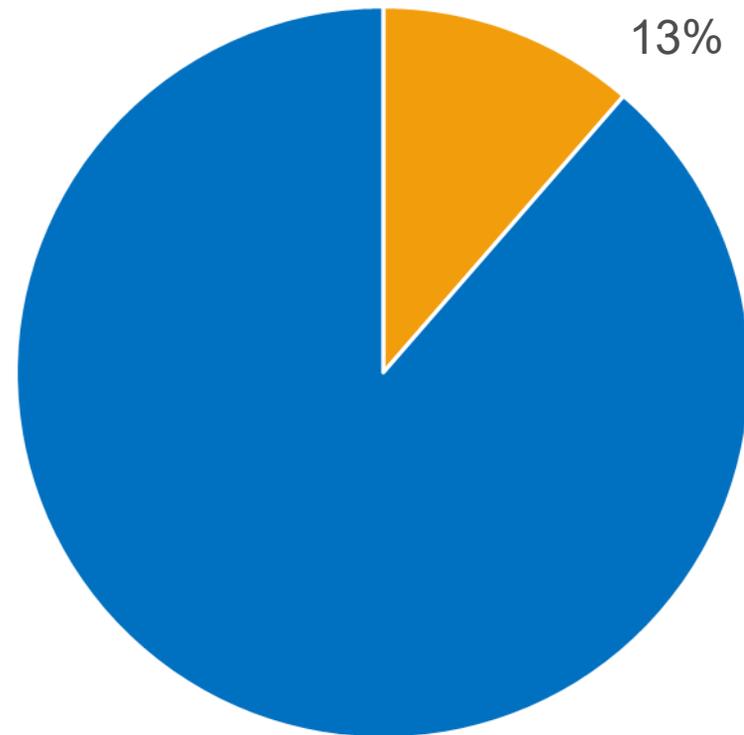
45% resubmission rate

STEEL: submission statistics



RFCS 2025 STEEL: submission statistics

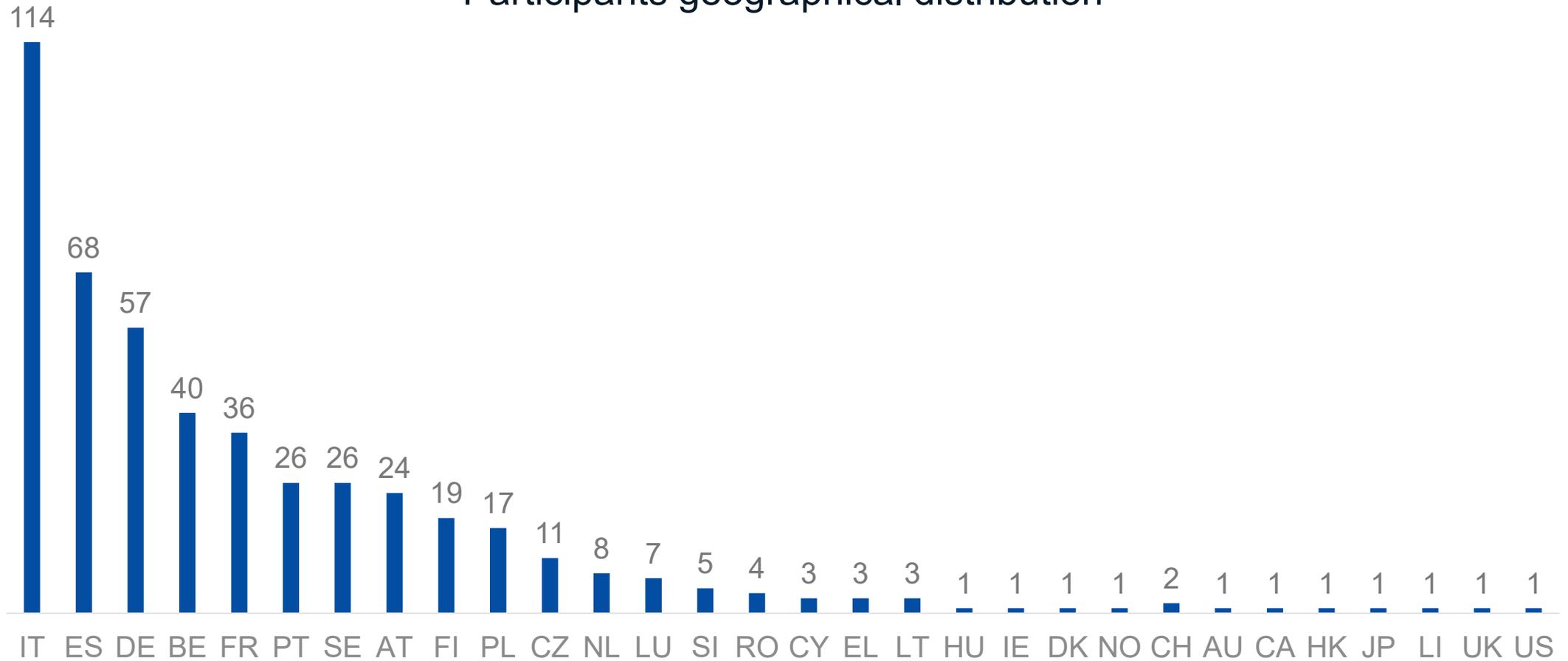
SME participation



62 SMEs out of 484 applicants

STEEL: submission statistics

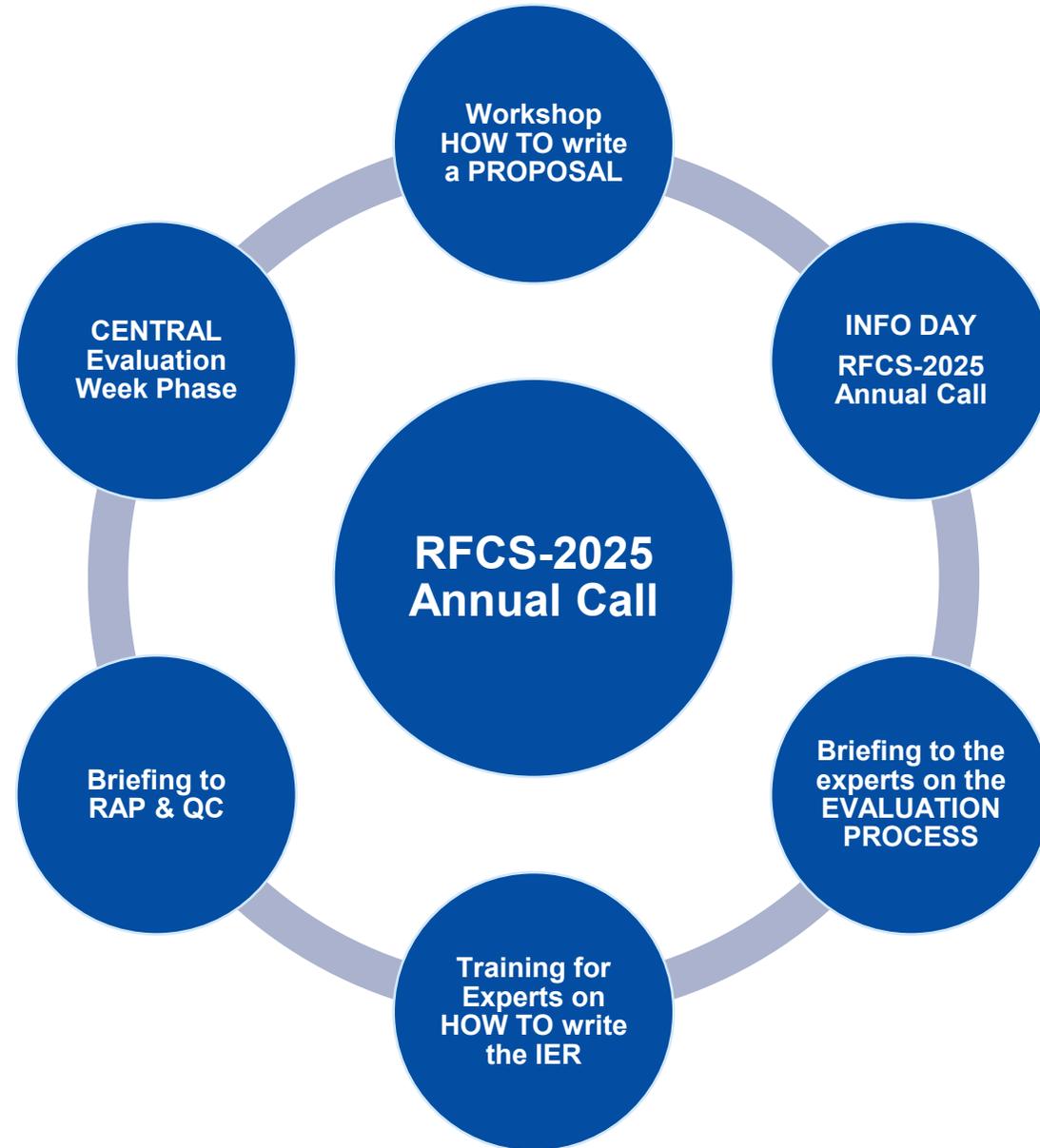
Participants geographical distribution



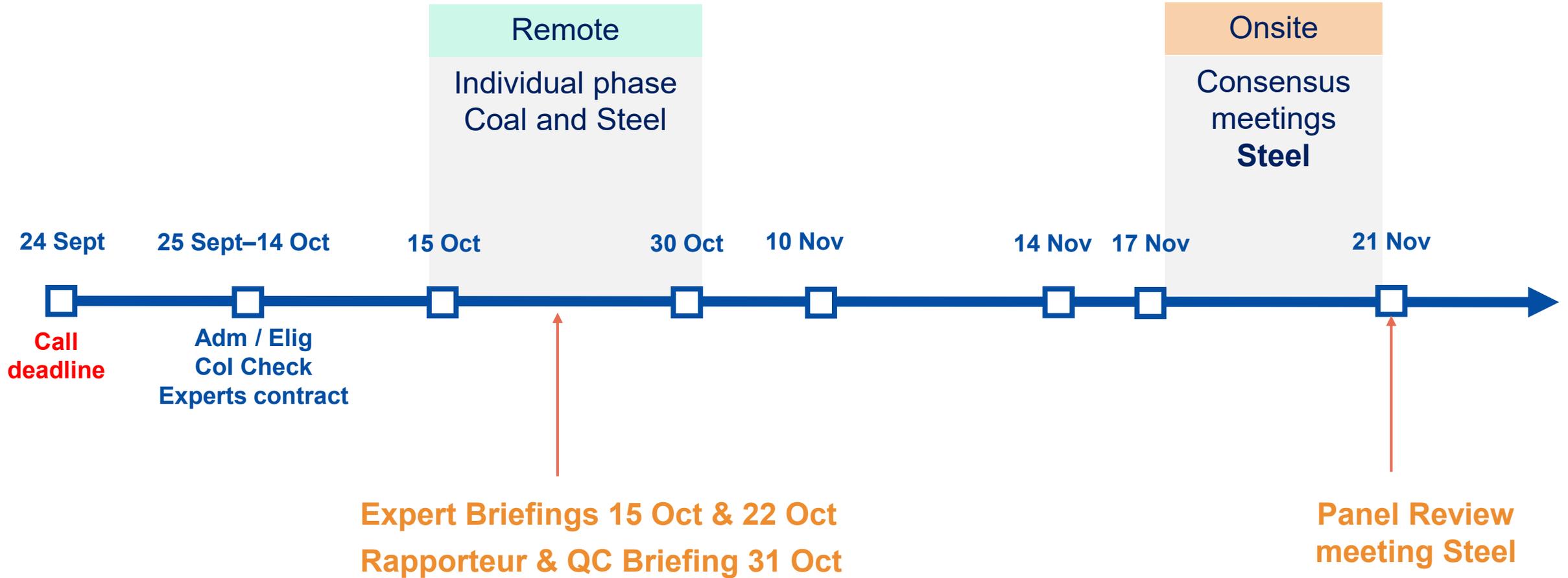
RFCS 2025 Annual Call: evaluation process

RFCS 2025 Annual call

Continuous
commitment by
REA.B1 in
ensuring top
quality proposals
as well as top
quality evaluations



Evaluation timeline



Evaluation process



Experts assess proposals **individually**.

Minimum of **three experts** per proposal.

All individual experts discuss together to agree on a **common position**, including comments and scores for each proposal

Pre-drafting task for the rapporteur

Rapporteur writes Consensus report and submits to **Quality Checkers**

The panel of experts reach an **agreement** on the scores and comments for all proposals within a call, checking **consistency across the evaluations**.

if necessary, resolve cases where evaluators were unable to agree

Rank the proposals with the same score

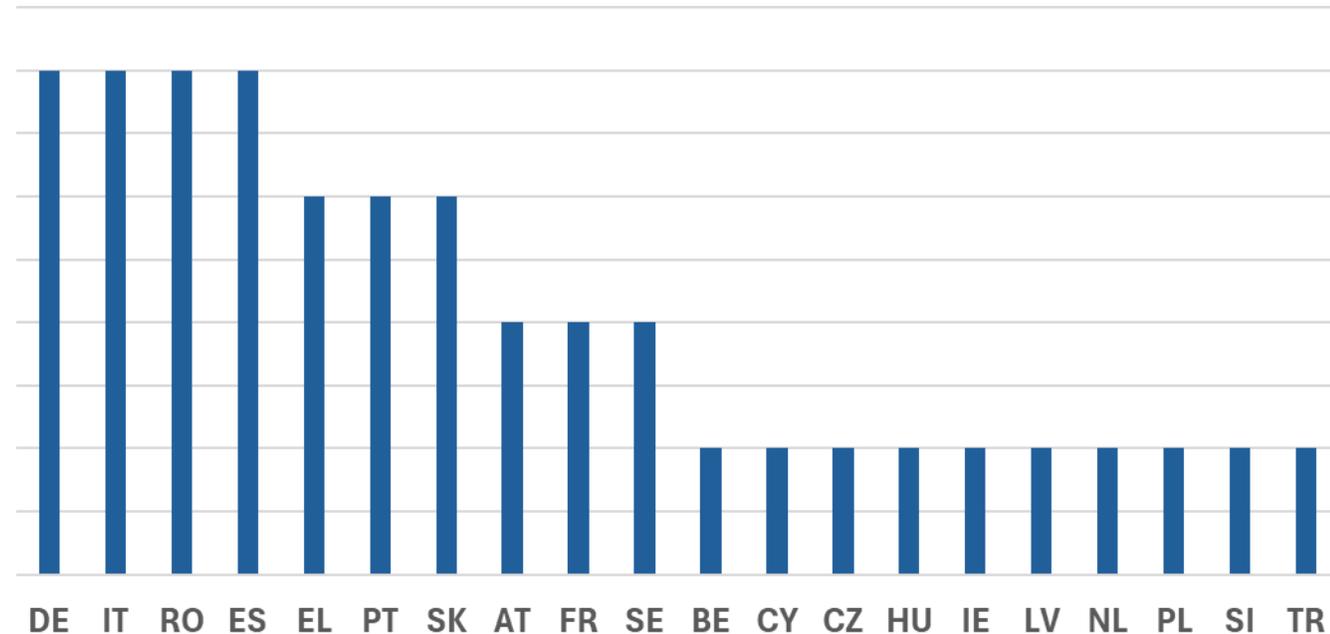
The Evaluation committee reviews the results of the experts' evaluation and decides the **final ranking list**

RFCS 2025 Annual Call: expert statistics

RFCS 2025 STEEL: expert statistics

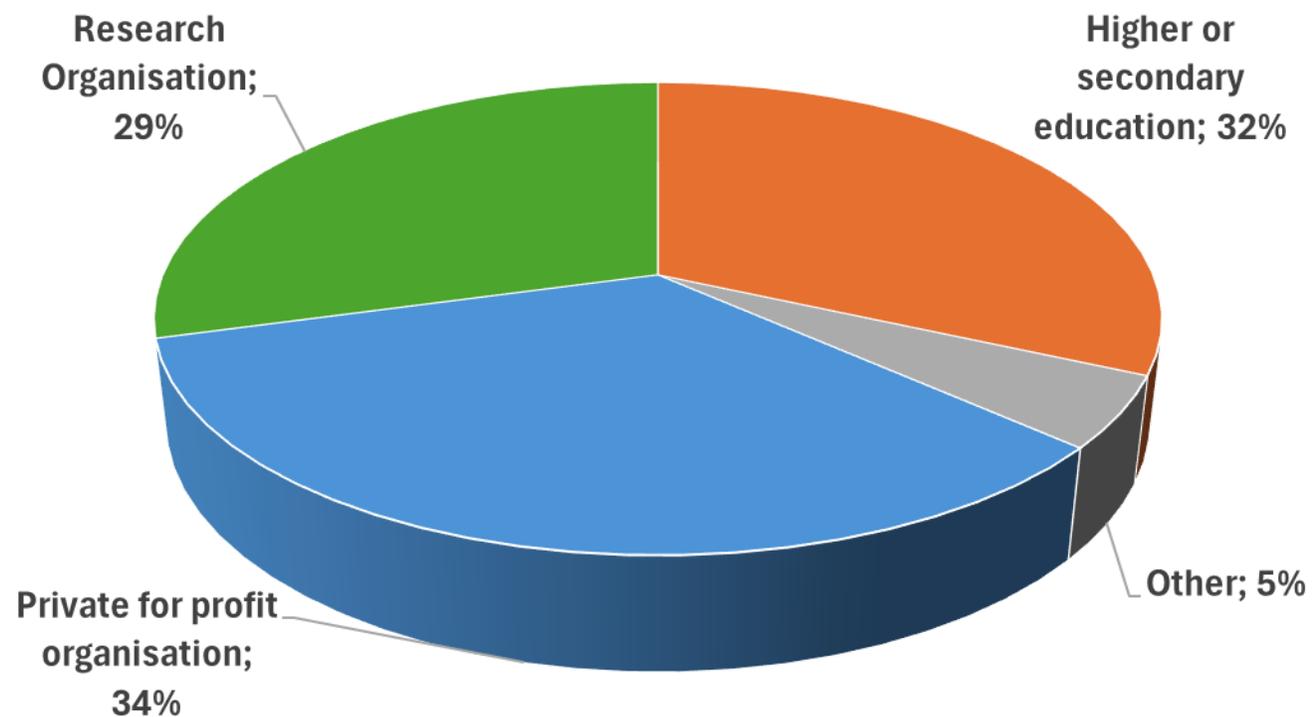
- **41** independent Evaluators
- **12** independent Rapporteurs
- **5** independent Quality controllers
- **47%** female and **53%** male
- **2** independent Observers (HR & IT)

Geographical distribution of **expert evaluators**

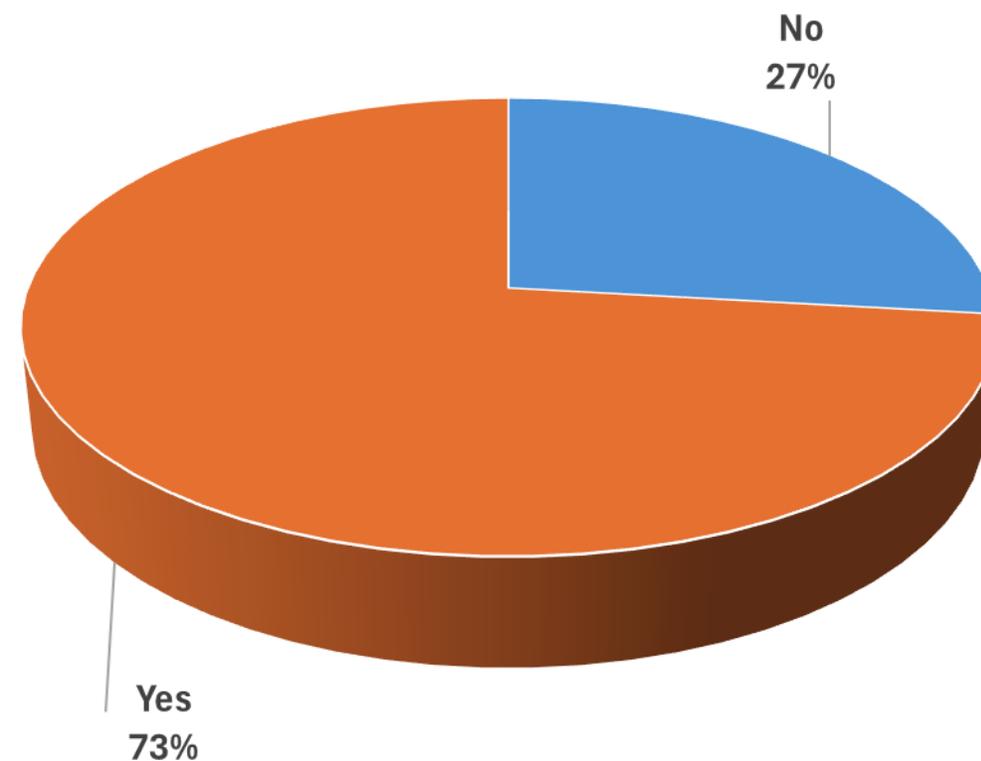


RFCS 2025 STEEL: expert evaluators

Organisation Type



Industrial background



RFCS 2025 Annual Call: Independent Observer's report

Observers' report relevant points

- The evaluation of the RFCS-2025 annual call was **organised in a clear, coherent and timely manner**. The independent observers noted that the process was implemented with professionalism and a consistently high level of quality.
- The **experience and qualifications of the evaluators** were well aligned with the needs of the call, and **their contributions reflected solid expertise in the subject matter**.
- **Procedures were clearly outlined** in the documentation provided and were further reinforced during the various briefing sessions.
- All stages of **the process were conducted in full respect of the applicable rules**, and the actors involved demonstrated independence, impartiality and diligence.
- **The evaluation was marked by objectivity and consistency throughout.**
- The **robust procedural framework developed by REA Unit B1** — grounded in established protocols and standardised practices — **provided a reliable structure for managing the evaluation efficiently and transparently**.

RFCS 2025 Annual Call: evaluation outcome

RFCS 2025: evaluation outcome

- Number of proposals financed within Annual Call budget for Steel
29,120,000€

Steel – 14 proposals	
AM	2 Proposals
PDP	1 Proposal
RPJ	11 Proposals

RFCS 2025: Flexibility Clause

The Commission Decision on the financing of RFCS contains a **Flexibility Clause**

- This clause allows the changing of the initially foreseen budget
- Up to 20% of the total 2025 RFCS budget
- The **responsible Authorizing Officer** may apply this change *in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality*

RFCS 2025: additional proposals for funding

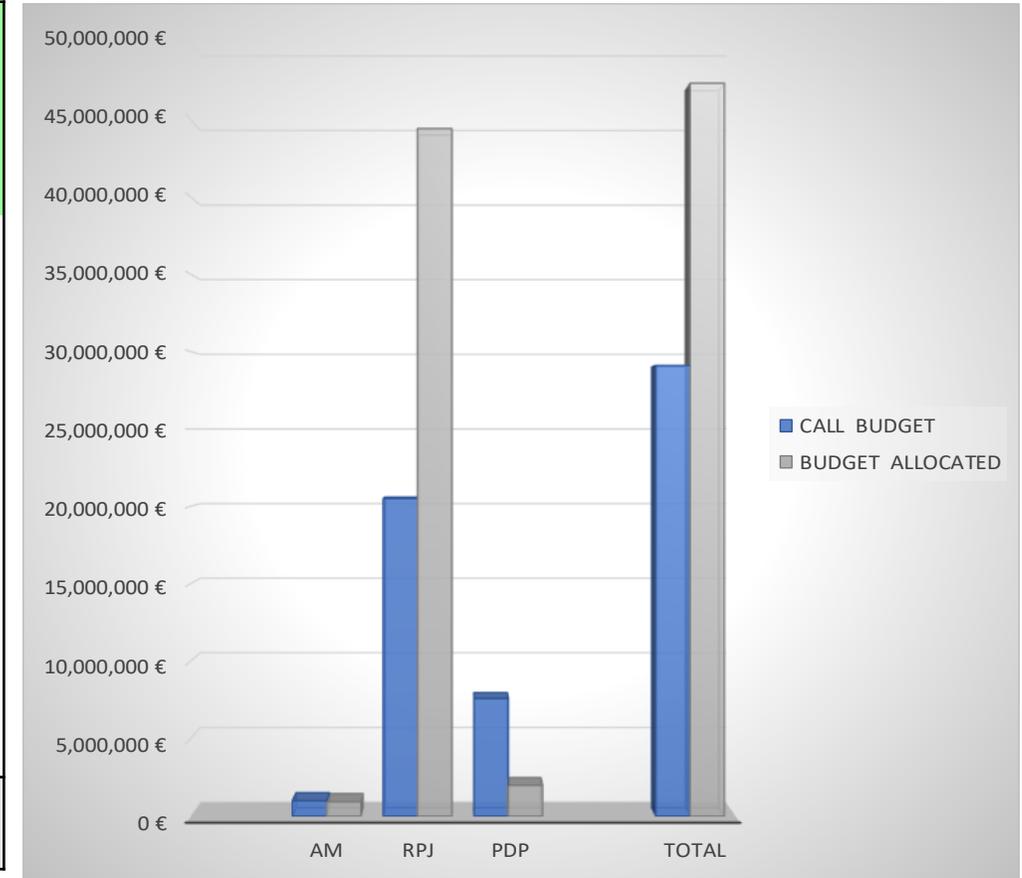
Following an improved overall score of the submitted research proposals (RPJs), it has been decided to include additional projects in the main list for funding.

- For Steel, **15 additional RPJ proposals** have been included in the main list.

STEEL Final ranking list (proposals selected)

29 proposals: 2 AM, 1 PDP and 26 RPJ

TOPIC	CALL BUDGET	N° of Proposals selected	BUDGET ALLOCATED
AM	1,000,000 €	2	937,006.30 €
RPJ	20,500,000 €	26	44,386,143.41€
PDP	7,620,000 €	1	1,993,299.29 €
TOTAL	29,120,000 €	29	47,316,449 €



RFCS 2025 STEEL: Main list statistics – Technical Groups

Of the 29 proposals on the main list:

- **4 selected out of 9** proposals for **TGA1**, Iron-and steelmaking;
- **6 selected out of 12** proposals for **TGA2**, Downstream steel processing;
- **6 selected out of 16** proposals for **TGA3**, Conception of steel products;
- **9 selected out of 18** proposals for **TGA4**, Steel applications and solutions for existing and new markets;
- **4 selected out of 12** proposals for **TGA5**, Steel factories – smart and human.

Main List

TGA1 / TGA2 / TGA3

Panel	Proposal Number	Acronym	Title
TGA1-RPJ	101295818	Excalibur	Excellent refractory material calibrated for application in Electric Arc Furnaces (EAFs) equipped with hydrogen burners
TGA1-RPJ	101293492	SmartSlag	Smart Valorisation of Steel Slags for Enhanced Metal Recovery and Circular Applications
TGA1-RPJ	101296097	2Dust	Toward Dust and Sludge Utilization in future Steelmaking Technologies
TGA1-RPJ	101295479	ARES	Alternative resources for iron- and steelmaking
TGA2-RPJ	101296115	AsCastScale	Investigate the influence of downstream hot charging on scaling via advanced sensor integration and data modelling
TGA2-RPJ	101296053	GRANDE	Gas-flow Refinement and Atomization Nozzle Design and testing for Efficient powder production
TGA2-RPJ	101296203	REVOLUTE	Rolling Enhancement Via Optimization of chosen LUBricants and digital TExturing
TGA2-RPJ	101295882	NextGenCAST	Next-Generation quality prediction and defect detection systems for continuous CASTing driven by fundamental and data-driven modeling
TGA2-RPJ	101295070	HyComAt	Enhancing the Hot Shortness Tolerance in Hot Rolled Flat and Long Products Reheated in H ₂ -Combustion Atmospheres
TGA2-RPJ	101296123	RenewRolls	RenewRolls
TGA3-RPJ	101296200	ECO-STEEL	Eco-Friendly Stainless Steel Production from Recycled Scrap
TGA3-RPJ	101294765	HYDRO-QP	Hydrogen-microstructure interaction in quench and partitioning steels
TGA3-RPJ	101295602	Quazcoat	QUAternary Zinc-based sacrificial COAtings for steel
TGA3-RPJ	101296025	RENEW	New AFA steel production routes for energy and nuclear components
TGA3-RPJ	101294629	TRANSFER	TRANSFER - addiTive manufactuRing of stAiNless Steels For hydrogEn seRvice

Main List

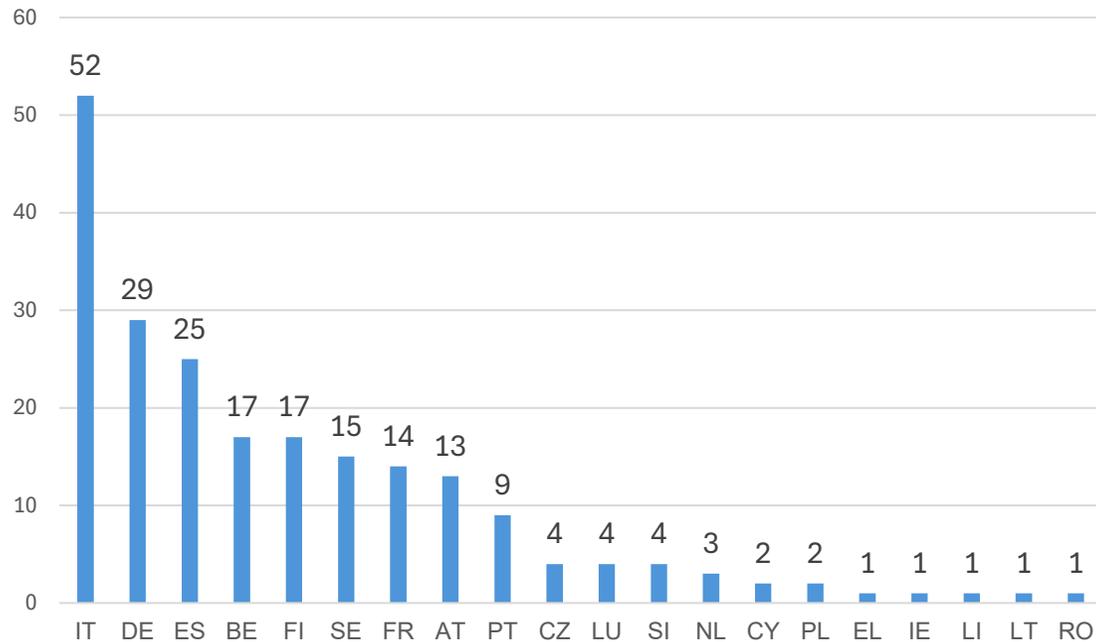
TGA4 / TGA5 / TGAM

Panel	Proposal Number	Acronym	Title
TGA4-RPJ	101296202	Orbistir	Cost effective and sustainable girth welding of steel pipelines for operation in extreme conditions
TGA4-RPJ	101296125	STIRVIVE	Enhancing the Fatigue Life of Advanced High-Strength Steel and Hybrid Structures through Friction Stir Welding
TGA4-RPJ	101294240	BriBotic	Steel Bridge sustainable Repairs with Robotic solutions
TGA4-RPJ	101295986	CISCOM	Corrosion Impact on Shear connections in existing steel-concrete COMposite members: a structural health monitoring perspective
TGA4-RPJ	101286718	PERFORM	Structural and functional roof decking with perforations and microprofiles
TGA4-RPJ	101295673	TRUST	opTimized pRessure vessel steels for new low-carbon fUel Tanks
TGA4-RPJ	101296058	3LEVEL-UP	System-level, sustainable, and artificial intelligence-aided design of steel structures
TGA4-RPJ	101286340	MULTI-STABLE	Innovative self-centering multi-stable dampers with high-performance properties and bi-stable metapanel with auxetic lattices for performance-based steel design in seismic engineering
TGA5-PDP	101296007	i-CAST	Intelligent tools to accelerate Digitalization in Continuous Casting of Steel by coupling Machine Learning to Advanced Sensors and Digital Twins
TGA5-RPJ	101296037	sAlfety	Steelworkers' Safety enhancement through AI based tools For prEdiction and risk reducTYon
TGA5-RPJ	101296078	AI4EAFRoute	Artificial Intelligence Supporting Innovative EAF Route Methods for Process and Plant Management to Enhance Performance and Component Effectiveness
TGA5-RPJ	101295781	SAFEPOt	Secondary materials recycled in Alternative ways For Easy Protection Of steelmaking Tools
TGA-AM	101293902	DREAMERS-Plus	Dissemination of design, REsearch And Monitoring of an Emerging technology applied to a demonstration Resilient Steel buildings
TGA-AM	101295346	FatSTEP	Advanced Fatigue knowledge for high-strength Steels: Transferring research results to support sustainable component design and Engineering Practice in automotive applications

Statistics on STEEL main listed proposals

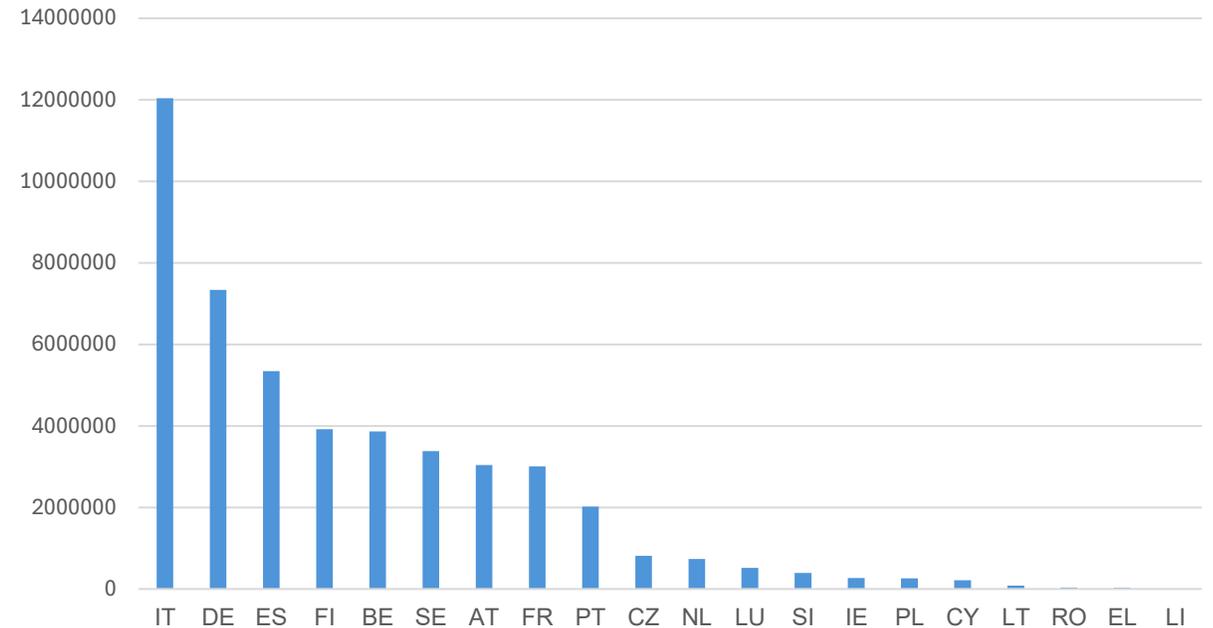
(AM, RPJ and PDP)

Count of beneficiaries per country



215 beneficiaries

Count of grant funding per country



47.3 MEUR grant funding

RFCS 2025 Annual Call Overview - Steel

Finally, thanks to the application of the flexibility clause:

The overall cumulative recommended funding for Steel is **47,316,449 EUR**
and the additional cumulative funding is **18,196,449 EUR**



RFCS - 2026 next steps - Calls for proposals

RFCS 2026 Big Tickets - Coal & Steel

- Publication 3 February 2026 & deadline 6 May 2026
- Total available budget: 110 MEUR (high TRLs steel/coal projects)
- 3 calls (one for Coal and two for Steel)

RFCS - 2026 next steps - Calls for proposals

RFCS 2026 Big Tickets - Coal & Steel

- **RFCS-2026-BT-Steel - Clean Industrial Deal (CID)**
 - Available budget: 50 MEUR (digital/greening transformation of the steel sector)
- **RFCS-2026-BT-Steel - Steel and Metals Action Plan (SMAP)**
 - Available budget: 25 MEUR (digital/greening transformation of the steel sector)
- **RFCS-2026-BT-Coal**
 - Available budget: 35 MEUR (accompanying the phase-out of coal)

RFCS - 2026 next steps - Calls for proposals

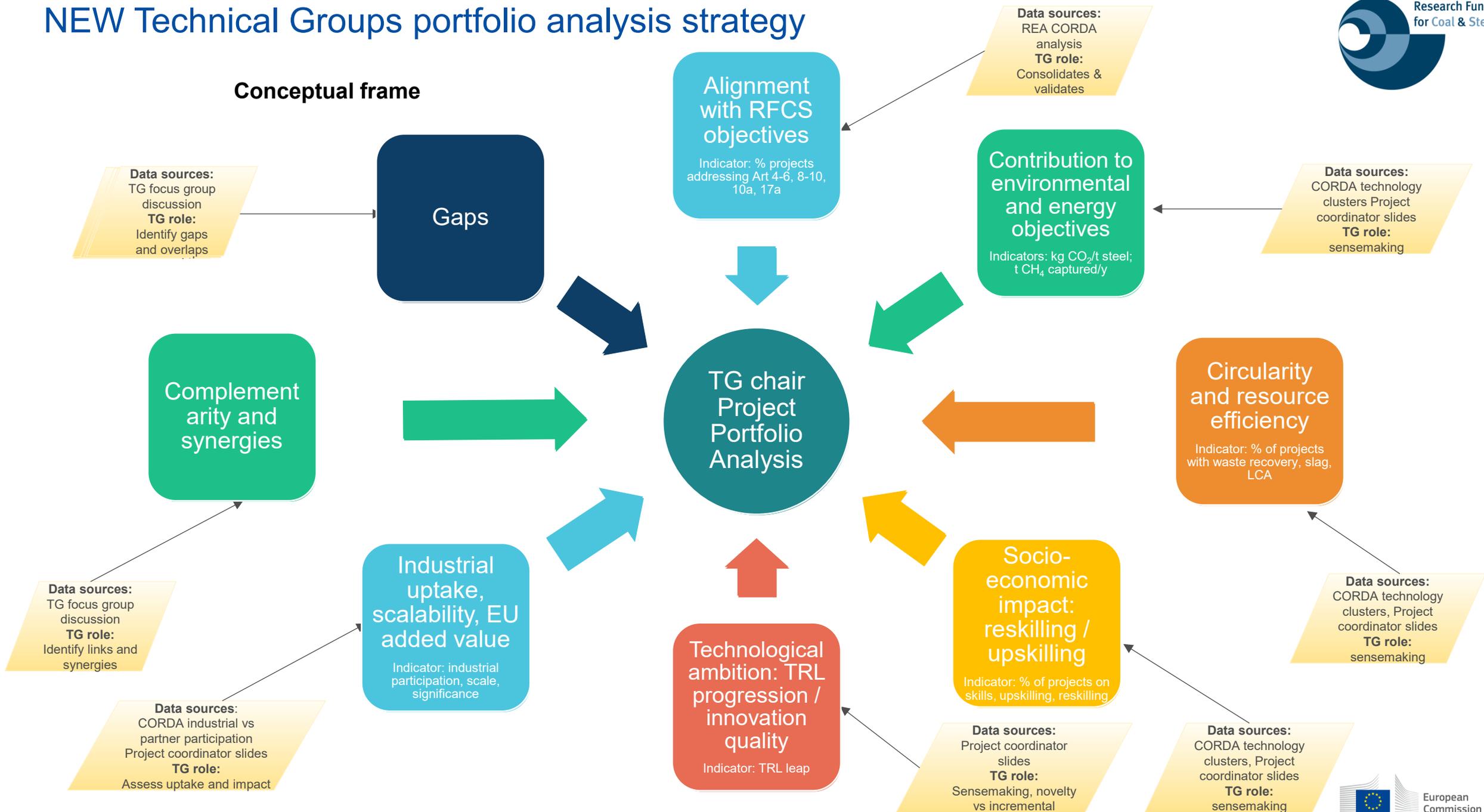
- **RFCS 2026 Big Tickets - Steel (Dual-use - NEW)**
 - Opening June 2026 & deadline September 2026
 - Available budget: 25 MEUR
- **RFCS 2026 Annual Call - Coal & Steel**
 - Opening June 2026 & deadline September 2026
 - Available budget: 40 MEUR

RFCS - 2026 next steps - Info days & events

- Info Days for the Big Tickets, Dual-Use and Annual calls for proposals:
 - **Info Day 2026 Big Tickets Coal & Steel**
 - Thursday 19 February, Brussels (hybrid), full day
 - Morning: presentations on the RFCS 2026 BT call (Clean Steel Partnership)
 - Afternoon: possibility to book **one-to-one sessions** with RFCS Project Officers (only for **in-person** participants)
- Annual dissemination events for Steel and for Coal (dates to be announced soon)

NEW Technical Groups portfolio analysis strategy

Conceptual frame





THANK YOU!!

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