

# The Seal of Excellence

## *Synergies: A practical way forward*

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Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation  
DG Research & Innovation

## Seal of Excellence

***What?*** *A quality label for excellent H2020 proposals not funded*

***Who benefits?*** *SME Instrument proposals –Pilot phase*

***Why?*** *A practical way forward*

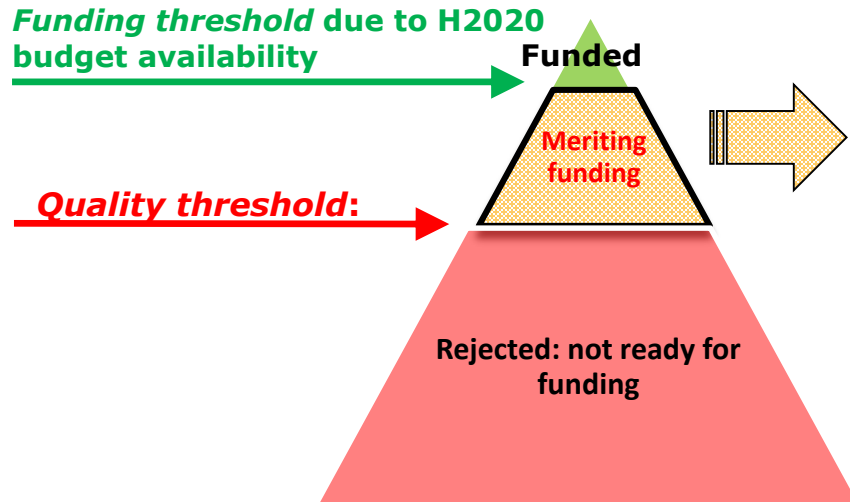
***When?*** *October 2015*

SME Instrument proposals  
evaluated above threshold but  
not funded

The European Commission  
awards the Seal of Excellence  
certificate to the proposals  
above threshold

The holder of the certificate  
approaches alternative funding  
sources (regional, national,  
private, etc.)

## Horizon 2020 evaluation:



## The SEAL OF EXCELLENCE

**certificate declaring that the proposals is of high quality and meriting funding**

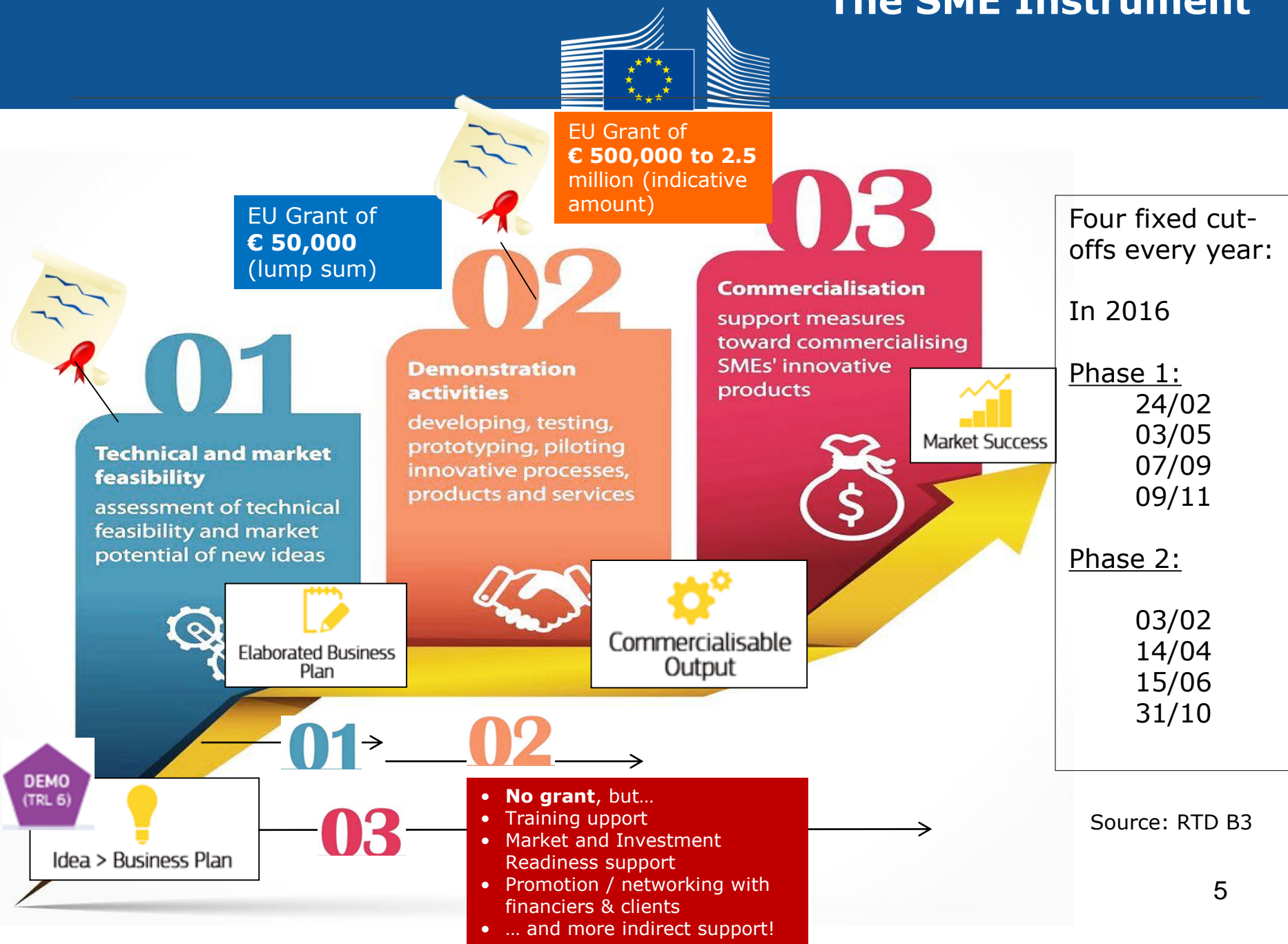
- ✓ **Target population:** excellent projects not funded by H2020
- ✓ **Accompanying letter** explaining how to search for alternative funding sources
- + **NO AUTOMATISM**
- + **NO SAME FUNDING INTENSITY**
- + **FEEDBACK**

## ✓ **Clear benefits for regions / Member States:**

- ✓ make the most of a unique, high quality evaluation process
- ✓ better use of resources
- ✓ potential high local impact

## **Pilot using the SME Instrument**

- ✓ Single company
- ✓ Small scale R&I actions
- ✓ Close to market



Source: RTD B3

| Submitted | Above<br>Threshold | Funded | Rejected | Above<br>threshold but<br>not funded |
|-----------|--------------------|--------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 18.194    | 3.391              | 1.414  | 16.780   | 1.977                                |
| 100%      | 19%                | 8%     | 92%      | 11%                                  |



The project proposal [662526](#)

Development of [redacted] cycle livestock manure and [redacted]

Submitted under the Horizon 2020's SME Instrument  
call 2020-SMEINST-1-2014 of 15 September 2015  
in the area of

Boosting the potential of smart materials by

HABERS  
8230 HARTBERG  
Austria

following evaluation by an international panel of independent experts  
**WAS SUCCESSFUL IN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PROCESS\***  
**AS AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT PROPOSAL**

This proposal is recommended for funding by other sources since Horizon 2020 resources available for this specific Call were already allocated following a competitive ranking.

\* This means passing all stringent Horizon 2020 assessment thresholds for the 3 award criteria (excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of implementation) required to receive funding from the EU budget Horizon 2020.

Corina Crețu,  
Commissioner for  
Regional Policy

**Carlos Moedas,**  
Commissioner for Research,  
Science and Innovation

Brussels, 11 March 2014

Research and Innovation

- ✓ **Awarded** to **ALL** qualifying SME instrument **PROPOSALS**
- ✓ **Downloadable** only by the SME/s from 'my area' in Participants Portal
- ✓ **Informs:** Indicates basic info on the proposal, the call and the proposer
- ✓ **Builds reputation:** Signed by two Commissioners - Highlights the competitive and highly professional selection process
- ✓ **Explains:** Refers to the evaluation criteria used in H2020
- ✓ **Unique and safe:** Digitally sealed against fraud as it is the related proposal and the ESR
- ✓ **Accompanying letter:** provides contacts for information and warns on lack of automatic funding and invites for feedback

## KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ SoE are excellent projects, not left-overs from Horizon 2020
- ✓ Great opportunity to exploit H2020 complete evaluation system : leading to gain time, use resources efficiently and increase R&I performance and impact at local level
- ✓ Keep the process as simple as possible: no need to re-evaluate the content
- ✓ Different support can be provided: grants/loans/guarantee/... general support
- ✓ The Commission services support those of you interested in taking up these projects, through the COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE and advertising your scheme!



## ...more KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ Does not ensure automatic alternative funding
- ✓ If alternative funding is provided, it does not ensure same funding intensity as Horizon 2020 (ref State Aid if nat./regional funding)
- ✓ Does not prevent resubmission to SME instrument, but could be a valid alternative
- ✓ Does not entail preferential treatment if the proposal is resubmitted to the SME instrument
- ✓ For the retroactive seals: if the 'seal' proposal has been resubmitted and funded by the SME instrument, it cannot be used for alternative funding (grants) **No Double Funding.**

✓ **Already 500 'certificates' delivered since  
November 2015 for cut-offs after 09/2015**

**...and more 1200 retroactively since February 2016 for the  
cut-offs before 09/2015**

***SMEs usually welcome the seal, understand its value and are asking for it***

Expectations have to be managed...

- ✓ A great opportunity, but process just starting: be patient!
- ✓ No guarantee of 'automatic' alternative funding and - or to the funding intensity of H2020 - Not to be used for DOUBLE FUNDING
- ✓ Search pro-actively: only the (SMEs) receive the seal and can use it....  
...if you wish so (no obligation!)
- ✓ Make available to the funder ALL documents at your disposal (Full Proposal, Evaluation Summary Report...)
- ✓ DIVERSIFY the search for funding, in terms of sources (public (ESIF or own resources) / private) and type (grants / financial instruments)

# The Seal of Excellence

*Community of Practice*

- ✓ **Purpose:** Exchange of know-how on the best ways to implement the 'seal of excellence' approach through ESIF
- ✓ **Establishment:** created by the Commission since July 2015 following the presentation of the 'seal' concept at EGESIF meeting
- ✓ **Membership:** on voluntary basis, restricted to National or Regional authorities that have a funding power and other Funding Agencies for Innovating SMEs (including private banks and investors)
- ✓ **Working Methods:** Regular meetings + IT platform SINAPSE

**FOR JOINING : Send to [RTD-SEAL-OF-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-SEAL-OF-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu)**

**1st Meeting October 2015 :** 28 participants from 13 MS/regions

**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting January 2016:** 44 participants from 19 MS/regions

**Community of Practice – Oct15:** 54 members from 13 MS

**Community of Practice- Jan16:** 105 members from **24 MS**

- ✓ 57 members at national level (MSs) only: CY, EE, EL, FI, HU, IE, LT, LV, PL, SE, SI, SK, RO, NL, DK, CZ.
- ✓ 48 at regional level: AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, IT, PT, UK
- ✓ HORIZON 2020 ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES (NO)
- ✓ PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS (IT)

| PHASE 1       | Number of 'Seal' proposals |               |               |               |               |             |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| <b>CUTOFF</b> | ICT-37-2015-1              | NMP-25-2015-1 | SC5-20-2015-1 | SFS-08-2014-1 | SFS-08-2015-1 | Grand Total |
| 24/09/2014    |                            |               |               | 1             |               | 1           |
| 18/03/2015    |                            |               | 1             |               | 1             | 2           |
| 17/06/2015    | 1                          |               |               |               |               | 1           |
| 17/09/2015    |                            | 1             |               |               |               | 1           |
| Grand Total   | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 1             | 1             | 5           |

← TOPICS

REQUESTED  
BUDGET

↓ SUBMISSION  
DATES

| PHASE 2       | DRS-17-2015                      |  | SFS-08-2015                      |   | SIE-01-2015                      |   |  |   |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>CUTOFF</b> | Number of<br>'Seal'<br>proposals | Amount<br>requested by<br>'Seal' proposals | Number of<br>'Seal'<br>proposals | Amount<br>requested by<br>'Seal'<br>proposals | Number of<br>'Seal'<br>proposals | Amount<br>requested by<br>'Seal'<br>proposals | Total Number<br>of 'Seal'<br>proposals | Total Amount<br>requested by<br>'Seal'<br>proposals |
| 18/03/2015    |                                  |  |                                  |   | 1                                | € 1.592.150                                   | 1                                      | € 1.592.150   |
| 17/06/2015    | 1                                | € 814.713                                  |                                  |   | 1                                | € 1.902.688                                   | 2                                      | € 2.717.400   |
| 17/09/2015    | 1                                | € 814.713                                  | 1                                | € 1.496.286                                   |                                  |   | 2                                      | € 2.310.998   |
| Grand Total   | 2                                | € 1.629.425                                | 1                                | € 1.496.286                                   | 2                                | € 3.494.838                                   | 5                                      | € 6.620.548   |



- **Interaction and close collaboration** between cohesion & research/innovation ministers
  - Already a number of **'seal'-friendly actions**:
    - > support package by Finland (Tekes) and Norway
    - > imminent call by Spain, Lombardia (grants / financial instruments)
    - > Phase 2 support in pipeline for Italy, Poland, Cyprus...
  - **SMEs** very pleased with the seal – some successful use starts appearing
- 
- **CLARITY ON valid features of a 'seal- friendly' ESIF call :**
    - > Either 'Targeted' or 'open to all+ SoE bonus'
    - No need of technical evaluation requirements if it this is foreseen in the selection criteria agreed in the OP Monitoring Committees
    - Monitoring committees aligning selection criteria to H2020
  - **Aggregated information (number/budget) on 'seal' proposals on demand**
  - **State aid** analysis and communication channel opened with DG COMP





## RESEARCH & INNOVATION

### Synergies with Structural funds

European Commission > Research & Innovation > Synergies with Structural funds

Home Seal of Excellence Synergies Funding Publications Events



## Highlights

12 October 2015

### Seal of Excellence



This quality label is awarded to project proposals submitted for funding under **Horizon 2020**, which succeeded in passing all of the stringent selection and award criteria but could not be funded under the available Call budget. The 'Seal' identifies project proposals which merit funding from alternative sources **public or private, national, regional, European or international**.

[Know more](#)

#### Why?

Not all the good proposals get funded in Horizon2020. The SEAL will benefit:

- **SMEs:** get a 2nd chance to get funding
- **Regions:** identify and support high quality proposals with a clear territorial impact

[Know more](#)

#### How?

The action concerns, for this initial 'pilot' phase, only proposals applying for the **SME instrument** and in particular all those **SME instrument** proposals evaluated above the quality threshold.

[Know more](#)

9 October 2015

### Commissioner Moedas to announce the 'Seal of Excellence' initiative

The Commissioner will announce, jointly with Commissioner Creţu, the launch of the 'Seal of Excellence' for proposals under the 'SME Instrument', at the opening session of the 13th edition of the **OPEN DAYS - European Week of Regions and Cities**.

Commissioner Moedas will also announce the establishment of a 'Knowledge Exchange Platform' (KEP), jointly set by DG Research and Innovation and the Committee of the Regions. The objectives of the KEP are to set up learning mechanism for regions and cities on research and innovation activities, valorise new knowledge created through Horizon 2020 projects and maximise synergies between Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds.

## Social Corner

### Tweets

Alicia O'Rourke @aor\_4  
Interested in the Seal of Excellence? Check out Q&A [europa.eu/1JQ49XU](http://europa.eu/1JQ49XU) #sealofexcellence #h2020 #EUOpenDays [pic.twitter.com/8A26knDRJm](https://pic.twitter.com/8A26knDRJm)  
2h

F. Hacque-Cosson @FHacque  
#EUfunds synergies up thx to New #SealofExcellence btw #H2020 #ESIF @CorinaCretuEU @Moedas ow.ly/TktzE Pilot phase @H2020SME  
3h

Annamaria Zonno @ZonnoA  
#sealofexcellence: 100 proposals submitted to H 2020 SMEs Instrument funded with national funds  
3h

Karin Aase @KarinAase  
#sealofexcellence in a Swedish context: [ec.europa.eu/easme/en/news/...](http://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/news/...) #EUOpenDays @H2020SME @vinnovase  
4h

Annamaria Zonno @ZonnoA  
#sealofexcellence presented at Open Days: funding innovative SMEs for competitive territories  
4h

[More tweets](#)

[Tweet about](#)

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# Seal of Excellence Website

European Commission > Research & Innovation > Synergies with Structural funds > Seal of Excellence

Home Seal of Excellence Synergies Funding Publications Events

## Seal of Excellence

In a period of scarce resources, the impact of our investments in Research and Innovation needs to be maximised: creating synergies between Horizon 2020 and other funding sources (such as, but not exclusively, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)) is a way to achieve it.

This was also a clear mandate from President Juncker to Commissioners Moedas and Creţu.

«We fully support the 'Seal of Excellence' as an important first step in a longer term process of building synergies between Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds. It will help innovative companies to access and enhance the knowledge economy in their regions, contributing therefore to the implementation of smart specialisation strategies»

### Why a 'Seal of Excellence' ?

Every year, thousands of organisations in Europe apply to the Horizon 2020 Programme investing precious resources and time. The European Commission runs one of the most complete evaluation systems in the world, using international independent experts. The evaluation screens against three defined criteria (excellence, impact and quality & efficiency of implementation) and identifies those proposals not mature enough to receive funding (below quality threshold) and those that are considered as meriting funding (above threshold). Only some of the above threshold proposals receive funding depending on the available Horizon 2020 budget.

The 'Seal of Excellence' certificate will be awarded to the applicants of above threshold not funded proposals: a holder of the certificate can then approach alternative funding sources (regional, national, private or public) and present the certificate as a label of a high-quality project proposal. Thanks to the 'Seal', high quality proposals from **innovative Small and Medium Enterprises** will have additional chances to be funded. The precious time and effort SMEs invested in the proposal and idea development will thus not be wasted.

The 'Seal of Excellence' offers at the same time a unique opportunity for **regions and Member States** (and any other interested actor) to fully exploit the high-quality Horizon 2020 evaluation process: to easily identify and possibly support high-impact proposals coming from promising innovative companies, with an ambition to grow and compete internationally.

## Seal of Excellence



What it is

Who can benefit

How to use it

## More Information

- [Regional Policy: Research and Innovation](#)
- [Community of Practice](#)
- [The Horizon 2020 SME Instrument](#)
- [Guide on Synergies](#) 2.0 MB

## Case Studies

- [Italy: The Experience of Lombardy](#)
- [Sweden: Building on the H2020 SME Instrument](#)

# Links and documents

- **SYNERGIES and SEAL OF EXCELLENCE WEBSITE:** <http://ec.europa.eu/research/regions/>
- **MORE INFO:** email to: [RTD-seal-of-excellence@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-seal-of-excellence@ec.europa.eu)
- **Guide for authorities on synergies between ESIF and Horizon2020 and other EU programmes:**  
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/other/index.html>
- **Horizon 2020 regulations & rules for participation,**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference\\_docs.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html)
- **Evaluation procedure of the SME Instrument**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/sme\\_participation.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/sme_participation.html)

**Thank you!**

**[Mersia.Panagiotakou@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Mersia.Panagiotakou@ec.europa.eu)**

DG Research & Innovation

HORIZON 2020

## All cut-offs Phase 1 and Phase 2 - 'seal of excellence' proposals

