

STUDY

Requested by the BUDG committee



Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the EU Budget 2014-2019



Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs
Directorate-General for Internal Policies
PE 654.474 - July 2020

EN

Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the EU Budget 2014-2019

Abstract

This study performs a “reality check” of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPs) included in the EU budget over 2014-2019 and assesses their use as a strategic political tool. It covers 324 PPPs with an aggregate value of EUR 337 million to date. PPPs can trigger new or fine-tune existing legislation or policy and generate important lessons learnt. However, there is no systematic data to assess their effectiveness. The study identifies a series of areas for improvement.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets. It designated its Member Eider GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL to follow the study.

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Original: EN

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Manuscript completed in June 2020

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFET	European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs
AGRI	European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
BUDG	European Parliament Committee on Budgets
CA	Commitment Appropriation
CONT	European Parliament Committee on Budgetary Control
DEVE	European Parliament Committee on Development
DG	European Commission Directorate-General
DG BUDG	European Commission Directorate-General for Budget
DG CNECT	European Commission Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG DEVCO	European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG DIGIT	European Commission Directorate-General for Informatics
DG EAC	European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ENV	European Commission Directorate-General for Environment
DG GROW	European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG MARE	European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG REGIO	European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG SANTE	European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
EC	European Commission
ECON	European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

EMPL	European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FEMM	European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
IIA	Interinstitutional Agreement
IMCO	European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection
INTA	European Parliament Committee on International Trade
ITRE	European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
LIBE	European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
PA	Preparatory Action
PETI	European Parliament Committee on Petitions
PP	Pilot Project
PPPA	Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions
REGI	European Parliament Committee on Regional Development
TRAN	European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Parliament (EP) via the Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union contracted Blomeyer & Sanz on 6 December 2019 to prepare a study on the Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs) in the EU budget 2014-2019. This study aims to perform a “reality check” of what has been achieved with PPPAs over 2014-2019 and to assess the use, actual and potential, of PPPAs as a strategic political tool for the EP. This study was prepared on the basis of desk research, including quantitative analysis, over 30 interviews with the EP, European Commission (EC) and other implementing actors, and case studies looking at eight specific PPPAs.

The following paragraphs briefly outline the main findings and recommendations.

Quantitative analysis

The analysis covers 324 PPPAs starting from 2014 to 2019 inclusive. Of these, 213 were still ‘open’ at the end of 2019 (i.e. their budget lines were still open). The aggregate value¹ of the 324 PPPAs to date is approximately EUR 337 million² and will still evolve, as the final total outturn of ongoing PPPAs will only be available in several years from now. PPPAs under Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) headings 1.1 (Competitiveness for growth and jobs) and 3 (Security and citizenship) have received disproportionately high amounts of total PPPA funding (in outturn payment appropriations), while PPPAs under MFF headings 1.2 (Economic, social and territorial cohesion) and 2 (Sustainable Growth: Natural Resources) have received disproportionately low amounts of total PPPA funding (in outturn payment appropriations). MFF heading 1.1 accounts for EUR 161 million, almost three times more than any other MFF heading. It also accounts for 135 PPPAs, again more than double any other MFF heading.

The EC Directorates-Generals (DG) CNECT, GROW, ENV, and SANTE have been responsible for more Pilot Projects (PP) than other DGs. DGs CNECT and EAC have been responsible for more Preparatory Actions (PA) than other DGs.

The number of PPs has increased in four of the six years covered by the assessment. There was a sharp increase in the number of PPs starting in 2016 and in the number of PAs starting in 2018.

With the exception of a few outliers, to date PAs have values under EUR 5 million and PPs have values under EUR 2 million¹.

Approximately half of PPPAs have been voted commitment appropriations just one year. 34 PPPAs were voted commitment appropriations but have not ultimately been funded. PPs are likely to remain ‘open’ significantly longer than PAs of the same value.

1,887 PPPA proposals were pre-assessed from 2013 to 2019.³ The number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment doubled from approximately 150 in 2014 to 300 in 2015.

¹ In this study “PPPA value” means PPPA total payment appropriations outturn to date (the best approximation of a PPPA actual cost over its lifetime).

² To put the financial volume of the PPPAs covered under this study in context, for the period 2014-2020, funding programmes of somewhat similar magnitude include the European Solidarity Corps with EUR 352 million programmed (2018-2020) or the Justice Programme with EUR 339 million programmed (2014-2020).

³ The analysis excludes the second round of 2019 pre-assessments as these were not included in the provided data. The total including these was 1,974.

63% of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment from 2013 to 2019 were categorised as 'C'⁴ or 'D'.⁵ The combined percentage of 'A'⁶ and 'B'⁷ proposals has remained lower in all years from 2015 onwards compared with 2013 and 2014. The higher the number of proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the less likely they will be categorised as 'A' or 'B'.

There have been almost 200 pre-assessments involving two or more DGs, more than undertaken by any individual DG. Pre-assessments involving two or more DGs are more likely to result in 'C', 'D', or 'None' (i.e. no category). DG EAC and DG CNECT have pre-assessed significantly more PPPAs than other DGs. Proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT are more likely than not to be categorised as 'A' or 'B', even though the likelihood does fall as the number of proposals increases. In the case of DG EAC, the analysis suggests that there is no relationship between the number of proposals and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. In fact, there appears to be a weak positive relationship.

For PPPAs where the author is an MEP rather than a Committee, there is a weak negative relationship between the number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' (the more proposals, the fewer 'A' and 'B'). For PPPAs where the indicated author is a Committee, there is a positive relationship between the number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' (the more proposals, the more 'A' and 'B'). There is of course no suggestion that the EC is in any way instrumental in this correlation. The CULT Committee followed by the TRAN Committee submitted far more proposals than any other Committee, and the CULT Committee's proposals had by far the highest combined rate of 'A' and 'B' pre-assessments (approximately 60% of the proposals it submitted).

Qualitative analysis

The 'programming' of the PPPAs stands out for its shorter cycle (2-3 instead of 7 years) with annual exercises of preparing new PPPAs and introducing them in the budget as amendments. Indeed the 'standard' approach to EU programming is multi-annual and derives from the current duration of the MFF (7 years). The Secretariat for the BUDG Committee (BUDG Secretariat) has a coordinating role in terms of the preparation of PPPAs (issuing the calendar, organising an information session, collecting PPPA proposals, forwarding PPPA proposals to the EC for pre-assessment).

The different Committee Secretariats support the MEPs on the preparation of the PPPAs, and each year, the BUDG Secretariat organises an information session on the budgetary procedure including the PPPAs. EP interviewees commented very positively on this support, though there were also recommendations for improvements. There is no comprehensive guidance document on the PPPAs. Despite the existing efforts to develop capacities on the preparation of PPPAs, there were still substantial needs for raising awareness on the tool of the PPPAs and developing MEP capacities.

The Committee Secretariats encourage MEPs to engage in consultations with the EC when preparing PPPAs as early as possible, however, this advice is not followed systematically. Feedback by the line DGs in the context of the preparatory consultations is not always endorsed by the EC's DG Budget (DG BUDG) in the formal pre-assessment.

⁴ 'PPPA is already fully covered by an existing legal base or the ideas are otherwise being addressed'.

⁵ 'PPPA cannot be implemented or similar actions have already been carried out in the past'.

⁶ 'PPPA could be implemented as suggested by the Parliament'.

⁷ 'PPPA might under certain conditions be fully or partially implementable but the project would need to be re-designed (it could be the case if part of the suggested action is already covered by a legal base); or more information might be needed before the Commission can assess the proposed project'.

EP interviewees noted the generally poor quality of the majority of the PPPA proposals with many 'C'- and 'D'-categorised proposals, specifically noting the poor quality of financial proposals for PPPAs, with budgets not in line with implementation requirements. This was mostly explained with MEP resource and time constraints.

In the course of discussions with different EP and EC actors, the question was raised as to whether there should be a limit on the number of PPPA proposals to be submitted to the EC for pre-assessment. EP and EC interviewees considered the volume of PPPA proposals to place a substantial burden on the EP and EC in terms of processing and pre-assessment. Different practices and positions were noted with regard to limiting the number of PPPA proposals.

DG BUDG coordinates the pre-assessment. This involves a preliminary review of the proposals by seven to ten experts. The proposals are then forwarded to the relevant line DGs. The assessment consumes significant EC resources with a total of about 3,500 working hours dedicated to the assessment each year. DG BUDG provides internal guidance on the pre-assessment, however, EP interviewees pointed to inconsistencies in the feedback provided by different line DGs and suggested that more detail should be provided. The EC's assessment is to be mainly guided by aspects of legality and feasibility. The pre-assessment process is also constrained by the tight schedule.

Further to the pre-assessment by the EC, new PPPAs need to be tabled as amendments to the budget. Moreover, amendments are required to 'top up' the resources of existing PPPAs. This need depends on the volume of commitment appropriations adopted when the PPPA was first introduced. Notwithstanding, in cases where additional commitment appropriations could be useful, EP feedback suggested that MEPs did not systematically introduce the required amendments.

Following the pre-assessment, there are different approaches to tabling amendments for the introduction of PPPAs in the budget, some Committees vote on PPPAs, some don't. In general terms, EP interviewees found the selection of PPPAs tabled as amendments not to respond to any specific EP priorities. The process of tabling amendments is also affected by a tight time schedule.

Further to the votes on the EU budget including the package of PPPAs in the Committee on Budgets and then in the Plenary, a Conciliation Committee meeting between the EP and the Council is organised to agree on the final 'compromise' budget package, including the final selection of PPPAs to be included and their respective budget allocations. Again, EP interviewees suggested that the final set of PPPAs maintained in the context of the 'compromise' package on the budget often did not reflect a clear set of (EP) priorities.

EP interviewees all pointed to the limited role of the EP when it comes to the actual implementation of the PPPAs. The regulatory framework for the PPPAs does not foresee any role for the EP in terms of implementation. It is also not standard practice that MEPs take an interest in the implementation of the PPPAs. In the cases where MEPs take an interest in the implementation of a specific PPPA, they often struggle to identify EC contacts to follow up on its implementation. Successful PPPAs are not systematically 'promoted' in the EP. Some EP Committees invite the EC to a Committee meeting to present the state of play with the PPPAs.

EP interview feedback suggested that besides the inherent quality of a PPPA, implementation performance was also a reflection of the importance that the EC is willing to attribute to a PPPA. Some PPPAs experience gaps in commitment / payment appropriations or do not start being executed. At times, the EC decides not to propose follow-up payments or rejects new commitments, arguing that results of the first year of implementation are not yet available. EP interviewees also considered the EC, on some occasions, to implement a PPPA in ways that departed from the originally intended idea as

proposed by an MEP. Finally, EP interviewees commented on the EC's role in terms of reporting on progress with the PPPAs. Feedback suggested that the reporting was lacking detail.

EP interviewees questioned the definition of success of a PPPA exclusively in terms of follow-up with a legislative action. EP feedback suggested that the absence of any follow-up could also be a valid outcome for various reasons. In this context, EP interviewees emphasised the 'experimental' nature of the PPPAs. Moreover, the absence of any follow-up could also be considered a success in terms of lessons learnt; a PPPA can thus contribute to avoiding 'wasting' efforts in terms of more substantial follow-up actions. However, the EC's DG BUDG considered the identification of a legislative gap to be the core of a successful PPPA.

Recommendations

The desk research, interviews and case studies have shown that PPPAs can lead to important outcomes in terms of triggering new or fine-tuning existing legislation or policy. PPPAs can also enhance the design of funding programmes and, more generally, generate important lessons learnt. PPPAs have thus proven their worth in the spirit of the Financial Regulation ('to test the feasibility of an action and its usefulness' / 'to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions'). However, there is no systematic data to assess the extent to which the tool of the PPPAs has been effective. This study has identified seven serious constraints, undermining the potential effectiveness of the PPPAs:

- The setting of priorities for PPPAs is not clear;
- MEPs often lack capacities for preparing PPPAs, and too many PPPA proposals are affected by quality constraints and are 'C'- or 'D'-categorised by the EC in the pre-assessment;
- PPPAs are being prepared and pre-assessed in the framework of a very tight time schedule;
- In the context of the preparation of the PPPAs, there is no systematic approach to consultations between MEPs and relevant EC line DGs;
- There appear to be inconsistencies in the way that different EC line DGs and DG BUDG approach the pre-assessment of PPPAs;
- The large number of PPPA proposals implies a significant administrative burden on the EP and EC, and quantitative data confirms that the more proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals; EP feedback on this point emphasises that PPPA expenditure is limited by two sets of ceilings (those specific to PPPAs under the Financial Regulation and those applying to expenditure by heading under the MFF regulation).
- There is no systematic and efficient approach to data handling, both on the pre-assessments of PPPAs and the subsequently adopted PPPAs.

The study therefore recommends that the EP reflects on the following recommendations and discusses follow-up within the EP and with the EC:

- Setting clear priorities for PPPAs;
- Developing the capacities of MEPs to prepare and implement PPPAs;
- Allowing for more time for the preparation of PPPAs, e.g. by starting the preparation of PPPAs at an earlier stage or moving to a multi-annual approach to PPPAs, only introducing new PPPAs every two or three years;
- Instead of revisiting the timing of the preparatory process or in combination with this, limiting the number of PPPAs to be prepared / submitted for pre-assessment;
- Enhancing the approach to preparatory consultations on PPPAs between the EP and EC line DGs;

- Systematising the approach to the pre-assessment of PPPAs;
- Enhancing data handling regarding PPPAs.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Europäische Parlament (EP) beauftragte Blomeyer & Sanz am 6. Dezember 2019 über die Generaldirektion Interne Politikbereiche der Union damit, eine Studie über Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen im EU-Haushalt 2014-2019 zu erstellen. Zweck dieser Studie ist es, einen „Realitätscheck“ darüber durchzuführen, was mit Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen im Zeitraum 2014-2019 erreicht wurde, und die aktuelle und potenzielle Verwendung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen als ein strategisches politisches Instrument für das Europäische Parlament zu bewerten. Diese Studie wurde auf der Grundlage von Schreibtischforschung erstellt, wozu auch quantitative Analyse, mehr als 30 Interviews mit dem Europäischen Parlament, der Europäischen Kommission und anderen für die Durchführung zuständigen Akteuren sowie Fallstudien über acht konkrete Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen gehörten.

In den folgenden Absätzen sind die wichtigsten Ergebnisse und Empfehlungen kurz dargestellt.

Quantitative Analyse

Die Analyse deckt 324 Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen von 2014 bis einschließlich 2019 ab. Davon waren Ende 2019 immer noch 213 „offen“ (d. h., ihre Haushaltslinien waren immer noch offen). Der Gesamtwert⁸ der 324 Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen beläuft sich derzeit auf ungefähr 337 Millionen EUR⁹. Diese Zahl ist noch nicht endgültig, da das definitive Gesamtergebnis der laufenden Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen erst in einigen Jahren verfügbar sein wird. Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen unter den Rubriken des Mehrjährigen Finanzrahmens (MFR) 1.1 (Wettbewerbsfähigkeit für Wachstum und Beschäftigung) und 3 (Sicherheit und Unionsbürgerschaft) erhielten unverhältnismäßig hohe Beträge an Gesamtfinanzierung im Rahmen von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen (an Mitteln für Zahlungen), während Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen unter den MFR-Rubriken 1.2 (wirtschaftlicher, sozialer und territorialer Zusammenhalt) und 2 (nachhaltiges Wachstum: natürliche Ressourcen) unverhältnismäßig niedrige Beträge an Gesamtfinanzierung im Rahmen von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen (an Ausführung der Mittel für Zahlungen) erhielten. Die MFR-Rubrik 1.1. beläuft sich auf 161 Millionen EUR, fast dreimal mehr als jede andere MFR-Rubrik. Auf sie entfallen auch 135 Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen, wieder mehr als doppelt so viel wie bei jeder anderen MFR-Rubrik.

Die Generaldirektionen der Europäischen Kommission CNECT, GROW, ENV und SANTE waren für mehr Pilotprojekte als andere Generaldirektionen verantwortlich. Die Generaldirektionen CNECT und EAC waren für mehr vorbereitenden Maßnahmen verantwortlich als andere Generaldirektionen.

Die Anzahl der Pilotprojekte hat sich in vier der sechs Jahre erhöht, die mit dieser Bewertung abgedeckt werden. Es gab einen steilen Anstieg der Anzahl der Pilotprojekte beginnend im Jahr 2016, und einen steilen Anstieg der Anzahl der vorbereitenden Maßnahmen im Jahr 2018.

Mit wenigen Ausnahmen haben die Pilotprojekte heute Werte von weniger als 5 Millionen EUR und die vorbereitenden Maßnahmen Werte von weniger als 2 Millionen EUR⁸.

⁸ In dieser Studie steht der Wert eines Pilotprojekts und einer vorbereitenden Maßnahme für die tatsächliche Ausführung der Mittel für Zahlungen insgesamt bis zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt (die beste Annäherung an die tatsächlichen Kosten eines Pilotprojekts und einer vorbereitenden Maßnahme über deren Laufzeit).

⁹ Um das Finanzvolumen der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, die durch diese Studie abgedeckt werden, in einen Kontext zu stellen, sei darauf verwiesen, dass in dem Zeitraum 2014–2020 zu den Mittelbeschaffungsprogrammen ungefähr vergleichbarer Größe das Europäische Solidaritätskorps mit 352 Millionen EUR (2018–2020) oder das Programm „Justiz“ mit 339 Millionen EUR (2014–2020) gehörten.

Für ungefähr die Hälfte der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen wurden nur in einem Jahr Mittel für Verpflichtungen bewilligt. Für 34 Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen wurden zwar Mittel für Verpflichtungen bewilligt, aber sie wurden letztendlich nicht finanziert. Bei Pilotprojekten ist es wahrscheinlich, dass sie erheblich länger „offenbleiben“ als vorbereitende Maßnahmen mit demselben Wert.

Von 2013 bis 2019 wurde für 1 887 Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen eine Vorbewertung durchgeführt.¹⁰ Die Anzahl der zur Vorbewertung eingereichten Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen verdoppelte sich von ungefähr 150 im Jahr 2014 auf 300 im Jahr 2015.

63 % der von 2013 bis 2019 zur Vorbewertung eingereichten Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen wurden als „C“¹¹ oder „D“¹² eingestuft. Im Vergleich zu 2013 und 2014 ist der Gesamtprozentsatz von als „A“¹³ oder „B“¹⁴ eingestuften Vorschlägen ab 2015 in allen Jahren niedriger geblieben. Je höher die Anzahl der Vorschläge ist, die in einem Jahr zur Vorbewertung eingereicht werden, desto weniger wahrscheinlich ist es, dass sie als „A“ oder „B“ eingestuft werden.

Es gab fast 200 Vorbewertungen, an denen zwei oder mehr Generaldirektionen beteiligt waren, das sind mehr als von jeder einzelnen Generaldirektion durchgeführt wurden. Vorbewertungen, an denen zwei oder mehr Generaldirektionen beteiligt sind, führen mit höherer Wahrscheinlichkeit zu „C“, „D“ oder „keine“ (d. h. keine Einstufung). Die Generaldirektion EAC und die Generaldirektion CNECT haben erheblich mehr Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen vorbereitend bewertet als andere Generaldirektionen. Von der Generaldirektion CNECT vorbereitete Vorschläge werden mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit mit „A“ oder „B“ eingestuft, obwohl die Wahrscheinlichkeit mit einer zunehmenden Anzahl an Vorschlägen abnimmt. Im Fall der Generaldirektion EAC lässt sich aus der Analyse schließen, dass es keinen Zusammenhang zwischen der Anzahl der Vorschläge und dem gemeinsamen Prozentsatz von „A“ und „B“ gibt. In der Tat scheint es einen schwachen positiven Zusammenhang zu geben.

Bei Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, bei denen der Autor eher ein MdEP als ein Ausschuss ist, besteht ein schwacher negativer Zusammenhang zwischen der Anzahl der zur Vorbewertung eingereichten Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen und dem gemeinsamen Prozentsatz von „A“ und „B“ (je mehr Vorschläge, desto weniger „A“ und „B“). Bei Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, bei denen der angegebene Autor ein Ausschuss ist, besteht ein positiver Zusammenhang zwischen der Anzahl der zur Vorbewertung eingereichten Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen und dem gemeinsamen Prozentsatz von „A“ und „B“ (je mehr Vorschläge, desto mehr „A“ und „B“). Es gibt selbstverständlich keinerlei Anzeichen dafür, dass die Kommission in irgendeiner Weise ursächlich für diesen Zusammenhang ist. Der Ausschuss für Kultur und Bildung (CULT) reichte, gefolgt vom Ausschuss für Verkehr und Tourismus (TRAN), weit mehr Vorschläge als jeder andere Ausschuss ein, und seine Vorschläge hatten bei weitem

¹⁰ Diese Analyse umfasst nicht die zweite Runde der Vorbewertungen des Jahres 2019, da diese in den zur Verfügung gestellten Daten nicht enthalten waren. Die Gesamtzahl belief sich einschließlich dieser auf 1 974.

¹¹ Pilotprojekt und vorbereitende Maßnahme sind bereits vollständig von einer existierenden Rechtsgrundlage abgedeckt, oder die Ideen werden anderweitig behandelt.

¹² Pilotprojekt und vorbereitende Maßnahme können nicht umgesetzt werden, oder ähnliche Maßnahmen wurden in der Vergangenheit bereits durchgeführt.

¹³ Pilotprojekt und vorbereitende Maßnahme konnten wie vom Parlament vorgeschlagen umgesetzt werden.

¹⁴ Pilotprojekt und vorbereitende Maßnahme könnten unter bestimmten Bedingungen vollständig oder teilweise umsetzbar sein, das Projekt müsste jedoch überarbeitet werden (das könnte der Fall sein, wenn ein Teil der vorgeschlagenen Maßnahme bereits von einer Rechtsgrundlage abgedeckt ist), oder es werden eventuell weitere Informationen benötigt, bevor die Kommission das vorgeschlagene Projekt bewerten kann.

den höchsten Anteil an „A“- und „B“-Vorbewertungen (ungefähr 60 % der von ihm eingereichten Vorschläge).

Qualitative Analyse

Die „Programmerstellung“ von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen zeichnet sich durch ihren kürzeren Zyklus aus (2–3 statt 7 Jahre), wobei jährlich neue Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen ausgearbeitet und als Änderungsanträge in den Haushalt eingeführt werden. Der „Standard“-Ansatz der EU-Programmerstellung ist mehrjährig und wird durch den aktuellen Zeitrahmen des MFR (7 Jahre) bestimmt. Das Sekretariat des Haushaltsausschusses (BUDG) hat bei der Vorbereitung der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen eine koordinierende Funktion (Ausgabe des Kalenders, Durchführung einer Informationsveranstaltung, Sammeln der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen, Übermittlung der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen an die Europäische Kommission zur Vorbewertung).

Die Sekretariate der verschiedenen Ausschüsse unterstützen die MdEP beim Ausarbeiten von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, und das Sekretariat des Haushaltsausschusses führt jährlich eine Informationsveranstaltung zum Haushaltsverfahren einschließlich der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen durch. Die im Europäischen Parlament befragten Personen äußerten sich sehr positiv zu dieser Unterstützung, obgleich es auch Empfehlungen für Verbesserungen gab. Es gibt keine umfassenden Leitlinien für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen. Trotz der bestehenden Bemühungen, die Kapazitäten für die Ausarbeitung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen zu erweitern, ist immer noch ein erhebliches Bedürfnis dafür vorhanden, das Bewusstsein für das Instrument der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen zu stärken und die Kapazitäten der MdEP zu erweitern.

Die Sekretariate der Ausschüsse bestärken die MdEP darin, bei der Ausarbeitung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen so früh wie möglich in Konsultationen mit der Europäischen Kommission einzutreten; dieser Rat wird jedoch nicht uneingeschränkt befolgt. Rückmeldungen der zuständigen Generaldirektionen in Verbindung mit den vorbereitenden Konsultationen werden von der Generaldirektion Haushalt der Europäischen Kommission (GD Haushalt) bei der formalen Vorbewertung nicht immer unterstützt.

Die im Europäischen Parlament befragten Personen wiesen auf die allgemein schlechte Qualität der Mehrheit der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen hin, von denen viele mit „C“ und „D“ eingestuft werden, wobei insbesondere auf die schlechte Qualität der finanziellen Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen hingewiesen wurde, bei denen die Haushaltsmittel nicht mit dem Bedarf für die Durchführung übereinstimmten. Das wurde meistens mit einem Verweis auf die Ressourcen der MdEP und die zeitlichen Beschränkungen erklärt.

Im Zug der Gespräche mit verschiedenen Akteuren des Europäischen Parlaments und der Europäischen Kommission wurde die Frage aufgeworfen, ob es eine Beschränkung für die Anzahl der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen geben sollte, die bei der Europäischen Kommission zur Vorbewertung eingereicht werden. Die im Europäischen Parlament und in der Europäischen Kommission befragten Personen waren der Ansicht, dass die Menge der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen eine erhebliche Belastung des Europäischen Parlaments und der Europäischen Kommission in Bezug auf deren Bearbeitung und Vorbewertung darstellte. Es gab unterschiedliche Verfahren und Standpunkte im Hinblick auf eine Beschränkung der Anzahl der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen.

Die Generaldirektion Haushalt koordiniert die Vorbewertung. Dazu gehört eine vorausgehende Überprüfung der Vorschläge durch sieben bis zehn Experten. Die Vorschläge werden dann an die

entsprechenden zuständigen Generaldirektionen übermittelt. Die Bewertung nimmt erhebliche Ressourcen der Europäischen Kommission in Anspruch, wobei jedes Jahr insgesamt 3 500 Arbeitsstunden für die Bewertung aufgewendet werden. Die Generaldirektion Haushalt gibt interne Leitlinien für die Vorbewertung vor. Die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament verwiesen jedoch auf Ungereimtheiten bei den Rückmeldungen der verschiedenen zuständigen Generaldirektionen und schlugen vor, dass ausführlichere Informationen zur Verfügung gestellt werden sollten. Die Bewertung der Europäischen Kommission bezieht sich in erster Linie auf Aspekte der Rechtmäßigkeit und Durchführbarkeit. Das Vorbewertungsverfahren wird auch durch einen engen Zeitrahmen begrenzt.

Neben der Vorbewertung durch die Europäische Kommission müssen neue Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen in Form von Änderungsanträgen zum Haushalt eingereicht werden. Änderungsanträge sind darüber hinaus erforderlich, um die Ressourcen vorhandener Pilotprojekte und vorbereitender Maßnahmen „aufzufüllen“. Dieses Erfordernis hängt von dem Volumen der Mittel für Verpflichtungen ab, die angenommen wurden, als die Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen ursprünglich eingeführt wurden. Gleichwohl deuten Rückmeldungen aus den Reihen des Europäischen Parlaments darauf hin, dass in Fällen, in denen zusätzliche Mittel für Verpflichtungen angebracht sein könnten, die MdEP die erforderlichen Änderungsanträge nicht systematisch einreichen.

Nach der Vorbewertung gibt es verschiedene Vorgehensweisen, um Änderungsanträge für die Einführung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen in den Haushalt einzureichen. Einige Ausschüsse stimmen über Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen ab, andere tun dies nicht. Allgemein gesagt waren die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament der Ansicht, dass die Auswahl der als Änderungsanträge eingereichten Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen keinen bestimmten Prioritäten des Europäischen Parlaments entsprach. Das Verfahren zur Einreichung von Änderungsanträgen leidet ebenfalls unter einem engen Zeitrahmen.

Nach den Abstimmungen über den EU-Haushalt, in dem das Paket an Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen enthalten ist, im Haushaltsausschuss und dann im Plenum wird vom Parlament und vom Rat eine Sitzung des Vermittlungsausschusses organisiert, um eine Einigung über das endgültige „Kompromiss“-Haushaltspaket zu erzielen, einschließlich einer abschließenden Auswahl der einzubeziehenden Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen und ihrer jeweiligen Haushaltsansätze. Auch hier verwiesen die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament darauf, dass der endgültige Satz an Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, die im Rahmen des „Kompromiss“-Haushaltspakets übrigbleiben, häufig keinen eindeutigen Prioritäten des Europäischen Parlaments entspricht.

Alle befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament verwiesen auf die begrenzte Rolle des Europäischen Parlaments im Hinblick auf die tatsächliche Umsetzung der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen. Der Regelungsrahmen für die Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen sieht für das Europäische Parlament keinerlei Rolle in Bezug auf die Umsetzung vor. Es ist auch selten der Fall, dass sich die MdEP für die Umsetzung der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen interessieren. In den Fällen, in denen sich MdEP doch für die Umsetzung konkreter Pilotprojekte und vorbereitender Maßnahmen interessieren, haben diese oft Schwierigkeiten, Ansprechpartner bei der Europäischen Kommission ausfindig zu machen, um etwas über die Umsetzung zu erfahren. Für erfolgreiche Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen wird im Europäischen Parlament nicht systematisch „Werbung gemacht“. Einige Ausschüsse des Europäischen Parlaments laden die Europäische Kommission zu Ausschusssitzungen ein, um den Sachstand in Bezug auf Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen vorzustellen.

Rückmeldungen der Befragten im Europäischen Parlament deuten darauf hin, dass der Umsetzungserfolg neben der Qualität eines Pilotprojekts oder einer vorbereitenden Maßnahme auch die Bedeutung widerspiegelt, die die Europäische Kommission einem Pilotprojekt und einer vorbereitenden Maßnahme zuzubilligen bereit ist. Bei einigen Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen treten Lücken bei den Mitteln für Verpflichtungen/Ausführungen der Mittel für Zahlungen auf, oder es wird nicht mit ihrer Ausführung begonnen. Mitunter entscheidet sich die Europäische Kommission dazu, keine Anschlusszahlungen vorzuschlagen oder lehnt neue Verpflichtungen mit dem Argument ab, dass die Ergebnisse aus dem ersten Jahr der Umsetzung noch nicht zur Verfügung stünden. Die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament vertraten auch die Ansicht, dass die Europäische Kommission ein Pilotprojekt und eine vorbereitende Maßnahme mitunter auf eine Weise umsetze, die von der vom jeweiligen MdEP ursprünglich vorgeschlagenen Idee abweicht. Schließlich kommentierten die im Europäischen Parlament Befragten die Rolle der Europäischen Kommission im Hinblick auf die Berichterstattung zum Fortschritte der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen. Die Rückmeldungen deuten darauf hin, dass die Berichte nicht detailliert genug sind.

Die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament hielten es für fraglich, ob der Erfolg eines Pilotprojekts und einer vorbereitenden Maßnahme ausschließlich dadurch definiert werden kann, dass diese eine legislative Maßnahme nach sich ziehen. Rückmeldungen aus dem Europäischen Parlament deuteten darauf hin, dass auch das Fehlen jeglicher Nachverfolgung aus verschiedenen Gründen ein sinnvolles Ergebnis sein kann. In diesem Zusammenhang betonten die befragten Personen im Europäischen Parlament den „experimentellen“ Charakter der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen. Des Weiteren könnte das Fehlen jeglicher Nachverfolgung auch als ein Erfolg in Bezug auf gewonnene Erkenntnisse angesehen werden. Ein Pilotprojekt bzw. eine vorbereitende Maßnahme könnte so dazu beitragen, „vergebliche“ Mühen in Form substanziellerer Folgemaßnahmen zu vermeiden. Die Generaldirektion Haushalt der Europäischen Kommission sieht die Identifizierung einer Rechtslücke als das entscheidende Kriterium für ein erfolgreiches Pilotprojekt und eine erfolgreiche vorbereitende Maßnahme an.

Empfehlungen

Aus der Schreibtischforschung, den Interviews und den Fallstudien geht hervor, dass Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen zu wichtigen Ergebnissen führen können, indem damit eine neue Gesetzgebung oder eine neue Politik angestoßen oder eine Feinabstimmung einer vorhandenen Gesetzgebung oder Politik vorgenommen wird. Mit Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen kann auch die Gestaltung von Finanzierungsprogrammen verbessert werden, und es können im allgemeineren Sinn wichtige Erkenntnisse gewonnen werden. Die Bedeutung der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen im Geist der Haushaltsordnung („Durchführbarkeit und Nutzen einer Maßnahme [zu] bewerte[n]“/„auf die Erarbeitung von Vorschlägen für künftige Maßnahmen ab[zustellen]“) gilt daher als erwiesen. Es liegen jedoch keine systematisch erfassten Daten vor, um den Umfang zu bewerten, in dem das Instrument der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen effektiv gewesen ist. Mit dieser Studie wurden sieben schwerwiegende Einschränkungen identifiziert, die die potenzielle Effektivität der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen untergraben.

- Die Setzung der Prioritäten für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen ist nicht eindeutig.
- Den MdEP fehlen oft die Kapazitäten zur Ausarbeitung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, und zu viele Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen werden durch Qualitätseinschränkungen beeinträchtigt und von der Europäischen Kommission bei der Vorbewertung mit „C“ und „D“ eingestuft.
- Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen werden im Rahmen eines sehr engen Zeitplans erstellt und bewertet.
- In Verbindung mit der Erstellung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen gibt es keinen systematischen Ansatz für Konsultationen zwischen den MdEP und den einschlägigen Generaldirektionen der Europäischen Kommission.
- Es scheint Ungereimtheiten bei der Art und Weise zu geben, in der verschiedene zuständige Generaldirektionen der Europäischen Kommission und der Generaldirektion Haushalt an die Vorbewertung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen herangehen.
- Die Anzahl der Vorschläge für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen bedeutet einen erheblichen Verwaltungsaufwand für das Europäische Parlament und die Europäische Kommission, und aufgrund quantitativer Daten lässt sich bestätigen, dass je mehr Vorschläge in einem Jahr zur Vorbewertung eingereicht werden, desto niedriger der Gesamtprozentsatz von „A“- und „B“-Vorschlägen ist. Aus den Rückmeldungen des Europäischen Parlaments geht in diesem Punkt hervor, dass die Mittel für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen durch zwei Arten von Obergrenzen eingeschränkt werden (diejenigen, die nach der Haushaltsordnung insbesondere für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen gelten, und diejenigen, die für die Mittel unter der Rubrik nach der MFR-Verordnung gelten).
- Es gibt keine systematische und effiziente Herangehensweise an die Datenverarbeitung, weder bei der Vorbewertung der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen noch bei den in der Folge angenommenen Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen.

In der Studie wird deshalb empfohlen, dass das Europäische Parlament die folgenden Empfehlungen erwägt und Folgemaßnahmen mit der Europäischen Kommission bespricht:

- die Setzung eindeutiger Prioritäten für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen,
- die Erweiterung der Kapazitäten der MdEP für die Erarbeitung und Umsetzung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen,
- die Gewährung von mehr Zeit für die Erarbeitung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, z. B. indem mit der Erarbeitung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen zu einem früheren Stadium begonnen oder ein mehrjähriger Rahmen für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen eingeführt wird, indem neue Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen nur alle zwei oder drei Jahr eingeführt werden,
- statt einer Überarbeitung des Zeitplans für Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen oder in Kombination damit, eine Begrenzung der Anzahl der Pilotprojekte und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen, die zu erarbeiten/zur Vorbewertung einzureichen sind,

- Verbesserung des Ansatzes für vorbereitende Konsultationen zwischen dem Europäischen Parlament und den zuständigen Generaldirektionen der Europäischen Kommission über Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen,
- Systematisierung des Ansatzes zur Vorbewertung von Pilotprojekten und vorbereitenden Maßnahmen,
- Verbesserung der Datenverarbeitung in Bezug auf Pilotprojekte und vorbereitende Maßnahmen.

SYNTHÈSE

Le Parlement européen (PE), par l'intermédiaire de sa direction générale des politiques internes de l'Union, a commandé le 6 décembre 2019 à Blomeyer & Sanz une étude sur les projets pilotes et actions préparatoires (PPAP) inscrits au budget de l'UE pour la période 2014-2019. L'étude constitue un «examen de réalité» de ce qui a été accompli au titre des PPAP sur la période 2014-2019 et une analyse de l'utilisation, réelle et potentielle, des PPAP en tant que dispositif politique stratégique pour le PE. Elle a été menée à partir de recherches documentaires, dont une analyse quantitative, plus de 30 entretiens avec le PE, la Commission européenne (CE) et d'autres instances d'exécution, ainsi que des études de cas portant sur huit PPAP en particulier.

Les points ci-après exposent brièvement les principales conclusions et recommandations.

Analyse quantitative

L'analyse porte sur 324 PPAP de 2014 à 2019 inclus, dont 213 étaient toujours en cours fin 2019 (autrement dit, leurs lignes budgétaires étaient encore ouvertes). À ce jour, les 324 PPAP représentent un montant total¹⁵ d'environ 337 millions d'EUR¹⁶, qui va encore varier, car le total exécuté des PPAP en cours ne sera disponible que dans plusieurs années. Les PPAP relevant des rubriques 1.1 (compétitivité pour la croissance et l'emploi) et 3 (sécurité et citoyenneté) du cadre financier pluriannuel (CFP) ont reçu des montants disproportionnellement élevés du financement total des PPAP (en crédits de paiement exécutés), tandis que les PPAP relevant des rubriques 1.2 (cohésion économique, sociale et territoriale) et 2 (croissance durable: ressources naturelles) du CFP ont reçu des montants disproportionnellement faibles (en crédits de paiement exécutés). La rubrique 1.1 du CFP représente 161 millions d'EUR, soit près de trois fois plus que n'importe quelle autre rubrique du CFP. Elle réunit 135 PPAP, soit plus du double de n'importe quelle autre rubrique du CFP.

Les directions générales (DG) CNECT, GROW, ENV et SANTE de la CE ont géré plus de projets pilotes (PP) que les autres DG, et ce sont les DG CNECT et EAC qui ont été chargées du plus grand nombre d'actions préparatoires (AP).

Le nombre de PP a augmenté au cours de quatre des six années sur lesquelles porte l'évaluation. Le nombre de PP a fortement augmenté à partir de 2016 et le nombre d'AP à partir de 2018.

À l'exception de quelques valeurs aberrantes, les AP affichent à ce jour des montants inférieurs à 5 millions d'EUR et les PP des montants inférieurs à 2 millions d'EUR¹⁵.

Pour environ la moitié des PPAP des crédits d'engagement ont été votés une année seulement. Par ailleurs, pour 34 PPAP des crédits d'engagement ont été votés mais n'ont finalement pas été financés. Par rapport à des AP de même montant, les PP sont susceptibles de rester «en cours» beaucoup plus longtemps.

De 2013 à 2019, 1 887 propositions de PPAP ont été pré-évaluées¹⁷. Le nombre de propositions de PPAP soumises à une pré-évaluation a doublé, passant d'environ 150 en 2014 à 300, en 2015.

¹⁵ Dans l'étude, par «montant des PPAP», il convient d'entendre le total à ce jour des crédits de paiement exécutés des PPAP (meilleure estimation du coût réel d'un PPAP sur sa durée de vie).

¹⁶ Pour replacer dans son contexte le volume financier des PPAP faisant l'objet de l'étude, parmi les programmes de financement d'ampleur quelque peu similaire pour la période 2014-2020 figurent le Corps européen de solidarité, avec 352 millions d'EUR programmés (2018-2020), ou le programme Justice, avec 339 millions d'EUR programmés (2014-2020).

¹⁷ Le deuxième cycle des pré-évaluations de 2019 est exclu de l'analyse car il ne fait pas partie des données qui ont été transmises. Le total, celles-ci comprises, était de 1 974.

Parmi les propositions de PPAP soumises à une évaluation préalable entre 2013 et 2019, 63 % ont été classées dans la catégorie C¹⁸ ou D¹⁹. Le pourcentage combiné des propositions des catégories A²⁰ et B²¹ est resté plus faible pour toutes les années à partir de 2015 par rapport à 2013 et 2014. Plus le nombre de propositions soumises à une évaluation préalable est élevé au cours d'une année, moins il y a de probabilités qu'elles soient classées dans les catégories A ou B.

Il y a eu près de 200 pré-évaluations à mettre au compte de deux DG ou plus, soit plus que ce qui a été entrepris par chaque DG individuellement. Les pré-évaluations par deux ou plusieurs DG sont plus susceptibles d'être classées dans la catégorie C ou D, ou de n'être classifiées dans aucune catégorie. Les DG EAC et CNECT ont pré-évalué beaucoup plus de PPAP que les autres DG. Les propositions pré-évaluées par la DG CNECT ont une plus forte probabilité d'être classées dans les catégories A ou B, même si cette probabilité diminue à mesure que le nombre de propositions augmente. Dans le cas de la DG EAC, l'analyse ne montre pas de corrélation entre le nombre de propositions et le pourcentage combiné des catégories A et B. Le rapport est légèrement positif.

Pour les PPAP dont l'auteur est un député européen et non une commission, le rapport est légèrement négatif entre le nombre de propositions de PPAP soumises à une évaluation préalable et le pourcentage combiné des catégories A et B (plus il y a de propositions, moins il y a de catégories A et B). Pour les PPAP dont l'auteur désigné est une commission, le rapport est positif entre le nombre de propositions de PPAP soumises à une évaluation préalable et le pourcentage combiné des catégories A et B (plus il y a de propositions, plus il y a de catégories A et B). Bien entendu, rien n'indique que la CE joue un quelconque rôle dans cette corrélation. La commission CULT, suivie de la commission TRAN, a soumis beaucoup plus de propositions que toute autre commission, et ses propositions ont eu de loin le taux combiné le plus élevé de pré-évaluations A et B (environ 60 %).

Analyse qualitative

La «programmation» des PPAP se distingue par son cycle plus court (deux ou trois ans au lieu de sept) qui comprend des exercices annuels de préparation de nouveaux PPAP et leur inscription au budget sous forme d'amendements. En effet, la démarche standard de programmation des actions de l'UE est pluriannuelle et découle de la durée actuelle du CFP (sept ans). Le secrétariat de la commission BUDG a un rôle de coordination dans la préparation des PPAP (publication du calendrier, organisation d'une séance d'information, collecte des propositions de PPAP, transmission des propositions à la CE pour pré-évaluation).

Les différents secrétariats des commissions assistent les députés dans la préparation des PPAP, et chaque année, le secrétariat de la commission BUDG organise une séance d'information sur la procédure budgétaire, y compris sur les PPAP. Les personnes interrogées au Parlement européen ont commenté cette assistance en termes très positifs, même si elles ont également formulé des recommandations d'amélioration. Aucun document d'orientation complet ne traite des PPAP. Malgré les efforts déployés pour développer les moyens de préparation des PPAP, il reste encore beaucoup à faire pour sensibiliser au dispositif et renforcer les capacités des députés européens.

Les secrétariats des commissions encouragent les députés européens à consulter la CE dès que possible dans la préparation des PPAP, mais ces conseils ne sont pas systématiquement suivis. Les

¹⁸ Le PPAP est déjà entièrement couvert par une base juridique existante, ou ses concepts sont promus autrement.

¹⁹ Le PPAP ne peut pas être mis en œuvre, ou une action similaire a déjà été menée par le passé.

²⁰ Le PPAP pourrait être mis en œuvre selon les modalités définies par le Parlement.

²¹ Le PPAP pourrait, sous certaines conditions, être totalement ou partiellement réalisable, mais le projet devrait être remanié (par exemple si une partie de l'action proposée est déjà couverte par une base juridique); ou bien de plus amples informations pourraient être nécessaires avant que la Commission puisse évaluer le projet proposé.

observations des DG responsables dans le cadre des consultations préparatoires ne sont pas toujours approuvées par la DG Budget de la CE (DG BUDG) au stade de la pré-évaluation formelle.

Les personnes interrogées au PE ont noté la qualité généralement médiocre de la majorité des propositions de PPAP, dont beaucoup ont été classées dans les catégories C et D, en particulier les propositions financières de PPAP, dont les budgets ne sont pas conformes aux exigences d'exécution. Cela a été expliqué principalement par les contraintes de ressources et de temps des députés européens.

Les discussions avec les différents acteurs du PE et de la CE ont fait ressortir la question de la limitation ou non du nombre de propositions de PPAP à soumettre à la CE pour pré-évaluation. Les personnes interrogées au PE et à la CE ont estimé que le nombre de propositions de PPAP représentait une charge importante pour le PE et la CE quant à leur traitement et à leur pré-évaluation. Plusieurs pratiques et avis différents ont été relevés au sujet de la limitation du nombre de propositions de PPAP.

La DG BUDG coordonne la pré-évaluation. Cela implique l'examen préalable des propositions par une équipe de sept à dix experts. Les propositions sont ensuite transmises aux DG concernées. L'évaluation mobilise beaucoup de ressources de la CE, qui y consacre au total environ 3 500 heures de travail chaque année. La DG BUDG formule des orientations internes sur la pré-évaluation, mais les personnes interrogées au PE ont relevé des incohérences dans les commentaires des différentes DG et ont suggéré que des précisions supplémentaires soient apportées. L'évaluation de la CE doit principalement prendre en compte la légalité et la faisabilité. La pré-évaluation est également encadrée par un calendrier serré.

Suite aux pré-évaluations de la CE, les nouveaux PPAP doivent être déposés sous la forme d'amendements budgétaires. Des amendements sont par ailleurs nécessaires pour «compléter» les ressources des PPAP existants. Cela dépend du volume de crédits d'engagement adoptés lors de la création du PPAP. Or, dans les cas où des crédits d'engagement supplémentaires pouvaient être utiles, les commentaires du PE ont laissé entendre que les députés n'ont pas systématiquement déposé les amendements requis.

Après la pré-évaluation, plusieurs options de dépôt d'amendements sont possibles en vue d'inscrire les PPAP au budget. Certaines commissions votent les PPAP, d'autres non. De manière générale, les personnes interrogées au PE ont trouvé que le choix des PPAP déposés sous la forme d'amendements ne répondait à aucune priorité particulière du PE. La procédure de dépôt des amendements est également tributaire d'un calendrier serré.

À la suite des votes portant sur le budget de l'UE, y compris sur le paquet de PPAP, en commission des budgets puis en séance plénière, un comité de conciliation entre le Parlement européen et le Conseil se réunit pour convenir du compromis budgétaire final, notamment le choix définitif des PPAP et leurs dotations budgétaires respectives. Une fois de plus, les personnes interrogées au PE ont laissé entendre que souvent, la dernière liste de PPAP retenus dans le «compromis» budgétaire ne correspondait pas à un ensemble clair de priorités (du PE).

Elles ont également toutes souligné le rôle limité du PE dans l'exécution proprement dite des PPAP. À cet égard, le cadre réglementaire des PPAP ne prévoit aucun rôle pour le PE. De plus, les députés européens ont peu l'habitude de s'intéresser à l'exécution des PPAP. Dans les cas où ils s'y intéressent, ils ont souvent du mal à trouver des interlocuteurs à la CE pour assurer le suivi d'exécution. Les PPAP qui aboutissent ne sont pas systématiquement «valorisés» au PE. Certaines commissions du PE invitent la CE à une de leurs réunions pour présenter l'état d'avancement des PPAP.

Les commentaires du PE lors des entretiens ont laissé entendre qu'outre la qualité inhérente à un PPAP, les performances d'exécution témoignaient également de l'importance que la CE est prête à accorder à un PPAP. Certains PPAP souffrent de lacunes en matière de crédits d'engagement ou de paiement, ou bien ne sont jamais exécutés. Parfois, la CE décide de ne pas proposer de paiements de suivi ou rejette de nouveaux engagements, au motif que les résultats de la première année d'exécution ne sont pas encore connus. Les personnes interrogées au PE ont également considéré que la CE, à certaines occasions, a mis en œuvre un PPAP selon des modalités qui s'écartaient de l'idée de départ avancée par un député européen. Enfin, elles ont commenté le rôle de la CE dans le compte-rendu de l'état d'avancement des PPAP. Les commentaires ont laissé entendre que les comptes rendus manquaient de détails.

Des personnes interrogées au PE ont remis en question la définition de la réussite d'un PPAP uniquement en termes de suite législative. Ces commentaires du PE ont laissé entendre que l'absence de suites de cette nature pourrait néanmoins tout à fait constituer un résultat positif pour diverses raisons. Dans ce contexte, les personnes interrogées au PE ont souligné le caractère «expérimental» des PPAP. En outre, l'absence de toute action de suivi pourrait également être considérée comme une réussite quant aux enseignements à tirer. Un PPAP peut donc permettre de ne pas «gaspiller» d'efforts à investir dans des actions de suivi plus substantielles. Cependant, la DG BUDG de la CE a considéré que l'essence d'un PPAP réussi était l'identification d'un vide législatif.

Recommandations

Les recherches documentaires, les entretiens et les études de cas ont montré que les PPAP pouvaient donner des résultats importants à même d'entraîner l'adoption de nouvelles législations ou politiques ou d'affiner celles qui existent déjà. Les PPAP peuvent également enrichir la conception des programmes de financement et, plus généralement, permettent de dégager des enseignements majeurs. Les PPAP ont ainsi prouvé leur utilité dans l'esprit du Règlement financier («tester la faisabilité d'une action et son utilité» et «élaborer des propositions en vue de l'adoption d'actions futures»). Toutefois, aucune donnée systématique ne permet d'évaluer dans quelle mesure le dispositif des PPAP a été efficace. L'étude a recensé sept limites majeures, qui compromettent l'efficacité potentielle des PPAP:

- les priorités des PPAP ne sont pas clairement définies;
- les députés européens manquent souvent de ressources pour préparer les PPAP, et trop de propositions sont entachées de problèmes de qualité puis sont classées dans les catégories C ou D par la CE au stade de la pré-évaluation;
- les PPAP sont préparés et pré-évalués selon un calendrier très serré;
- au cours de la préparation des PPAP il n'y a pas d'approche systématique concernant les consultations entre les députés européens et les DG concernées de la CE;
- la méthode de pré-évaluation des PPAP adoptée par les différentes DG de la CE et la DG BUDG semble présenter des incohérences;
- le grand nombre de propositions de PPAP implique une lourde charge administrative pour le PE et la CE, et les données quantitatives confirment que plus le nombre de propositions soumises à une pré-évaluation est élevé au cours d'une année, plus le pourcentage combiné de propositions A et B est faible; les commentaires du PE sur ce point soulignent que les dépenses relatives aux PPAP sont limitées par deux types de plafonds (ceux qui sont spécifiques aux PPAP en vertu du Règlement financier et ceux qui s'appliquent aux dépenses par rubrique en vertu du Règlement CFP);
- aucune méthode systématique et efficace de traitement des données n'a été mise en place, tant pour les pré-évaluations des PPAP que pour les PPAP adoptés par la suite.

L'étude recommande donc que le PE réfléchisse aux recommandations suivantes et discute des suites à envisager au sein du PE et avec la CE:

- fixer des priorités claires pour les PPAP;
- renforcer les ressources des députés européens pour la préparation et l'exécution des PPAP;
- prévoir plus de temps pour la préparation des PPAP, par exemple commencer la préparation plus tôt ou adopter une procédure pluriannuelle en n'introduisant de nouveaux PPAP que tous les deux ou trois ans;
- au lieu de revoir le calendrier de préparation ou en lien avec le calendrier, limiter le nombre de PPAP à préparer et à soumettre à une pré-évaluation;
- améliorer l'approche des consultations préparatoires entre le PE et les DG de la CE;
- systématiser l'approche de la pré-évaluation des PPAP;
- améliorer le traitement des données des PPAP.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The European Parliament (EP) via the Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union (Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs, Directorate for Budgetary Affairs) contracted Blomeyer & Sanz on 6 December 2019 to prepare a study on the Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPA) in the EU budget 2014-2019.

In the words of the Terms of Reference for this assignment, this study aims ‘to perform a “reality check” of what has been achieved with PPPAs over 2014-2019’ and ‘to assess the use, actual and potential, of PPPAs as a strategic political tool for the EP’.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

This study was prepared on the basis of desk research, including quantitative analysis, and interviews / case studies.

- The study was initiated in mid-December 2019, and a kick-off meeting with the Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs was organised on 8 January 2020 involving the Secretariat for the Committee on Budgets (BUDG Secretariat). Moreover, political advisors from all political Groups were invited to participate.
- Desk research involved a review of well over 100 documents on the process of preparing the PPPA; the documentation was facilitated by the Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs,²² and the European Commission (EC),²³ more specifically, Directorate-General Budget (DG BUDG) (DG A2, Unit A1 - Budgetary procedures and execution, relations with the budget committees). DG BUDG shared financial and pre-assessment data on the PPPA and facilitated exchanges with line DGs involved in the case studies.
- Interviews / case studies: In the course of January / February 2020, interviews were conducted with EP, EC and other actors involved in the preparation and implementation of PPPAs (see Annex 2 on the interviews). Further interviews were conducted in the context of case study work in March/April 2020; case studies focused on eight PPPAs (see Annex 5 on case study selection). In total, over 30 interviews were conducted, covering 15 EP Committees and four EC DGs, five Political Group representatives, (former) MEPs, MEP assistants, and other actors involved in the implementation of the selected case studies. All interview feedback was carefully triangulated (between different sources) to validate the feedback.
- Two virtual progress meetings were organised to discuss emerging findings and case study work (on 11 March and on 24 March 2020).
- The COVID-19 health crisis affected data collection; there was more limited availability of EP Committee Secretariat staff, EC and case study stakeholders for interviews. Considering this and the fact that key data for the quantitative analysis only became available in late January 2020, the study was practically conducted in less than three months.

²² The EP shared documents as of 13 December 2019.

²³ The EC shared documents as of 17 January 2020, however, key data for the quantitative analysis was only shared on 20 and 31 January 2020.

- Finally, this final report addresses comments on an interim version of the report, and comments on two draft versions of the final report.²⁴

The authors of this report would like to express their gratitude to the colleagues in the EP's Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs, the BUDG Secretariat and the EC's DG BUDG for the support provided in terms of facilitating documentation and data and helping with the organisation of data collection.

1.3. REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is organised in the following sections:

- Section 1 – This introduction;
- Section 2 – The PPPAs in 2014-2019;
- Section 3 – Quantitative assessment;
- Section 4 – Qualitative assessment;
- Section 5 – Recommendations.

²⁴ The Interim Report was submitted on 28 February 2020; the EP provided comments on 10 and 23 March 2020. The first draft of the final report was submitted on 8 April 2020 and the EP provided comments on 22, 23, 27 and 29 April 2020; the second draft of the final report was submitted on 6 May 2020 and the EP provided comments on 21 May 2020. The version of 6 May 2020 was also shared with the EC, and the latter provided comments on 28 May 2020. Final comments by the EP of 11 June 2020 were addressed in the present version of the report.

2. THE PILOT PROJECTS AND PREPARATORY ACTIONS IN 2014-2019

This section introduces PPPAs and discusses existing insights into PPPAs (literature review).

2.1. INTRODUCING THE TOOL

A recent EP paper presents PPPAs as ‘tools introduced in the European Union (EU) budget that aim at testing new policy initiatives and/or preparing the ground for the adoption of future measures. Such PP/PAs give Members of the European Parliament the possibility to initiate innovative policies and fund them in advance of a legal basis being set’.²⁵

2.1.1. History of PPPAs

The EP introduced PPPAs in the budget as of the financial year 1975 (‘entering items into the budget that did not have an established legal base’).²⁶ The EC challenged this and a compromise was reached with a joint declaration in 1982, allowing for the EC to finance ‘research or experiments necessary for it to formulate proposals in the exercise of its power of initiative’, whilst at the same time agreeing that ‘appropriations for significant new actions would require a basic regulation’. Following a legal challenge by the UK, the Court of Justice (12 May 1982) required the EC to ‘prove that such actions are not significant’. The institutions responded to this by defining PPs and PAs and limiting their duration and setting funding limits and incorporating this framework in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Legal Bases and Implementation of the Budget (1998).²⁷ The Financial Regulation first mentioned PPPAs in 2002 (Article 49).²⁸ In the course of the past 45 years, PPPAs have given rise to important initiatives. For example, the Erasmus programme originated as a PP in the 1980s. Similarly, a PP in 2004 gave rise to programmes in the field of security research.²⁹ Other examples of important follow-up in terms of triggering new or fine-tuning existing legislation or policy are presented in the text boxes on case studies in section 4.3.3. However, there is no systematic data to assess the extent to which the tool of the PPPAs has been effective.

2.1.2. Legal framework

The current legal basis for PPPAs is detailed in Article 58 of the Financial Regulation.

Furthermore, the Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA) of 20 December 2013 introduced some procedural elements for a smoother adoption of PPPAs. Point D of the Annex to the IIA provides that: “A trilogue shall be convened in good time before the Council's reading, to allow the institutions to have an exchange of views on the draft budget. In order for the Commission to be able to assess in due time the implementability of amendments, envisaged by the European Parliament and the Council, which create new preparatory actions or pilot projects or which prolong existing ones, the European Parliament and the Council shall inform the Commission of their intentions in this regard, so that a first discussion may already take place at that trilogue.”.

Discussing the legal framework, some EP Committee Secretariats questioned whether the absence of a legal basis (‘may be implemented without a basic act’, Art. 58.2 Financial Regulation) was a necessary

²⁵ European Parliament (2019) At a Glance, Pilot projects and preparatory actions in the annual EU budgetary procedure.

²⁶ European Parliament (2009) Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions.

²⁷ European Parliament, Council, Commission Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 October 1998 on legal bases and implementation of the budget (98/C 344/01).

²⁸ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

²⁹ European Commission (2019) Study, Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (Budgetary Years 2009-2019)

pre-condition for a PPPA. This was noted in the context of PPPAs proposed by the Committees on Development (DEVE) and Foreign Affairs (AFET). Indeed, in the pre-assessment of the feasibility of the PPPAs, the EC often 'C'- or 'D'-categorises these PPPAs considering that these areas are covered by existing legislation.³⁰

Article 58 of the Financial Regulation 'Basic act and exceptions'

1. Appropriations entered in the budget for any Union action shall only be used if a basic act has been adopted.
2. By way of derogation from paragraph 1, and subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, the following appropriations may be implemented without a basic act provided the actions which they are intended to finance fall within the competences of the Union:
 - (a) appropriations for pilot projects of an experimental nature designed to test the feasibility of an action and its usefulness;
 - (b) appropriations for preparatory actions in the field of application of the TFEU and the Euratom Treaty, designed to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions;
 - (...)
3. With regard to appropriations referred to in point (a) of paragraph 2, the relevant commitment appropriations may be entered in the budget for not more than two consecutive financial years. The total amount of appropriations for pilot projects shall not exceed EUR 40 000 000 in any financial year.
4. With regard to appropriations referred to in point (b) of paragraph 2, preparatory actions shall follow a coherent approach and may take various forms. The relevant commitment appropriations may be entered in the budget for not more than three consecutive financial years. The procedure for the adoption of the relevant basic act shall be concluded before the end of the third financial year. In the course of that procedure, the commitment of appropriations shall correspond to the particular features of the preparatory action with regard to the activities envisaged, the aims pursued and the recipients. As a result, the amount of the appropriations committed shall not correspond to the amount of those envisaged for financing the definitive action itself.

The total amount of appropriations for new preparatory actions referred to in point (b) of paragraph 2 shall not exceed EUR 50 000 000 in any financial year, and the total amount of appropriations actually committed for preparatory actions shall not exceed EUR 100 000 000.

It was also noted that whilst the absence of an act providing a legal basis might be a precondition for a PPPA, the question remained as to what exactly the existing act covered. For example, a development cooperation act might have a broad scope, but this does not necessarily mean it provides a potential legal basis for absolutely every expenditure action related to development cooperation. There might still be aspects of this policy that cannot be implemented on the basis of an existing act, therefore

³⁰ See section 4.2.7 for a discussion of the pre-assessment by the EC. Category 'C' means that a PPPA is fully covered by a legal base or the ideas are otherwise being addressed; category 'D' means that the PPPA cannot be implemented or similar actions have already been carried out in the past.

justifying a PPPA. DG BUDG feedback on this point suggested that the rather broad legal basis in the area of development cooperation means that it is difficult to argue that a legal basis does not exist and proposals tend to be 'C'-categorised. Indeed, EC feedback suggested that Article 58.2 ('may be implemented without a basic act') can only be understood as requiring the strict absence of an existing basic act, and this was explained with the understanding that Article 58.2 was constituting an exception to Article 58.1, stipulating the existence of a basic act as a precondition for any budgetary appropriations ('Appropriations entered in the budget for any Union action shall only be used if a basic act has been adopted').

EP interviewees also wondered about the adequate approach to PPPAs in areas where a legal basis is in discussion, noting that PPPAs in this category are usually 'C'-categorised, however, in the view of these interviewees more positive assessments were provided for PPPAs in the same category but proposed by the EC (interviewees noted the example of the PA on defence research (02 04 77 03)).

Finally, EP interviewees noted different views as to the 'ideal' outcome of a PPPA; whilst some suggested that PPPAs should aim to prepare the grounds for legislative follow-up, others argued for a broader understanding of outcomes, e.g. including enhanced understanding, changes in priorities, contributions to policy development, changes in the allocation of funding etc.

2.1.3. The coherence of PPPAs with EP political priorities

The EP BUDG Rapporteurs for Section III of the EU budget frame PPPAs as 'important tools for the formulation of political priorities and the introduction of new initiatives'. Their success is defined in terms of 'sustainability and durability of the results produced by a PPPA'.³¹ In this context, the Rapporteurs have specified selected policy areas in their annual Working Document on the PPPAs. For example, the Working Document for 2019 and 2020 specifies: 'priority will be given to PP-PAs that aim at improving competitiveness, innovation and research, internal and external security, as well as boosting the effectiveness and quality of development aid and neighbourhood policies'.³² Earlier Working Documents noted somewhat different priorities: 'strengthening growth, jobs creation and security in the EU' (Working Document for 2017 and 2018); 'fight against unemployment, in particular youth unemployment' (Working Document for 2015 and 2016). The Working Document for 2016 and 2017 did not note any priorities. The Working Document with the priorities for 2021 presents a wide set of priorities: 'priority will be given to PP-PAs that express Parliament's political vision for the future, i.e. that contribute to the EU's efforts to address climate and environment-related challenges, implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, strengthen social inclusion and cohesion, improve competitiveness, innovation and research, promote cultural policies, enhance (internal and external) security, and boost the effectiveness and quality of development aid and neighbourhood policies'.³³

In the view of the authors of this study, the priorities in the Working Documents are of a rather general nature, providing limited concrete guidance on specific 'suitable' topics for PPPAs. However, setting priorities is a useful approach in terms of focusing limited resources on areas where maximum impact is desirable. If the Working Document aims to set priorities ('priority will be given to PP-PAs that aim at'), it is not clear how this is being achieved with the current approach to phrasing the priorities. Interview feedback suggests that the priorities are intentionally phrased as widely as possible. EP

³¹ EP (2019) Committee on Budgets Rapporteurs on the EU Budget, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020. The same text is also used in earlier Working Documents, e.g. for 2015 and 2016, 2016 and 2017, 2017 and 2018.

³² EP (2019) Committee on Budgets Rapporteurs on the EU Budget, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020.

³³ EP (2020) Committee on Budgets Rapporteur for the EU budget, 16 March 2020, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2020 and 2021.

feedback on this point notes constraints to setting priorities. Reducing top down the scope for proposals may not allow the most innovative ideas to emerge, and it is not always possible to anticipate with certainty what financial margins under the ceilings of which headings will be still available for financing PPPAs once programme reinforcements and other possible urgent needs have absorbed all or the greatest part of that margin.

EP interviewees noted that the motivation behind supporting a PPPA can be somewhat unrelated to the specific merit of the concerned PPPA. For example, on occasions, the rapporteurs have accepted amendments for PPPAs by Groups to 'compensate' these Groups for a more limited inclusion of some of their budget priorities, or a more limited involvement in certain tasks / roles and / or to build alliances (and not solely based on the actual merit of the proposed PPPA).

Several EP interviewees explained the interest of some MEPs (especially new MEPs) in PPPAs with the fact that larger and more complex programmes under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) were seen as more difficult to understand, with (new) MEPs therefore taking an interest in the annual procedure for PPPAs, however, this was not substantiated with quantitative data. In this context, DG BUDG also noted that MEPs were using PPPAs rather than introducing budget amendments to regular programmes since the Council had established a practice of not scrutinising the content of the PPPAs compromise package.

Moreover, interview feedback suggested that MEPs were also occasionally using PPPAs to support specific 'causes'; on some occasions the proposed PPPAs are 'earmarked' to support a specific organisation, or target support to a specific region. This might respond to outside stakeholders, e.g. civil society organisations, having approached MEPs to propose PPPAs. However, EC feedback suggests 'as a general rule, earmarking or reference to funding for a concrete beneficiary/applicant is against the basic principles of the Financial Regulation and in particular the principles of transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination',³⁴ and these proposals are usually 'D'-categorised by the EC.

EP interviewees suggested that on occasions the EC asks a MEP to propose a PPPA, noting for example the PA 'Preparation of the new EU GOVSATCOM programme' (02047707). The EC approach was explained with the fact that the EU Space Programme was underfinanced. EC feedback suggests that the EC is now refraining from proposing new PPPAs, and there have not been any proposals from the EC for new PPPAs in the last three years.³⁵

Finally, the Council is entitled to use the instrument of the PPPAs, however, has not made any use of this in the period covered by this study.

Text box 1: Preparatory Action: Urban Agenda for the EU

The Urban Agenda for the European Union (UAEU) responds to a need to better involve cities in EU policy making. The UAEU was launched in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam, and represents a new multi-level working method, promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the EC and other stakeholders in order to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe and to identify and successfully tackle societal challenges.

³⁴ EC (2019) 2020 budget – PPPA assessments round I.

³⁵ A DG BUDG study on the PPPA in 2017 notes: 'Between 2009 and 2017, the Commission initiated one new pilot project and eight new preparatory actions. The pilot project was proposed under heading 1.1. The most common heading concerning preparatory actions was heading 3 with three new PAs, followed by heading 1.1 with 2 actions. Additionally, there was one preparatory action initiated by the Commission under heading 1.2, 2 and 4 respectively.' See EC (2017) 'Pilot projects (PPs) and preparatory actions (PAs), Budgetary years 2009-2017'

MEP Jan Olbrycht serves as Chair of the Urban Intergroup at the EP,³⁶ and hence he is one of the reference persons for urban matters at the EP. In his ongoing dialogue with the Intergroup stakeholders (cities, regions, civil society organisations) he became aware that more resources were required to create the necessary 'momentum' for the UAEU, for instance to organise regular meetings and consultations, etc.

Acknowledging this demand from 'urban' stakeholders, a proposal for a PA was drafted by Jan Olbrycht's office and submitted through the REGI Committee. The PA further received wide-spectrum support from several political groups due to Jan Olbrycht's strategic visibility on urban issues at the EP.

Lesson learnt: PPPA meeting clear and well-established political priorities (as opposed to individual PPPA-specific priorities) and supported in a bottom-up approach by a wide range of stakeholders.

³⁶ <http://urban-intergroup.eu> <http://urban-intergroup.eu>

2.2. 'LITERATURE' REVIEW

The existing academic literature on the EU budgetary process has not taken any interest in the tool of the PPPAs.³⁷ However, the EP and the EC have prepared a series of 'studies' on PPPAs. Moreover, some of the larger PPPAs have been covered by independent evaluations.

2.2.1. European Parliament

The EP issued two studies and a short overview on PPPAs:

- In 2009, the EP published a 'Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions' (18 pages with annexes). The publication covers PPPAs in the period 2000-2008. Besides a brief introduction to the history of the PPPAs, the study comprises a statistical analysis (mostly numbers and values of PPPAs, including per policy area). The main finding is that 'the majority of PPs that came to an end during 2000-2008 were continued through transformation into PAs, through incorporation into an existing legal base or through the adoption of a new legal base, 40% of them were nevertheless abandoned. Only 16% of PAs were abandoned - the rest were continued either since the activities covered were already being carried out elsewhere, through incorporation into an existing legal base or through the adoption of a new legal base'.³⁸ However, overall, the study mainly limits itself to presenting data with very limited analysis of processes or factors explaining outcomes.
- In 2014, the EP published a follow-up study on the 2009 study: 'Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions 2009-2013', this time covering the five years following the publication of the earlier study. The structure of the study is similar to the 2009 study, including, however, in addition a new separate section with 18 'Success Stories'. Whilst the study provides a wealth of individual examples of different types of outcomes, there is rather limited analysis of the underlying factors / processes. The section on the analysis of outcomes limits itself to presenting data, e.g. 40 of a total of 107 PPs (37%) and 11 of 79 PAs (14%) in the period covered were found to have no follow up.
- Finally, in 2019, the European Parliamentary Research Service issued a 2-page publication 'At a glance – Pilot projects and preparatory actions in the annual EU budgetary procedure' on PPPAs. This publication is purely descriptive, briefly discussing the key features of PPPAs, the budget, the process of adoption in the annual budgetary procedure and the pre-assessment by the EC.

2.2.2. European Commission

Working Document IV accompanying the Draft Budget every year includes an analytical part on PPPAs.³⁹

Besides there are also short 15-20 page informal 'studies' on PPPAs, including:

³⁷ See for example recent academic contributions: Benedetto, G. (2019) 'The European Parliament as budgetary extractor since the Lisbon Treaty' in *Journal of European Integration*, 329-345. Héritier, A., Meissner, K., Moury, C. and Scholler, M. (2019) 'The European Parliament in the Budgetary Process' in *European Parliament Ascendant*, p. 81-110. A search on relevant databases of academic literature failed to identify any contributions referring to the PPPAs.

³⁸ EP (2009), *Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions*, p. 3

³⁹ See for example COM(2019) 400 - June 2019 has a section on statistical trends in pilot projects and preparatory actions in the EU Budget 2009-2019.

- 'Main features of the Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions carried out between 2009 and 2014' (not dated)
- 2017: 'Pilot projects (PPs) and preparatory actions (PAs), Budgetary years 2009-2017'
- 2018: 'Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (Budgetary years 2009 – 2018)'
- 2019: 'Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (Budgetary years 2009 – 2019)'
- 2020: 'Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (Budgetary years 2009 – 2020)'

The studies in the years 2017 to 2020 were authored by DG BUDG trainees. These studies present key statistical data on the PPPAs, i.e. numbers and budgets of adopted PPPAs per year and per budget heading, development of payment and commitment appropriations etc. As of the 2017 study, there is also a discussion of the pre-assessment, noting the steep increase in the number of proposals since 2015. Finally, the studies touch on the fact that an increasing number of PPPAs have no continuation in terms of commitment appropriations following the first year.

2.2.3. Evaluations of individual PPPAs

For some PPPAs the EC organised final evaluations. For example, the Terms of Reference for this study provide links to PPPA evaluations.⁴⁰ The evaluations focus on the outcomes of PPPAs, i.e. to what extent have objectives been achieved, categories of outcomes, recommendations for follow-up etc. However, the evaluations do not discuss issues related to the preparation of PPPAs (e.g. some evaluations do not even refer to the EP having proposed the PPPA in the first place).

⁴⁰ See for example for the PP 'Erasmus for Public Administration': https://www.instituto-camoes.pt/images/images_divulgacao/erasmus_ap_report.pdf.

3. QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Unless otherwise specified, **PPPA value** means here the sum of annual outturn for initial (voted) payment appropriations **to date** (the best current approximation of actual PPPA cost).⁴¹

KEY FINDINGS

This analysis covers 324 PPPAs starting from 2014 to 2019 inclusive. Of these, 213 were still 'open' at the end of 2019 (i.e. their budget lines were still open).

Annual total commitment appropriations are consistently at or near the maximum permitted.

For closed PPPAs, there has been underutilisation of voted commitment appropriations amounting to 38% (difference between total payment appropriations and commitment appropriations). Given the innovative/ experimental nature of PPPAs, this is not necessarily always a bad thing, and full utilisation could in some cases indicate systemic lack of scrutiny and learning from PPPAs.

The aggregate value of the 324 PPPAs to date is approximately EUR 337 million.

PPPAs under MFF headings 1.1 (Competitiveness for growth and jobs) and 3 (Security and citizenship) have received disproportionately high amounts of total PPPA funding (in payment appropriations), while PPPAs under MFF headings 1.2 (Economic, social and territorial cohesion) and 2 (Sustainable Growth: Natural Resources) have received disproportionately low amounts of total PPPA funding (in payment appropriations). MFF heading 1.1 accounts for EUR 161 million, almost three times more than any other MFF heading. It also accounts for 135 PPPAs, again more than double any other MFF heading.

DGs CNECT, GROW, ENV, and SANTE have been responsible for more PPs than other DGs.

DGs CNECT and EAC have been responsible for more PAs than other DGs.

With the exception of a few outliers, PAs have values under EUR 5 million and PPs have values under EUR 2 million. The latter are generally concentrated below EUR 1 million.

The number of PPs has increased in four of the six years covered by the assessment. There was a sharp increase in the number of PPs starting in 2016 and in the number of PAs starting in 2018.

Approximately half of PPPAs have been voted commitment appropriations in only one year.

34 PPPAs were voted commitment appropriations but have not ultimately been funded.

PPs are likely to remain 'open' significantly longer than PAs of the same value.

1,887 PPPA proposals were pre-assessed from 2013 to 2019.

The number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment doubled from approximately 150 in 2014 to 300 in 2015.

63% of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment from 2013 to 2019 were categorised as 'C' or 'D', although DG BUDG considers it could be as high as 70%.

⁴¹ The DG BUDG spreadsheet used to make the analysis includes two payment appropriation columns for each year. On the advice of DG BUDG, the column 'outturn voted payment appropriations' has been used as the best approximation of the actual cost and the column "outturn all sources" disregarded. This is explained in more detail in 3.2.1.

The combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals has remained lower in all years from 2015 onwards compared with 2013 and 2014.

There is a strong negative relationship between the number of PPPAs in a year and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals. In other words, the higher the number of proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the percentage of proposals categorised as 'A' or 'B'.

There have been almost 200 pre-assessments involving two or more DGs, more than undertaken by any individual DG. Pre-assessments involving two or more DGs are more likely to result in 'C', 'D', or 'None' (i.e. no category).

DG EAC and DG CNECT have pre-assessed significantly more PPPAs than other DGs.

Proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT are more likely than not to be categorised as 'A' or 'B', even though the likelihood does fall as the number of proposals increases.

In the case of DG EAC, the analysis suggests that there is no relationship between the number of proposals and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. In fact, there appears to be a weak positive relationship.

For PPPAs where the author is an MEP rather than a committee, there is a weak negative relationship between the number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment by an MEP and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. In other words, the more proposals an MEP submitted, the lower the pre-assessment outcome. There is no suggestion that the Commission is in any way instrumental in this correlation.

For PPPAs where the indicated author is a committee, there is a positive relationship between the number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. There is no suggestion that the Commission is in any way instrumental in this correlation.

The CULT Committee, followed by the TRAN Committee, submitted far more proposals than any other Committee, and the CULT Committee's proposals had by far the highest combined rate of 'A' and 'B' pre-assessment classifications (approximately 60% of the proposals it submitted).

This chapter starts with some observations on the available financial and pre-assessment data (3.1). It then looks at the financial data (3.2) and finally the pre-assessment data (3.3).

It covers **PPPAs that started between 2014 and 2019 inclusive**. PPPAs starting in 2014 will have been pre-assessed in 2013. Thus, the **analysis of pre-assessment data starts in 2013**. It also **includes pre-assessments carried out in 2019** – although this covers PPPAs starting in 2020, which are outside the scope of this study, though the pre-assessment activity itself took place within the period covered by the study.

The analysis is based on **three spreadsheets provided by DG BUDG**. Two of these cover PPPA financing and the third covers PPPA pre-assessment results.⁴² **All tables and figures in this chapter are based exclusively on these three sources.**

The methodology used for the financial analysis is explained below (3.2.1). The methodology used for the pre-assessment analyses is explained at the beginning of section 3.3.

⁴² DG BUDG (31/01/2020), 'PPPA_proposals and assessments 2014 – 2019.xlsx'

3.1. OBSERVATIONS ON THE AVAILABLE FINANCIAL AND PRE-ASSESSMENT DATA

Unique ID number: DG BUDG is maintaining information on PPPAs in several spreadsheets. There appears to be no common key and there are differences in PPPA titles within and between files, making it hard to combine data from the different spreadsheets. DG BUDG notes that this is because the EP modifies titles between PPPA pre-assessment and adoption. This is particularly problematic when attempting to link pre-assessment data to financial data. Ideally, PPPA proposals would be automatically assigned a unique ID number before they reach DG BUDG for pre-assessment and all information from pre-assessment onwards would be recorded in a single database, rather than different files.

Completeness: The provided data appears to be incomplete, as we were unable to find one of the case studies in the pre-assessment dataset.

Linked PPPA: On the basis of the available information, the only means of establishing if a PP is followed by a PA and vice versa, is to search for matches in PPPA titles. This works only if the titles are an exact match and as noted above there are many variations in PPPA titles. Therefore, it is unreliable. This could be addressed with the use of unique PPPA IDs and a 'linked ID' field or column.

Duration: The financial data from DG BUDG does not include information on the duration of project implementation. An approximation of duration has to be inferred from the number of years during which the budget line is open. This is unlikely to be accurate and must constrain learning and decision making. Ideally, the expected duration and actual start and end of implementation would be included in PPPA data.

Format of financial data: The format of the financial data addresses the accounting needs of DG BUDG. However, it is not adapted to the needs of other users and requires manipulation (in some cases significant) in order to generate basic information such as 'PPPA value' (discussed below) and duration, and to merge data from different spreadsheets.⁴³ Some of the terminology used in the financial data is unclear to users at the EP. It would be desirable for DG BUDG to make available, on a regular basis, financial data in a format that is accessible to external users. This means integrating the needs of other users and providing data that can be easily analysed in the required ways with the tools available in standard spreadsheet applications. This would benefit decision making and dialogue between the main actors. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the financial data provided by DG BUDG is consistently structured, and DG BUDG was helpful in explaining the terminology used and in advising which columns to use to address the needs of the analysis.

Type of PPPA: The type of PPPA (PP or PA) is included in the title. In order to disaggregate the analysis by PP and PA, the type has to be separated from the title. This is made more complicated by the fact that there are small variations in how the type and title have been combined.⁴⁴

Authors: In DG BUDG's pre-assessment spreadsheet, the author column frequently includes multiple names, including multiple MEPs, one or more Committees, and political groups and the information is not entered in a systematic way, which makes it difficult to extract specific pieces of information. In one case approximately 28 authors are listed. It is understood that this is how the information is provided to DG BUDG by the EP and we do not suggest that it is the responsibility of DG BUDG to rationalise the author information. In order to carry out the analysis, the first name was extracted and used as the

⁴³ We have used the Python programming language <https://www.python.org/about/apps/>

⁴⁴ e.g. use of '-' (em dash) and '-' (hyphen) between the type and title, with and without spaces. Variations like this can be addressed with use of regular expressions (a tool that matches text patterns) but this is an unnecessary and time consuming additional step, and likely beyond the reach of everyday users of the data. See, for example <https://www.regular-expressions.info/reference.html>

author. In many cases the resulting author is a Committee and it is unclear if this Committee is actually the author, or simply the channel through which the proposal was submitted. These issues could perhaps be addressed by having four author fields or columns to show the different types of authors: committee, political group, the lead author or coordinator (MEP), and other MEPs authoring the proposal.

MEP names: There are numerous variations in the names of MEPs listed in DG BUDG's pre-assessment spreadsheet. These variations had to be 'normalised' in order to undertake analysis of PPPA proposals disaggregated by author, and to link the proposals to political groups. The names of MEPs given in the pre-assessment data should adhere strictly to the names as they are listed in the EP directory of MEPs. Ideally, the names should be entered using a drop-down list that takes names from the directory in order to avoid any possibility of errors at the time of entry.

General observations and recommendation: The above observations suggest that the system for proposing and monitoring PPPAs is essentially using a '**paper logic**', where much information is entered manually, including copying between documents. This is unnecessarily **resource intensive and prone to errors**, and significantly **undermines strategic learning and decision-making**. It would be highly desirable to move away from the use of multiple standalone documents. It would be more reliable and less labour intensive to manage PPPAs through a multi-user, server-based database, where PPPAs are assigned a unique ID as soon as they are entered into the system.⁴⁵ This could then be used to (among other things):

- Submit proposals, including description of objectives, budget, expected duration, supporting documentation, etc.;
- Contact persons at the EP and EC to enable dialogue about specific PPPAs;
- Provide pre-assessment feedback and categories for every year that a PPPA is proposed;
- Communicate between authors and the EC to fine tune proposals and provide clarifications;
- Provide regular progress reports on each PPPA to inform decision making;
- Record pre-assessment and funding information for each PPPA in one place, rather than in different documents or separate systems;
- For each PPPA, record funds committed and utilised;
- Record information about outputs and outcomes;
- Record information about why PPPAs have been continued or discontinued (e.g. a drop-down list of options enabling subsequent quick analysis);
- Provide MEPs and other actors with a summary of all the PPPAs they have proposed or are associated with, and the status of those PPPAs, including during implementation;
- Send automatic alerts to PPPA authors e.g.: to remind them of the need to re-submit proposals for ongoing PPPAs;
- Automatically generate different types of analyses and reports for different users.

⁴⁵ Among other things, this type of approach would enable the implementation of data validation rules that would ensure that manually entered information is consistent and meets requirements.

3.2. ANALYSIS OF THE FINANCIAL DATA

3.2.1. Methodology for analysis for financial data

The **financial analysis** presented here primarily makes use of one spreadsheet provided by DG BUDG,⁴⁶ although some useful data has been imported from an earlier version. Some additional calculated columns have been generated from the existing data, such as PPPA value (total outturn to date for initial payment appropriations), duration, number of years commitment appropriations were adopted, etc. These are discussed in more detail below. The DG BUDG financial spreadsheet lists 588 PPPAs. However, these are not all within the scope of this study. The number used for this analysis has been narrowed down to 326. **Two of these are open/ ongoing PAs put forward by the EC** (see Table 1 below) and these have also **been excluded, bringing the total number of PPPAs included in the analysis to 324**. The processed financial data has been made available to DG BUDG, in the event that DG BUDG has the possibility to validate it.

These 324 PPPAs include 34 'zero value' PPPAs. These are PPPAs that were voted commitment appropriations and possibly also payment appropriations, but have ultimately not received any funding, in other words they have not been executed. Unless otherwise stated, these unexecuted PPPAs *are included* in the analysis of financial data, as they are included in DG BUDG's financial data. It was not possible to investigate these further in the time and budget available for this study.

Table 1: European Commission PAs excluded from the analysis

	Year of first Commitment Appropriation	Commitment Appropriation count	Duration so far (years)	PPPA value to date ⁴⁷	MFF	DG
Capacity development and institution building to support the implementation of economic reforms	2016	1	4	2,550,285	1.2	SRSS
Preparatory action on defence research	2017	3	3	84,526,890	1.1	GROW

Source: based on data from DG BUDG⁴⁸

As noted below (see Table 4 and Figure 2) many of the PPPAs in the dataset are open. This means that they might still be under active implementation, or that implementation has ceased but the budget line remains open for administrative reasons and there is still the possibility of further adjustments to the financial information. For open PAs starting in 2019, there is still the possibility for additional commitments under the 2021 budget. Thus, **calculations on value (total funding to date), number of years commitment appropriations were adopted, and duration do not present the final picture for PPPAs starting in the years from 2014 to 2019.**

Explanation of the main calculations used in the financial analysis

PPPA value: It is understood that initial commitment and payment appropriations are the main focus in the EP budgets committee, which has responsibility for preparing their adoption. However, these

⁴⁶ DG BUDG (31/01/2020), 'PPPA in the budgets 2014-2020-full budget lifecycle.xlsx'

⁴⁷ The calculation of PPPA value is explained in 3.1.1 below.

⁴⁸ DG BUDG (31/01/2020), 'PPPA in the budgets 2014-2020-full budget lifecycle.xlsx'

figures do not provide information about the actual cost of a PPPA. The financial analysis presented here primarily looks at the sum of the **annual ‘Outturn Voted Payment Appropriations’ columns in DG BUDG’s spreadsheet**⁴⁹ as the best current approximation of actual PPPA value. This data excludes any carryovers or transfers.⁵⁰ **For ease of reading, the text below refers simply to ‘payments outturn’.** The calculation includes figures **up to 2019 plus the ‘Initial Voted Budget Payment Appropriations’ for 2020.**⁵¹ **According to DG BUDG, this is the best approximation of the actual value/ cost of a PPPA.** Here it is important to recall that under the Financial regulation PPs may have up to two consecutive annual budget commitment appropriations and PAs may have up to three. Thus, PAs starting in 2019 may still receive additional commitments under the 2021 budget. Moreover the time limit for the adoption of PPPA commitments and payments does not apply to their execution which may span several years beyond the time of budget adoption so the final value of these projects may increase. It is also possible that PPPAs starting in earlier years (where the budget line is still open) may be subject to decommitments, so their final values may be less than calculated in this analysis. **PPPA duration** is based on the span of years from the first year in which there was a ‘Final Voted Budget Commitment Appropriation’ (the ‘**start year**’) to the first year in which there is no longer a ‘Closing RAL’⁵² (the ‘**end**’ year). Both years are included in the span. Strictly speaking, this is the period during which there is an **active budget line**, and this is not necessarily the same as the period of time during which a project is being actively implemented. However, this is a useful measure, as it provides an indication of the overall ‘monitoring load’, which is interesting to plot against project value: e.g. is there a correlation between PPPA value and PPPA duration? No correlation could potentially indicate a lack of efficiency in that smaller projects tend to generate the same monitoring load as larger projects (in terms of the number of years they have to be monitored and reported on). There is however a strong positive relationship between the duration of PPPAs (as defined here) and their level of funding. This suggests that the overall ‘monitoring load’ for smaller projects is less (lasting for fewer years) than for larger projects. For many PPPAs the budget line is still open and the duration is therefore the duration up to 2019 inclusive.

3.2.2. Overview of the financial data

Article 58 of the Financial Regulation states that the ‘total amount of appropriations for pilot projects shall not exceed EUR 40 000 000 in any financial year’ and ‘the total amount of appropriations actually committed for preparatory actions shall not exceed EUR 100 000 000’.⁵³ Table 2 below shows that commitment appropriations for PPs have been at, or very close to, the maximum allowed in every year from 2014 to 2018. For PAs, commitment appropriations have reached the maximum in both 2018 and 2019. Figures for 2014 and 2015 included PPPAs that started before 2014 and are thus outside the scope of this study.

⁴⁹ The DG BUDG data used for this analysis includes the following columns for each year: Final voted Budget (incl. AB) CA; Final voted Budget (incl. AB) PA; Transfers (voted) CA; Transfers (voted) PA; Outturn (all sources) CA; Outturn (all sources) PA; Outturn (voted) CA; Outturn (voted) PA; Decommitments; Closing RAL. Following the advice of DG BUDG, the analysis uses the sum of the annual ‘Outturn (voted) PA’ columns as the best approximation of the actual value/ cost of each PPPA.

⁵⁰ Consolidated data for carryovers and transfers becoming available with a delay.

⁵¹ When it is eventually available, the Outturn Voted PA for 2020 may well be different from the Initial Voted Budget PA for 2020.

⁵² Closing balance.

⁵³ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union

Table 2: Final voted budget commitment appropriations 2014-2019 EU budgets

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Pilot Projects	39,750,000	38,460,000	38,400,000	39,990,000	40,000,000	40,000,000
Preparatory Actions	39,660,012	18,650,000	28,100,000	61,950,000	100,000,000	99,933,000

Table 3 below looks at PPPAs that started between 2014 and 2019 inclusive, and for which the budget lines are closed. This covers 112 PPPAs and it shows that **38% of the voted commitment appropriations were not utilised**. The rate of underutilisation was slightly higher for PAs (40%) than for PPs (36%). Nearly all closed PPPAs have been subject to underutilisation, although for 41 PPPAs, there was less than 10% underutilisation.

Table 3: Total commitment appropriations vs total outturn payment appropriations for closed PPPAs starting 2014-2019

Start year	Total Commitment Authorisation (Final Voted Budget)	Underutilisation	Percent underutilisation	Count of closed PPPAs
Pilot projects	69,005,000	24,908,658	36%	80
2014	24,600,000	7,478,309	30%	20
2015	17,420,000	3,463,842	20%	19
2016	14,125,000	4,213,988	30%	26
2017	8,550,000	5,709,899	67%	10
2018	2,100,000	1,832,620	87%	3
2019	2,210,000	2,210,000	100%	2
Preparatory actions	52,890,012	21,284,504	40%	32
2014	31,090,012	8,113,259	26%	15
2015	5,850,000	518,496	9%	3
2016	4,900,000	2,602,749	53%	7
2017	1,750,000	750,000	43%	2
2018	7,800,000	7,800,000	100%	4
2019	1,500,000	1,500,000	100%	1
Total	121,895,012	46,193,162	38%	112

Table 4 looks at the same information but here they are presented disaggregated by responsible DG and it is limited to DGs where there has been underutilisation of EUR 1 million or more. This shows that for closed PPPAs managed by DG DEVCO, there was underutilisation of 45% (approximately EUR 10 million). Two PPPAs assigned to the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments had 100% underutilisation.

It is important not to jump to conclusions about these figures. Reasons for underutilisation could include, for example:

- Less funding than expected is required to achieve PPPA objectives;
- It may be particularly challenging to implement PPPAs in some areas/ subjects;
- PPPAs voted by the EP are found to be impractical or unimplementable in practice;
- A call or tender or grant proposals did not receive a sufficient number or submissions;
- There are changes in the operating environment after PPPAs have been voted on that make some PPPAs less relevant or feasible.

PPPAs are by definition innovative and/ or experimental and this means that progress, results, and utilisation of available funding are inevitably unpredictable. With this in mind, it is important to note that **high rates of funding utilisation do not automatically imply that funds have been used efficiently.** In some cases, this **could imply that there is systemic absence of proper scrutiny of, and learning from, PPPAs.**

Table 4: Total commitment appropriations vs total outturn payment appropriations for closed PPPAs starting 2014-2019 disaggregated by responsible DG (underutilisation >= EUR 1 million)

Responsible DG	Total Commitment Authorisation (Final Voted Budget)	Underutilisation	Percent underutilisation	Count of closed PPPA
DEVCO	21,695,000	9,830,729	45%	13
FPI	5,100,000	5,100,000	100%	2
EMPL	5,000,000	3,161,380	63%	3
MOVE	9,225,000	3,016,196	33%	11
ENER	2,870,000	2,810,012	98%	3
HOME	3,700,000	2,565,332	69%	3
EAC	5,000,000	2,413,332	48%	8
MARE	4,950,000	2,313,144	47%	6
SANTE	6,150,000	2,058,535	33%	10
JUST	2,000,000	1,800,265	90%	3
GROW	10,750,000	1,542,054	14%	12
NEAR	4,240,012	1,500,000	35%	2
FISMA	5,000,000	1,262,913	25%	1
AGRI	3,200,000	1,235,285	39%	5
CLIMA	2,215,000	1,145,743	52%	2
RTD	1,750,000	1,013,182	58%	3

Table 5 and Table 6 below show the value and number of PPPAs respectively, disaggregated by MFF heading. The processed DG BUDG data includes 324 PPPAs that started between 2014 and 2015 inclusive. The total value of these projects to date (including initial figures for 2020⁵⁴) is approximately EUR 337 million (in payments outturn).⁵⁵ As explained above (3.2.1), this includes 34 unexecuted PPPAs.⁵⁶ Unless otherwise stated, these unexecuted PPPAs are included in the analysis of financial data as they are included in DG BUDG's financial dataset.

Table 5: PPPA values (in payment appropriations outturn) by MFF heading and type of PPPA (2014-2019)

MFF	1.1	1.2	2	3	4	5	Total
PP	64,470,279	8,392,510	32,393,024	31,284,232	19,098,928	6,074,252	161,713,225
PA	96,583,851	28,284,010	6,213,707	23,039,261	15,283,861	6,345,960	175,750,650
Total	161,054,130	36,676,520	38,606,731	54,323,493	34,382,789	12,420,212	337,463,875

Table 6: Total number of PPPAs by MFF heading and type of PPPA

MFF	1.1	1.2	2	3	4	5	Total
PP	92	8	56	46	20	9	231
PA	42	10	6	18	13	4	93
Total	134	18	62	64	33	13	324

⁵⁴ Initial Voted Budget Payment Appropriations for 2020.

⁵⁵ To put the financial volume of the PPPAs covered under this study in context, for the period 2014-2020, funding programmes of somewhat similar magnitude include the European Solidarity Corps with EUR 352 million programmed (2018-2020) or the Justice Programme with EUR 339 million programmed (2014-2020).

⁵⁶ Unexecuted PPPAs were voted commitment appropriations and possibly also payment appropriations, but have ultimately not received any funding.

Figure 1 below shows the total value of PPPAs to date disaggregated by MFF heading.

Figure 1: Total value (in payment appropriations outturn) of PPPAs starting 2014-2019 by MFF heading

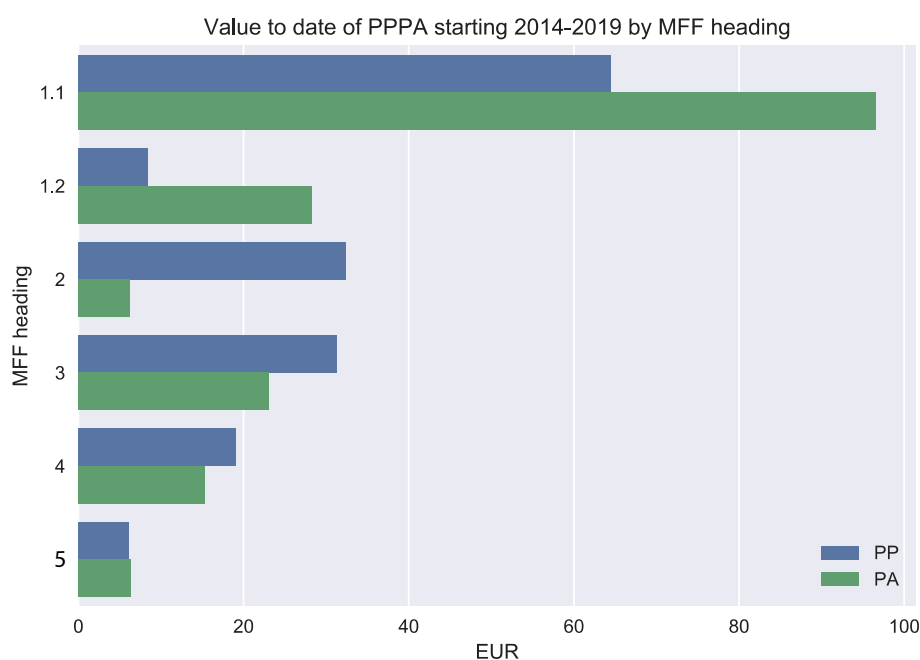


Table 7 below shows that PPPAs under MFF headings 1.1 and 3 have received disproportionately high amounts of total PPPA funding (in payment appropriations outturn), while PPPAs under MFF headings 1.2 and 2 have received disproportionately low amounts of total PPPA funding (in payment appropriations outturn).

Table 7: MFF headings: percentage of MFF envelope 2014-2020 vs Percent of total PPPA value (payments appropriations outturn)

MFF	Percent of MFF envelope ⁵⁷	Percent of total PPPA (in payments outturn)	Difference (in percentage points)
1.1 Competitiveness for growth and jobs	13%	50%	+37
1.2 Economic, social, and territorial cohesion	34%	11%	-23
2 Sustainable growth: natural resources	39%	12%	-27
3 Security and citizenship	2%	17%	+15
4 Global Europe	6%	11%	+5

⁵⁷ Based on: European Commission (undated), *EU funding programmes 2014-2020*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/spending/topic/eu-funding-programmes-2014-2020_en

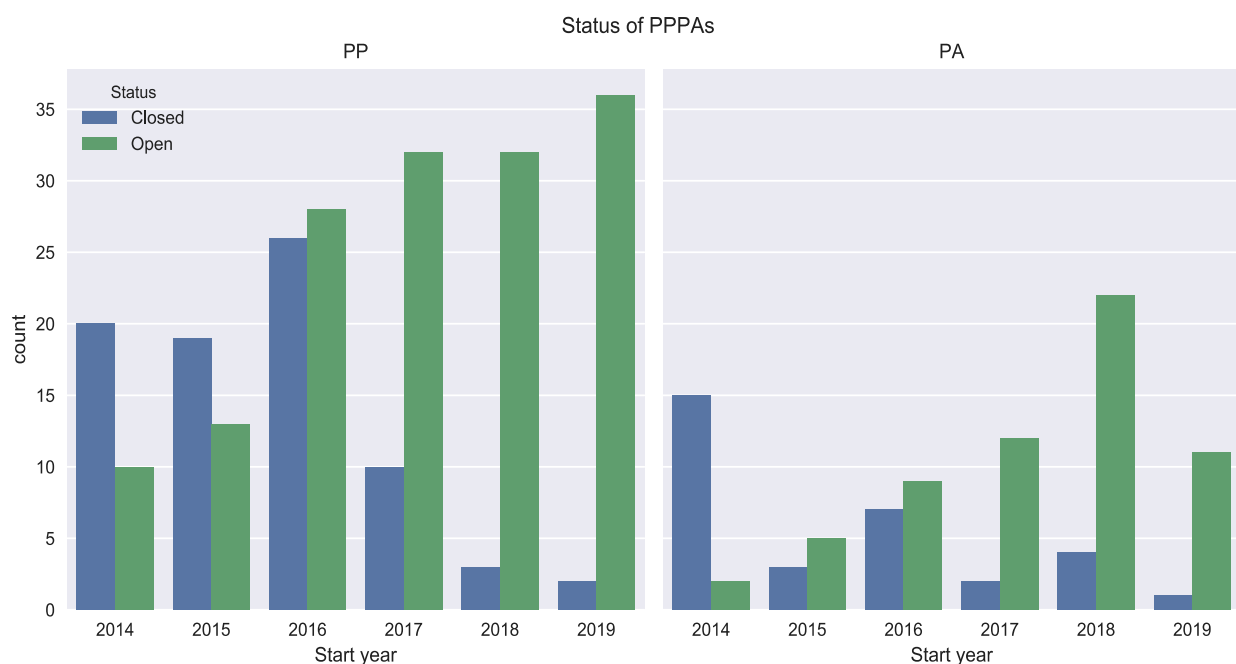
Table 8 below shows that 112 PPAs in the dataset are closed, and 212 were open at the end of 2019.

Figure 2 below presents the same information disaggregated by PPPA start year. It is unsurprising that few PPPAs started in the last three years are closed. However, it is interesting to note that a number of PPPAs from earlier years are still open. It is unclear if this is because the projects are still active, or because budget lines remain open although activities stopped some time ago.

Table 8: Status of PPPAs

	Closed	Open	Total
PP	80	151	231
PA	32	61	93
Total	112	212	324

Figure 2: Status of PPPAs

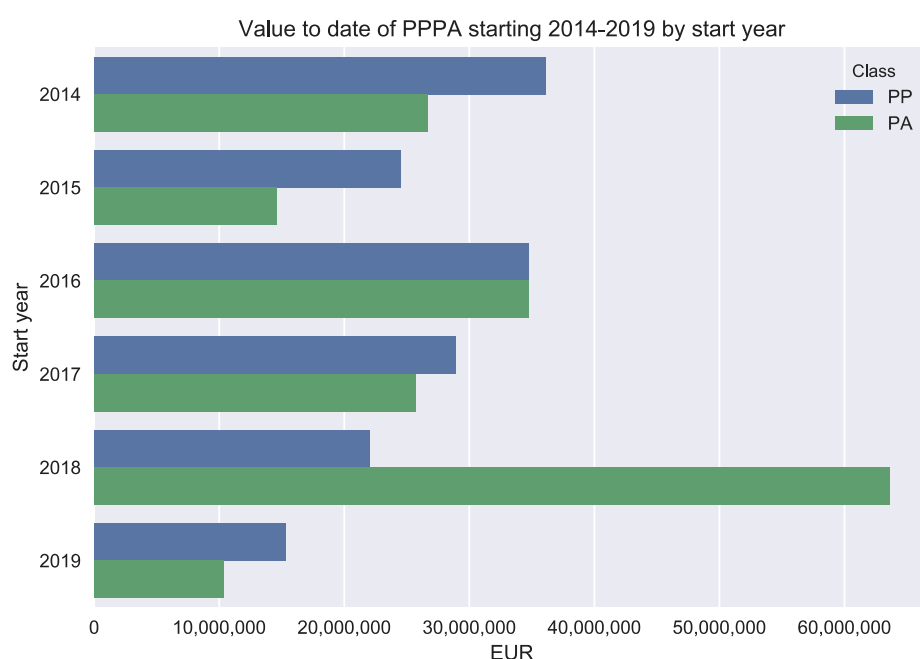


3.2.3. Trends

Figure 3 below indicates that **the aggregate value of PPs (in payment appropriations outturn) appears to have steadily reduced since the start of the period under review**,⁵⁸ while according to Figure 5 there has been an **upward trend in the number of PPs since 2014**. This may imply a reduction in the size of PPs (level of funding) since the start of the period. This is possibly supported by Figure 4 and Figure 6. **However, it has to be kept in mind that in particular for PPs starting in more recent years, there might still be substantial amounts of additional outturn.**

This possible trend may raise **questions about the efficiency⁵⁹ of funding an increasing number of lower value PPs, and about their potential impact**. If confirmed, it is possible that this trend relates to an increase in the use of types of PPs that are less costly (such as desk studies, which tend to be cheaper than real world experiments). However, this type of analysis is not possible on the basis of the data provided by DG BUDG.⁶⁰

Figure 3: Aggregate value (in payment appropriations outturn) of PPPAs starting 2014-2019 by start year



The total value of PAs starting in different years has followed a similar pattern, with one notable exception: the **value of PAs starting in 2018 is approximately EUR 70 million, far higher than PAs starting in any other year**. Four PAs starting in that year account for approximately EUR 48 million, and of this amount, EUR 32 million has been allocated under the 2020 budget alone. These are shown in Table 9 below.

⁵⁸ The aggregate value is the sum of all payment appropriations outturn to date for all PPPAs that started in a given year.

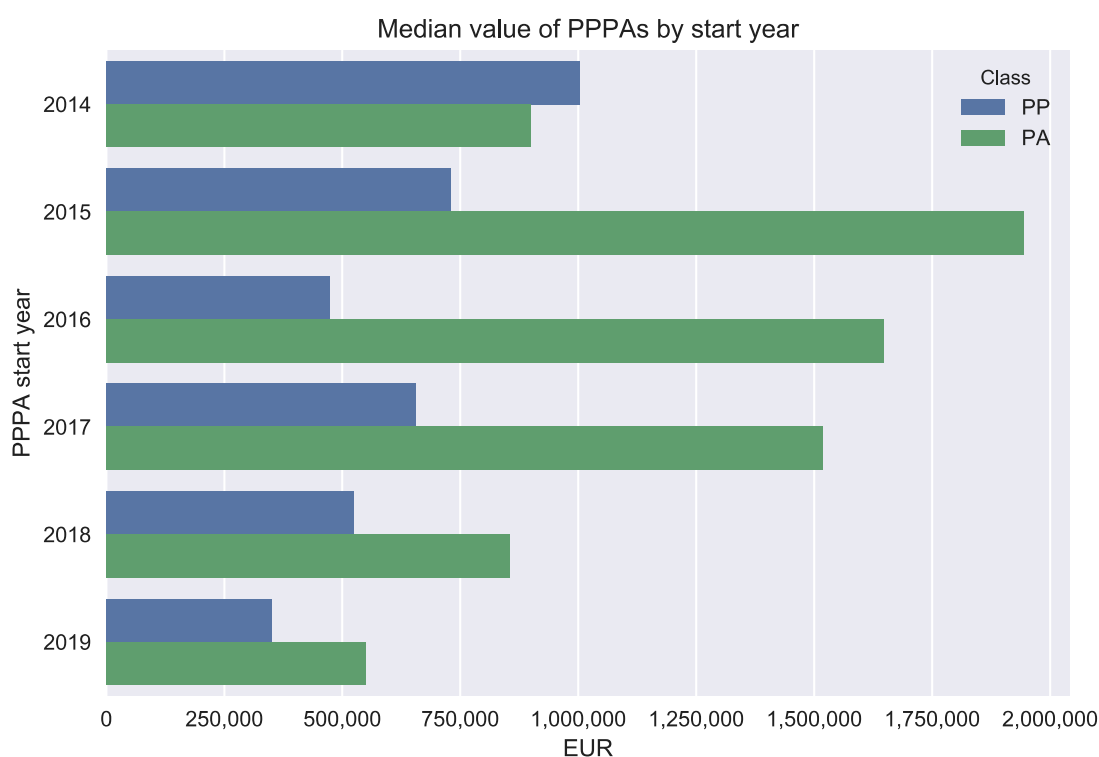
⁵⁹ E.g. preparation, screening, monitoring, reporting, etc.

⁶⁰ The type of activity funded would have to be manually extracted from multiple documents, which is not feasible.

Table 9: Four largest PAs starting in 2018

PPPA	2020 Initial voted budget payment appropriations	PPPA value to date (payments outturn)
DiscoverEU: Free travel pass for Europeans turning 18	19,250,000	35,107,666
Establishing comprehensive support for coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition	5,750,000	5,750,000
Music Moves Europe: Boosting European music diversity and talent	2,880,000	3,875,357
Smart rural areas in the 21st century	3,650,000	3,650,000
Totals	31,530,000	48,383,023

Nevertheless, according to Figure 4 below there appears to have been a **steady decline in the median value of PPPAs since 2015**.⁶¹ However again, this may in part be due to the fact that in this analysis, PPPA value calculated on the basis of executed payments and there can be a gap of several years between adoption of a PPPA and its execution.

Figure 4: Median value of PPPAs starting 2014-2019 by start year (in payment appropriations outturn)

⁶¹ If the values of all PPPAs starting in a year are arranged in order from the smallest to the largest, the median value is the value that lies in the middle of this range. Thus, for PPs that started in 2014, the median value is approximately EUR 1 million, including funding that any of those PPs received in subsequent years. Similarly, for PAs that started in 2014, the median value is approximately EUR 900,000 including any funding that those PAs received in subsequent years.

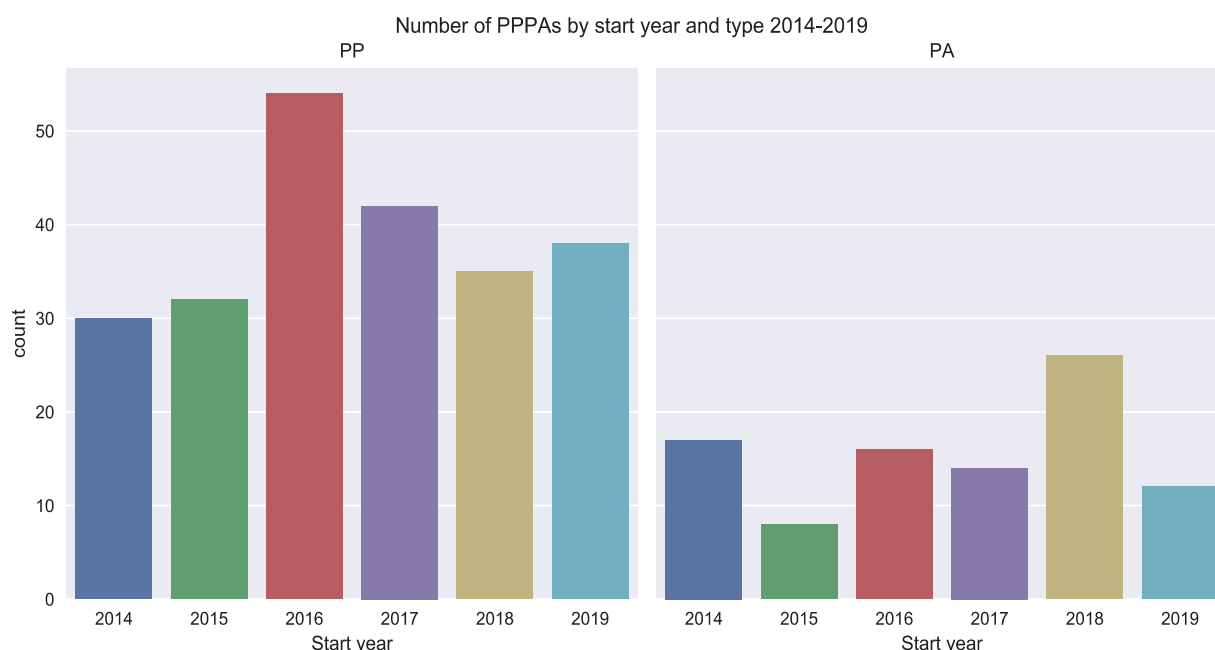
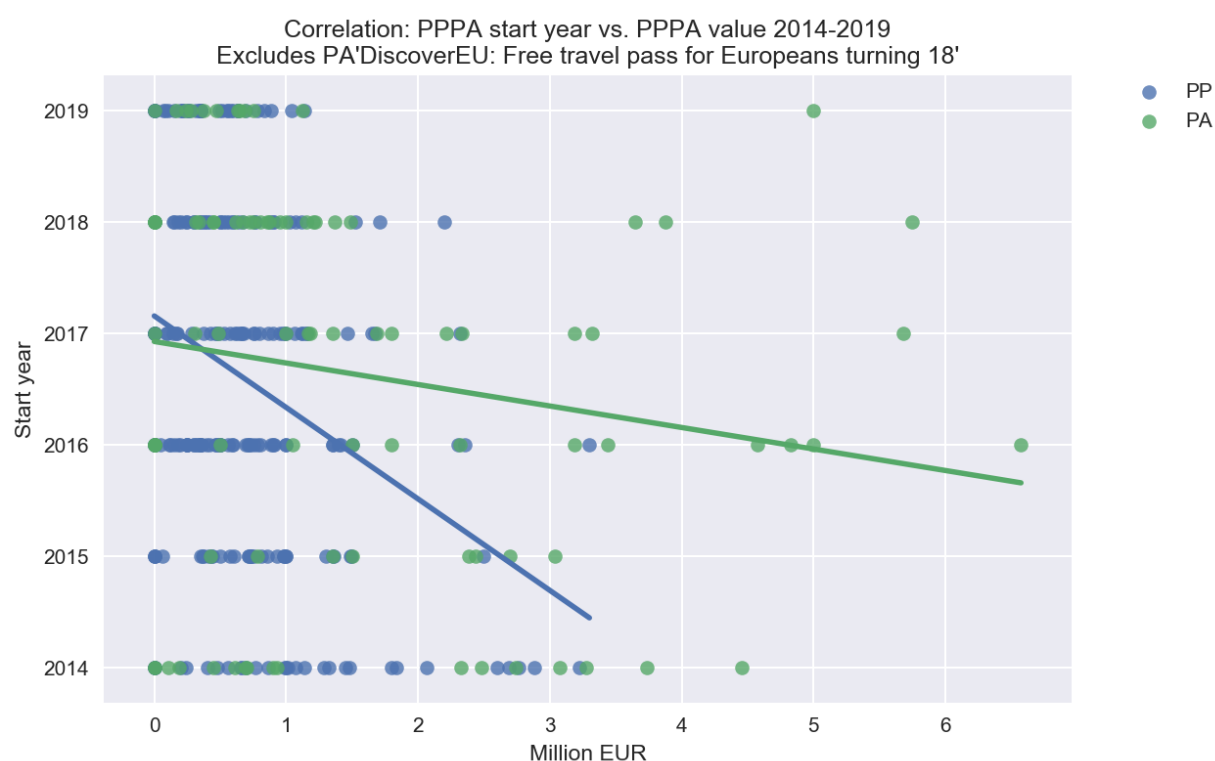
Figure 5: Number of PPPAs by start year 2014-2019

Figure 5 above shows that there was a **spike in the number of PPs starting in 2016 and smaller spike in the number of PAs starting in 2018**. Possible explanations for these spikes are:

- By 2016, MEPs in the 8th Parliament had become more aware of the possibilities of PPPAs, and the process;
- MEPs were increasingly concerned to get PPPAs adopted for their constituents, especially if they saw 'competitors', including from their own party, achieving success in this regard.

Figure 6 below plots PPPA value against PPPA start year. Each point represents one PPPA, the lines show the relationships between start year and PPPA value. This excludes the EUR 35 million PA 'DiscoverEU: Free travel pass for Europeans turning 18', which started in 2018. Despite the spikes identified in Figure 5 above, the **figure below possibly confirms the trend of diminishing PPPA values over time, although this trend is weaker for PAs** (green points and line). Moreover, the trends are unchanged if the 34 unexecuted PPPAs are excluded from the analysis.⁶²

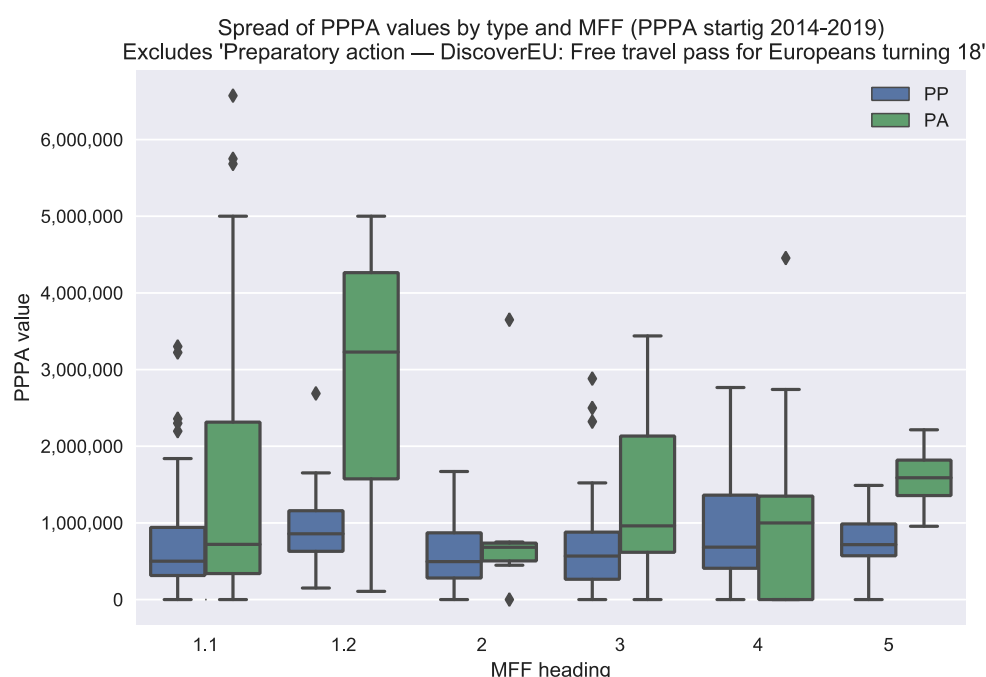
⁶² Unexecuted PPPAs were voted commitment appropriations and payment appropriations but ultimately received no funding.

Figure 6: Correlation: PPPA start year vs. PPPA value (in payments outturn) 2014-2019

3.2.4. Spread of values

Figure 7 below shows the spread of PPPA values (in payment appropriations outturn) by type of PPPA and MFF heading. The coloured boxes (blue for PP, green for PA) show the middle 50% of projects by value, while the horizontal lines inside each box represent the median value. The vertical line at the top of each box represents the top 25% of projects by value and vertical line at the bottom represents the bottom 25% of projects. The black diamonds represent outliers.

This shows that PP values to date (excluding outliers) are generally concentrated below EUR 1 million across all MFF headings. There is far more variability in the spread of PA values to date between MFF headings, and for most headings, PA values are more spread out. Thus, for MFF heading 1.2, PA values range from approximately EUR 75,000 to EUR 5 million and 50% of PAs have values between approximately EUR 1.75 million and EUR 4.2 million. However, the values of PAs under MFF heading 2 are concentrated in a narrow range, from approximately EUR 0.5 million to EUR 0.75 million.

Figure 7: Spread of PPPA values by type and MFF heading 2014-2019

3.2.5. Number of years commitment appropriations were adopted and duration

3.2.5.1 Commitment appropriations

Figure 8 shows the number of years commitment appropriations were adopted per PPPA. Figure 9 shows the same information disaggregated by type. It is important to keep in mind that this analysis uses initial voted commitment appropriations for 2020. Also, the final budget year for commitment appropriations for PAs starting in 2019 is 2021. Thus it is possible that these two figures might look slightly different by the time the 2021 commitment appropriations are included. These two figures highlight the following points:

- Approximately half of all PPPAs were voted commitment appropriations in only one year;
- This includes more than half of all PAs;
- Only approximately 25 of the 94 PAs have received commitment appropriations in three years;
- Only approximately 60 of the 231 PPs have received commitment appropriations in two years.

This is possibly because:

- Owing to the experimental nature of PPPAs, it is to be expected that many will not be continued;
- The EP does not include additional commitment appropriations in its budgetary position, although continuation may be justified. This in turn could be due to lack of reporting, follow-up, and contact between implementers and MEPs voting on the budget;
- Authors are unaware of the possibility, or forget, to re-propose funding for ongoing PPPAs after the first year, although feedback indicates that, at least in the case of one Committee, continuity funding for PPPAs was automatically included in budgetary amendments;
- PPPA objectives can be fully achieved without the need for the maximum number of years of commitment appropriations;

- PPPA results are considered not to merit additional funding, i.e. it is already clear after one year of funding whether something can be pursued as a legislative proposal or other measure, or not);
- The political support for a continuation was not high enough for the EP rapporteur to include the proposal in his/her package;
- Author MEPs / political supporters may not have been re-elected.

Figure 8: Number of PPPAs starting 2014-2019 voted commitment appropriations adopted in years 1, 2, & 3

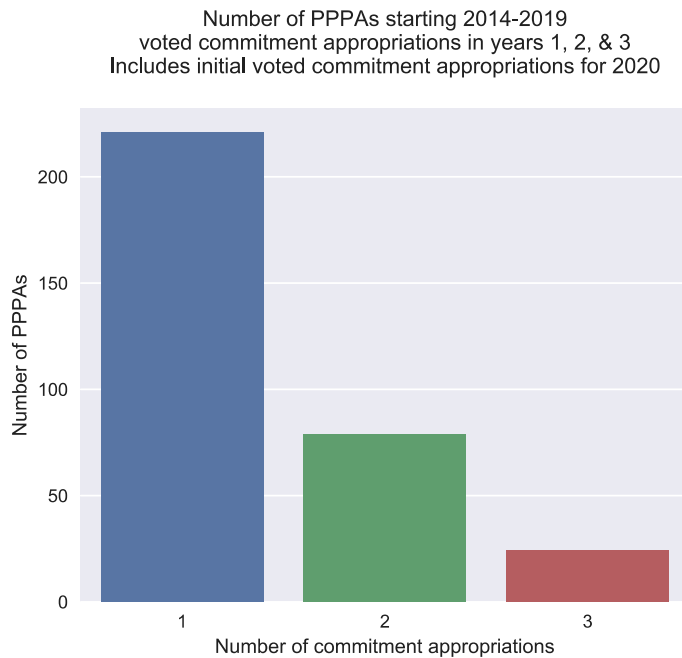
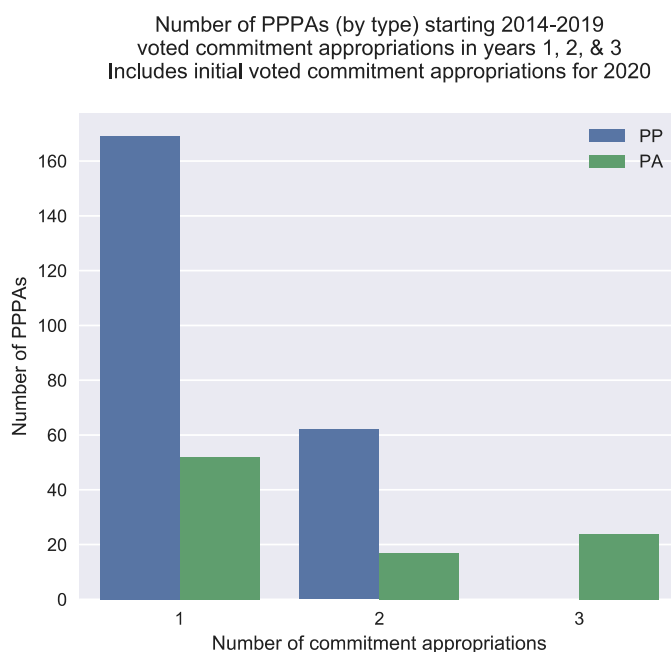


Figure 9: Number of PPPAs (by type) starting 2014-2019 voted commitment appropriations in years 1, 2, & 3



3.2.5.2 Duration

For this analysis, the number of years for which a PPPA remains 'open' is used as a proxy for project duration. For reasons discussed above (see the Explanation of the main calculations used in the financial analysis in section 3.2.1), **the analysis of duration has to be treated with caution**. It is possible that project implementation activities have ceased long before the budget line is closed.

Figure 10 below shows the durations of PPPAs (in terms of the number of years the budget line is open). It indicates that approximately 30 have a duration of just one year. Some PPPA have durations of five or six years but it is **unclear how much of this is accounted for by actual implementation and how much by administrative finalisation of the budget line** (i.e. post-implementation accounting and reporting).

Figure 10: Duration of PPPAs

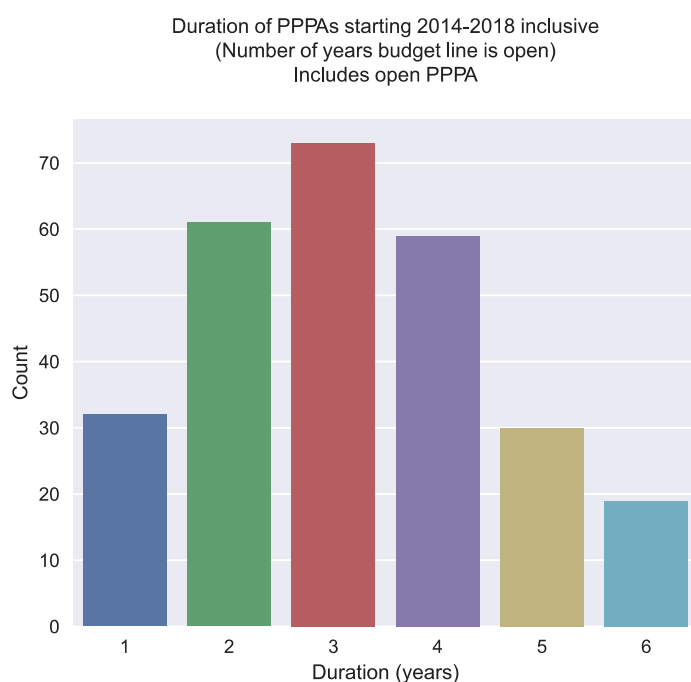
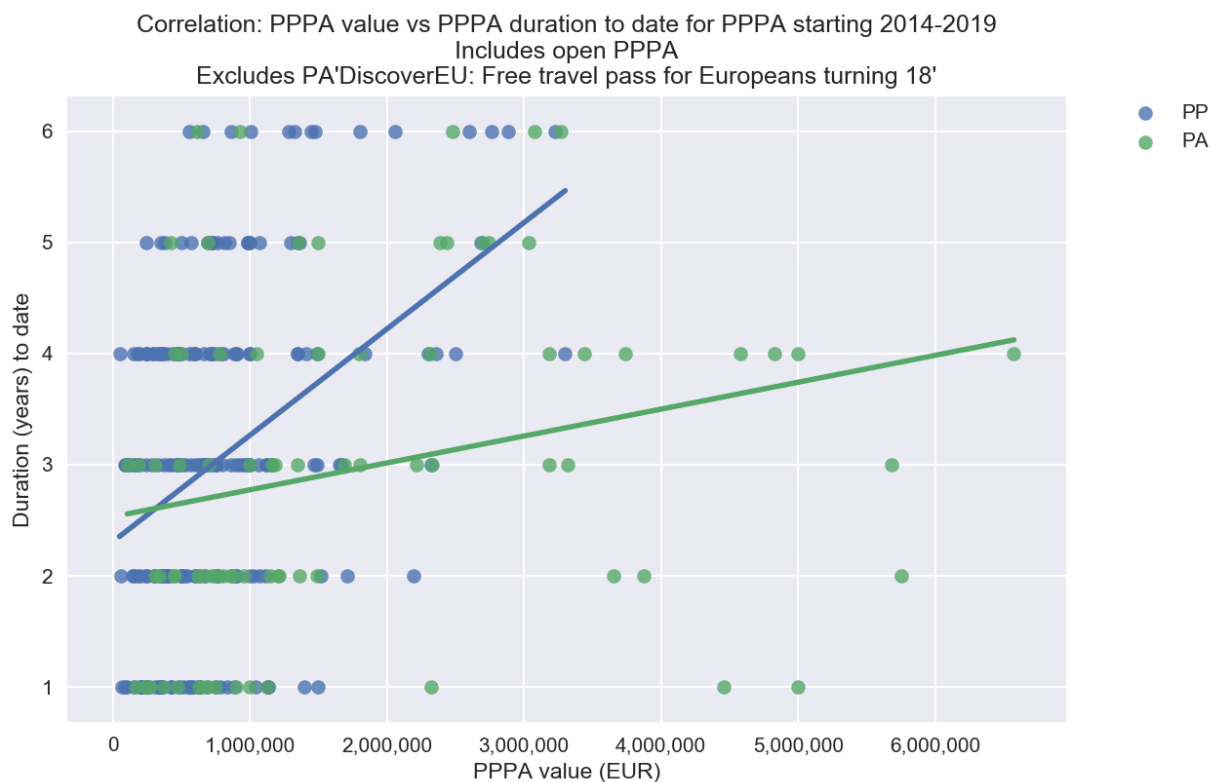


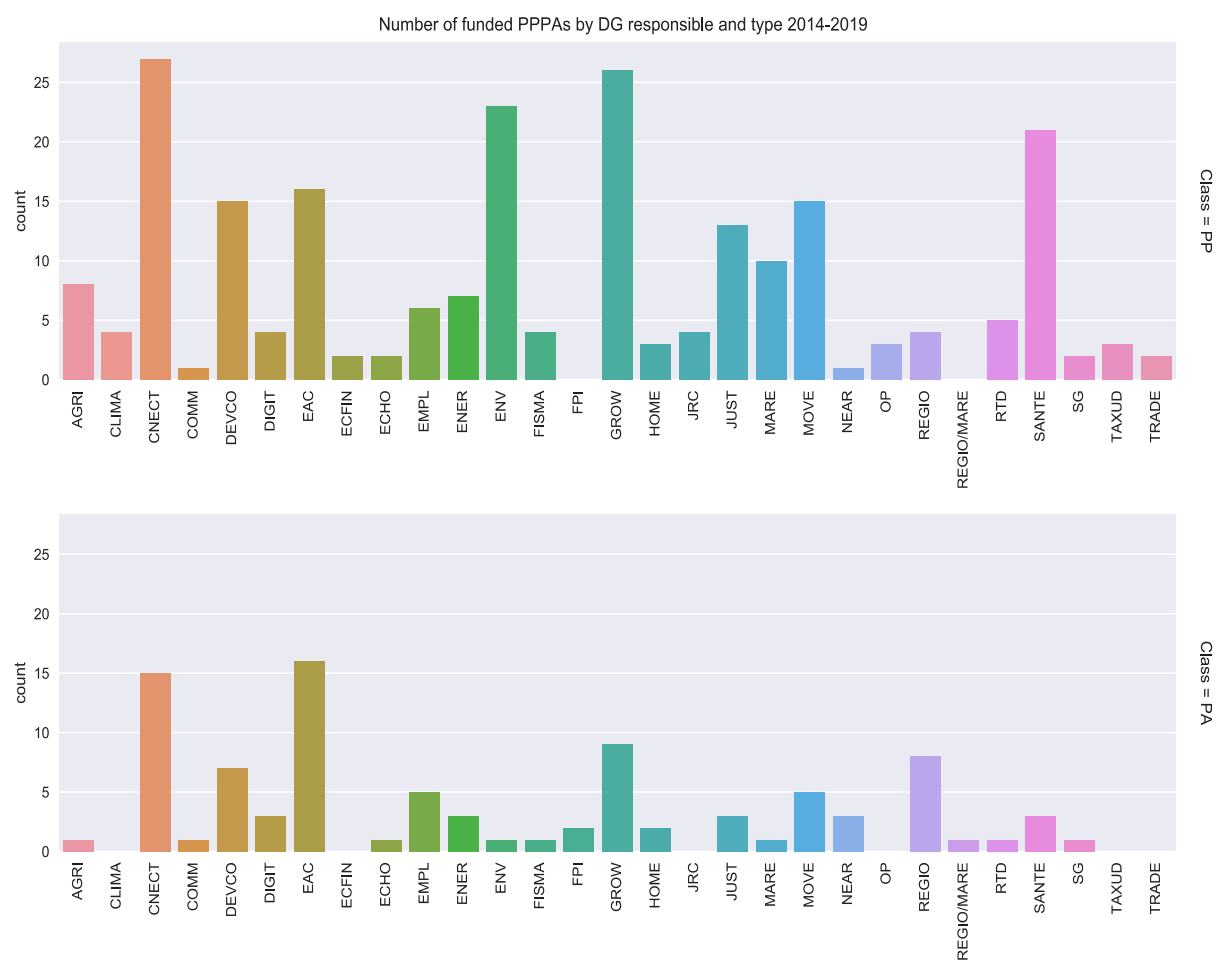
Figure 11 below plots PPPA value against duration. It indicates a strong relationship between the value and duration of PPPAs. In other words, higher value PPPAs tend to have longer durations. This is logical.

However, Figure 11 also indicates that **PPs (blue points and line) tend to have longer durations than PAs (green points and line) of the same value**. This seems less logical and **suggests that PPs are more resource intensive over their lives compared with PAs of the same value in terms of monitoring and reporting**.

Figure 11: Correlation: PPPA duration vs PPPA value for PPPAs starting 2014-2019

3.2.6. Responsible DGs

Figure 12 below shows the number of PPPAs managed by different DGs of the EC. It includes PPPA that started between 2014 to 2019 inclusive. The top part of the figure shows PPs, while the bottom shows PAs. Four DGs have managed significantly more than others. DG CNECT and DG GROW have each managed more than 25 PPs, and DG ENV and DG SANTE have each managed more than 20. DG EAC and DG CNECT are the leaders when it comes to PAs and both have managed approximately 15.

Figure 12: Number of funded PPPAs by DG responsible and type 2014-2019

3.3. ANALYSIS OF PRE-ASSESSMENT DATA

3.3.1. Methodology

This section covers the analysis of a January 2020 DG BUDG spreadsheet on PPPA proposals pre-assessment from 2013 to 2019.⁶³ It includes **1,887 pre-assessments**. Unless otherwise stated, all figures in this section are based on that data.

The spreadsheet provided by DG BUDG has 10 headings. The analysis uses seven of these headings, as indicated in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Headings in DG BUDG pre-assessment spreadsheet

Column heading	Used in the analysis	Notes
Type	Yes	Used together with 'Title' to link pre-assessment data with financial data. ⁶⁴
Heading	Yes	
Budget line	No	Changes from year to year
Title	Yes	Used together with 'Type' to link pre-assessment data with financial data.
Author	Yes	The analysis uses the first author listed where there is more than one author. The author is also used to link proposals to political groups using data downloaded from the EP's website (for the 8 th Parliament) and EP's online directory of MEPs (for authors not in the 8 th Parliament).
EP's proposal description	No	Narrative text. Not used in the quantitative analysis.
Responsible DG(s)	Yes	
Assessment	No	Narrative text. Not used in the quantitative analysis.
Category	Yes	
Date submitted for pre-assessment (for the budget n+1)	Yes	

3.3.2. Overview

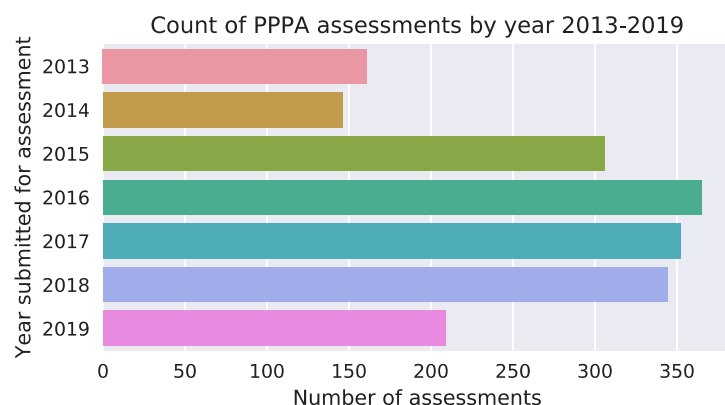
Figure 13 shows the number of pre-assessments conducted per year. This shows **the number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment doubled from approximately 150 in 2014 to 300 in 2015**. There was a further increase in 2016, when the number peaked at approximately 360. There were small reductions in the following two years, followed by a reduction of around 40% in 2019.

⁶³ DG BUDG (31 January 2020), 'PPPA_proposals and assessments 2014 - 2019.xlsx'. This data includes only the first round of 2019 pre-assessments. Data for the second round of pre-assessments is not included. DG BUDG notes that, in total, 1,974 proposals were pre-assessed from 2013 to 2019 inclusive, suggesting that 87 from 2019 are not included in the analysis presented here.

⁶⁴ As PPPAs do not have a unique ID number, it was necessary to use titles as a common key to link different datasets. However, there are numerous variations in PPPA titles within and between documents. As a result it was only possible to link a limited number of PPPAs listed in the financial data to the pre-assessment data.

While the reduction in 2019 could be attributed to the EP elections in that year, it is less clear what accounted for the increases in 2015 and 2016, beside possibly a gradually increasing interest by MEPs in the PPPA tool.

Figure 13: Count of PPPA pre-assessments by year 2013 – 2019 (1,887 in total)



Proposals are categorised by the EC during the pre-assessment process. There are four categories:⁶⁵

- A = PP/PA could be implemented as suggested by the Parliament;
- B = PP/PA might under certain conditions be fully or partially implementable but the project would need to be re-designed (it could be the case if part of the suggested action is already covered by a legal base); or more information might be needed before the Commission can assess the proposed project;
- C = PP/PA is fully covered by a legal base or the ideas are otherwise being addressed;
- D = PP/PA cannot be implemented or similar actions have already been carried out in the past.

Figure 14 shows the number of proposals by pre-assessment category. From this it is clear that **a large proportion were categorised as 'C' or 'D'. In fact, these two categories account for 66.3% of all pre-assessments from 2013 to 2019.** 14.2% of proposals were categorised as 'A', and 17.6% as 'B'.

⁶⁵ EC (2014) Annex 3, Commission Assessment of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, Budget 2015.

1.9% are considered for the purposes of this analysis as having no category as the relevant column in the data provided by DG BUDG was blank, or it included other text, or two categories are provided.⁶⁶

Figure 14: Count of PPPA pre-assessments by category – 2013-2019 (1,887 in total)

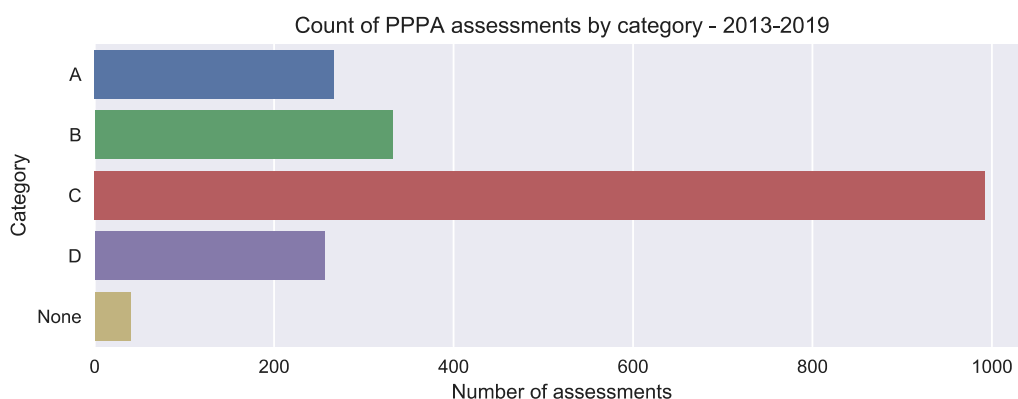
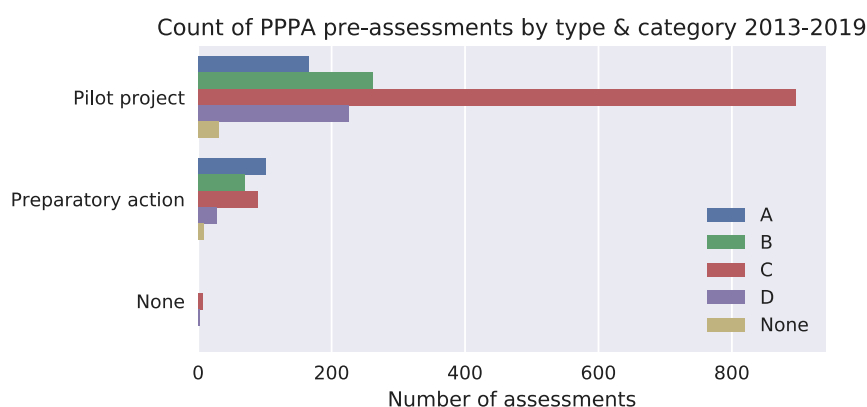


Figure 15 disaggregates the number of PPPAs by type and category. This shows that the vast majority of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment from 2013 to 2019 were PPs and that these were mostly categorised as 'C' or 'D'. In contrast, PAs were categorised largely as 'A' or 'B', which may be accounted for by the fact that some PAs are essentially continuations of 'successful' PPs.

Figure 15: Count of PPPA pre-assessments by type & category 2013-2019 (1,887 in total)



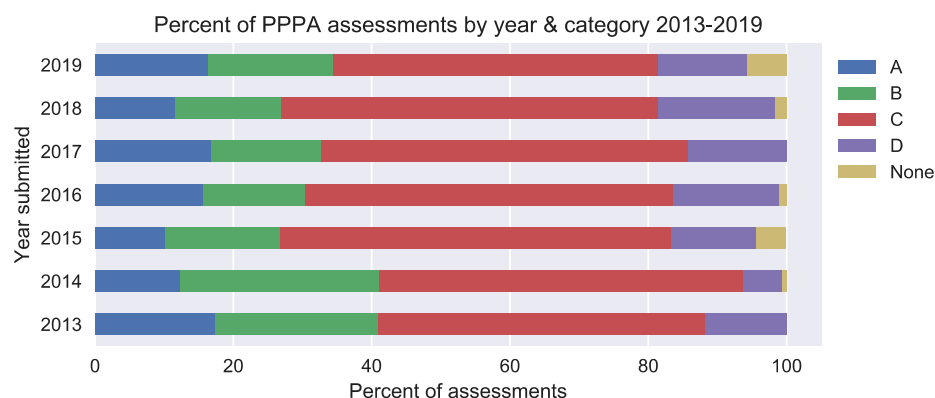
As noted above (see Figure 13), the number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment in 2015 doubled compared with 2014. Figure 16 shows that the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' category PPPAs fell from approximately 40% in 2013 and 2014, to approximately 25% in 2015. Possible reasons for this could be that the large number of proposals submitted:

- Undermined their overall quality or relevance because the volume of proposals overloaded the system in some way, including potentially the capacity and resources of MEPs to produce high quality proposals;
- Meant that the EC had to limit the time spent on each proposal and took a more cautious approach to categorisation;

⁶⁶ For example, 'B/C', or 'C (in part)/ D (in part)'.

It is also possible that changes in processes, allocated resources and/or the general approach taken may have played a part. DG BUDG considers that another major factor is the adoption of new programmes under the new MFF starting in 2014.

Figure 16: Percent of PPPA pre-assessments (1,887 in total) by year & category 2013 - 2019



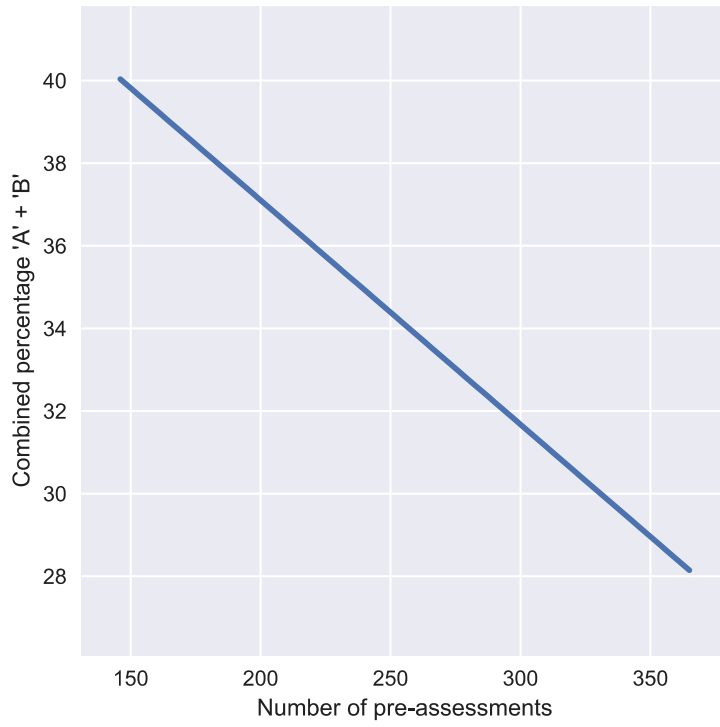
The combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals has fluctuated in subsequent years but has not reached the same level as in 2013 and 2014. The combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' did, however, increase in 2019 to approximately 34.5% and this improvement coincides with a significant reduction in the number of proposals submitted for pre-assessment. This suggests that there is a strong inverse relationship between the number of proposals submitted and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals. In other words, **the more proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals.** This is confirmed by Figure 17 below, which plots the number of proposals pre-assessed each year against the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals.

Figure 17: Correlation: Number of pre-assessments per year 2013-2019 vs percentage 'A' + 'B' (1,887 PPPA in total)

Correlation: Number of pre-assessments per year vs percentage 'A' + 'B'

2013-2019

All DGs



3.3.3. Analysis disaggregated by responsible DG

Figure 18 shows the number of pre-assessments carried out by individual Directorates General (DG) of the Commission Services. It is limited to DGs that undertook 10 or more pre-assessments from 2013 to 2019. Top of the list is 'Multiple DGs', which indicates that almost 200 pre-assessments involved two or more DGs. This is followed by DG EAC with 175 pre-assessments and DG CNECT with 150 pre-assessments.

Figure 18: Count of PPPA pre-assessment by DG 2013-2019 (1,887 in total)

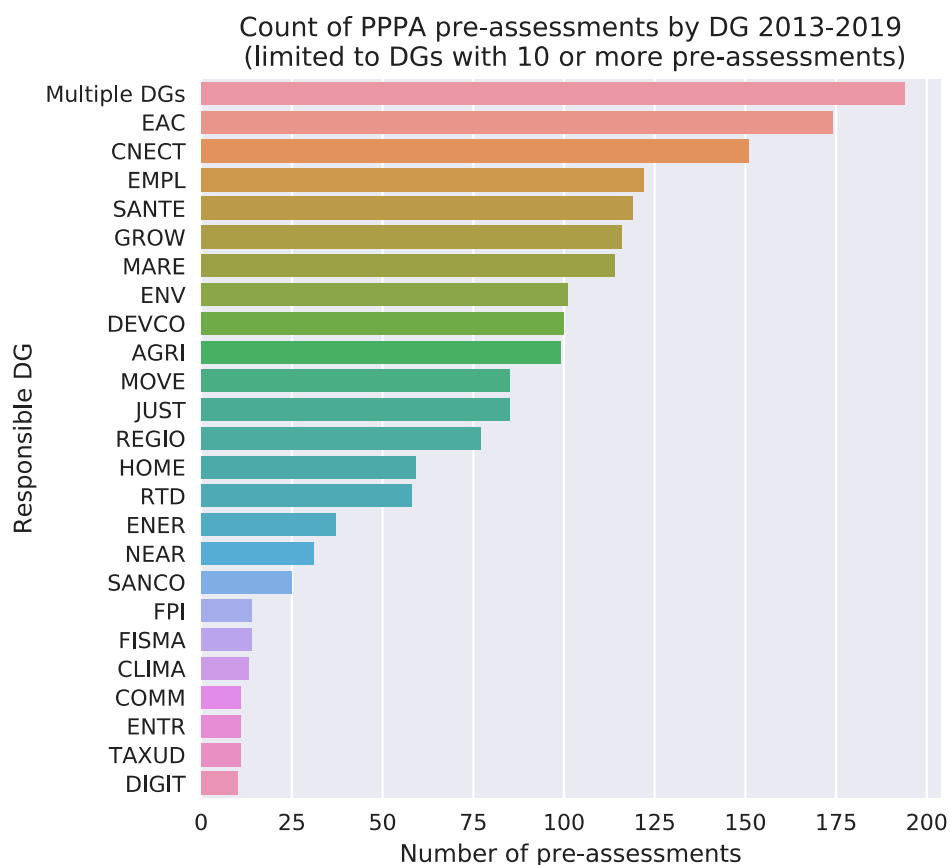
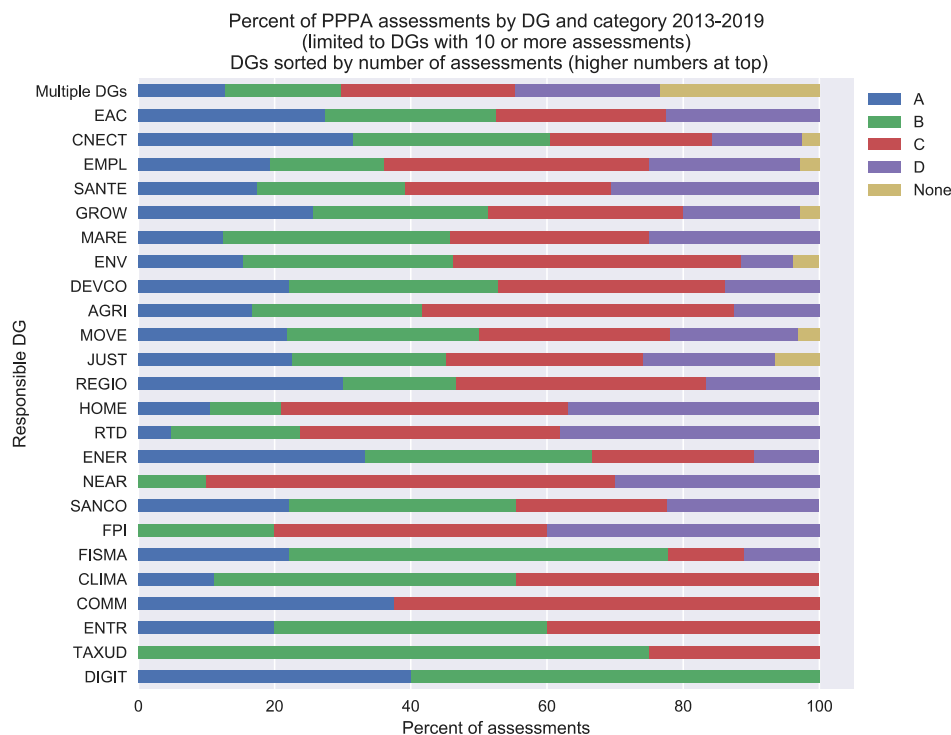


Figure 19 disaggregates the pre-assessments undertaken by each DG by category of pre-assessment. Thus, where two or more DGs were involved ('Multiple DGs') the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' was approximately 30%. This is the lowest until we reach DG HOME further down the list. However, DG HOME accounted for just over 50 pre-assessments, whereas 'Multiple DGs' accounted for almost 200. This suggests that **pre-assessments involving two or more DGs are more likely to result in 'C', 'D', or 'None' (i.e. no category).**

Another noteworthy feature of Figure 19 is that proposals processed by the two DGs handling the most pre-assessments (EAC 175, and CNECT 150) resulted in relatively high combined percentages of 'A' and 'B' (52.5% for DG EAC and 60.5% for DG CNECT). This appears to **contradict the trend observed in Figure 16 above**, which implies that the more pre-assessments processed by each DG, the lower the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'.

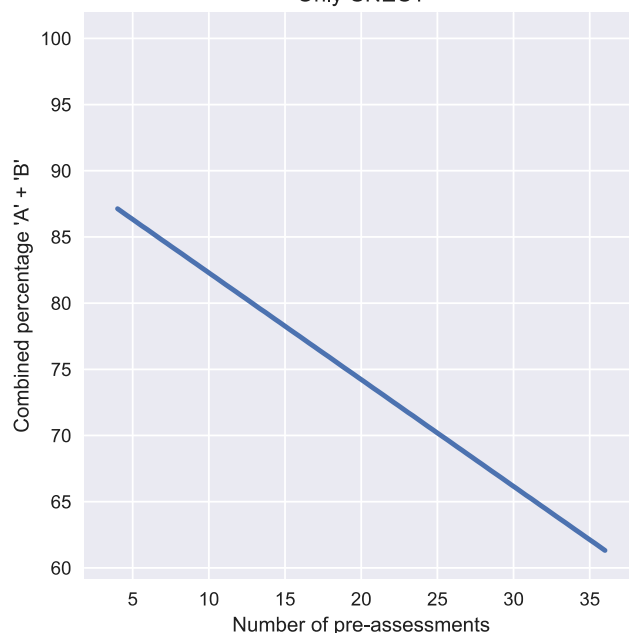
Figure 19: Percent of PPPA pre-assessment by DG and category 2013-2019 (1,887 in total)



In fact, the data indicates that the trend for DG CNECT is similar to the overall trend, but that the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' for proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT is generally high. Figure 20 shows that this combined percentage never fell below 60%, whereas for all DGs together, it never exceeded approximately 42% (Figure 17). In other words, **proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT are more likely than not to be categorised as 'A' or 'B', even though the likelihood does fall as the number of proposals increases.**

Figure 20: Number of pre-assessments per year vs percentage 'A' + 'B'- only DG CNECT

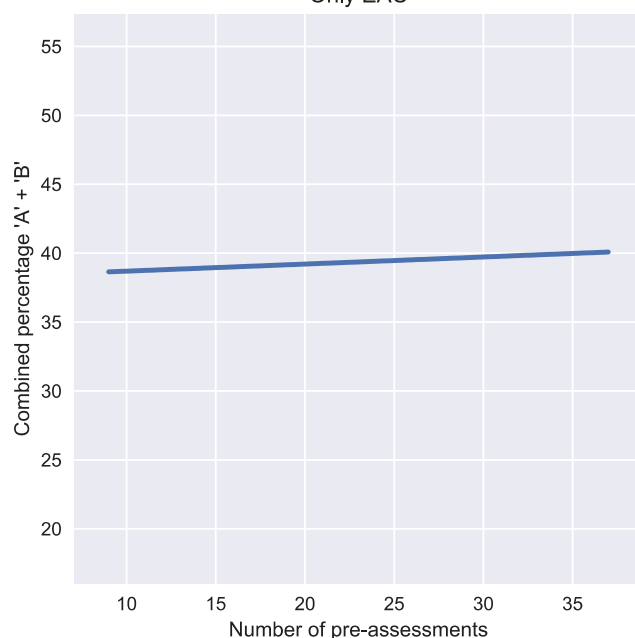
Correlation: Number of pre-assessments per year vs percentage 'A' + 'B'
2013-2019
Only CNECT



In the case of DG EAC, the analysis suggests that there is no relationship between the number of proposals and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. In fact, there appears to be a weak positive relationship (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Number of pre-assessments per year 2019-2013 vs percentage 'A' + 'B'- only DG EAC

Correlation: Number of pre-assessments per year vs percentage 'A' + 'B'
2013-2019
Only EAC



This suggests that there may be **differences in the implementation of the pre-assessment between DGs**, which could be due to:

- Differences in the interpretation and application of the guidelines;
- Differences in available resources, although DG BUDG notes that resources are shared equally with all DGs;
- Differences in the level and quality of dialogue between the EP and individual DGs (e.g. the latter's availability to engage during the design phase to clarify and fine-tune initial proposals. DG BUDG notes that according to its guidelines this should be avoided).

It is also possible that there are systematic differences in the quality of proposals submitted to different DGs for pre-assessment, which in turn could be related to the last bullet point above.

Another point to keep in mind here is that there are differences in the scope for identifying legislative gaps in the various policy areas covered by individual line DGs. In some policy areas PPPA subjects tend to be less well covered by legislation and are thus more likely to be categorised as 'A' or 'B'.

3.3.4. Tentative analysis disaggregated by MEP and political group

Figure 22 below shows the track record of MEPs who submitted 10 or more proposals for pre-assessment between 2013 and 2019. Each bar represents a specific MEP. As noted above (Table 10), for

the purposes of this analysis, **only the first listed author is used** where there is more than one author.⁶⁷ Thus, **it is possible that in practice, authors are associated with many more PPPAs than indicated here**. Furthermore, in many cases, the indicated author is a Committee and it is not possible to identify a specific MEP author. Committee authors are considered separately below.

The top two authors shown in Figure 22 proposed 72 and 54 PPPAs respectively. In the first case, only 5 (7%) were categorised as 'A' or 'B', while in the second case 21 (39%) were categorised as 'A' or 'B'. **In the first case, the number of 'A' and 'B' is lower than that received by other authors who submitted far fewer proposals.** For example, the bottom bar represents an MEP who submitted just 10 proposals, which resulted in two 'A' and 5 'B'.

Figure 22: MEPS who proposed 10 or more PPPAs 2013-2019

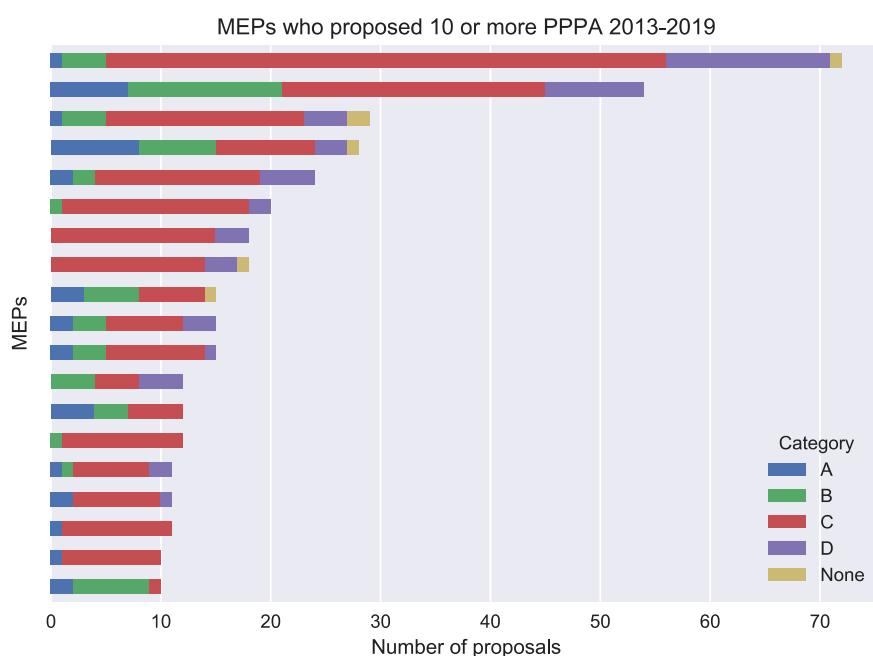


Figure 23 indicates a weak inverse relationship between the number of proposals submitted and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B'. In other words, in general, **MEPs who submit more proposals are less likely to receive 'A' or 'B' in the pre-assessment**. However, it is evident that most MEPs involved proposed 10 or fewer PPPA, and within this range the results are spread between 0% 'A' and 'B' to 100% 'A' and 'B'. In other words, **the 'success' rate appears to depend very much on the MEP involved**.

⁶⁷ Approximately 23% of 1,887 proposals have two or more authors. It is theoretically possible to undertake an analysis of every proposal that every MEP is associated with. Indeed, this would be an interesting analysis. However this is not feasible in the context of the present study due to the lack of structure in the author data and variations in the way some individual MEP's names have been entered (i.e. the names are not always consistent with the names on the Parliament's website). Cleaning, restructuring and checking the data, and then carrying out the analysis would be a time-consuming task.

Figure 23: Correlation: Number of PPPAs proposed vs percentage 'A' + 'B' (author is not a Committee) 2013-2019 (1,111 PPPAs)

Correlation: Number of PPPA proposed vs percentage 'A' + 'B'
2013-2019

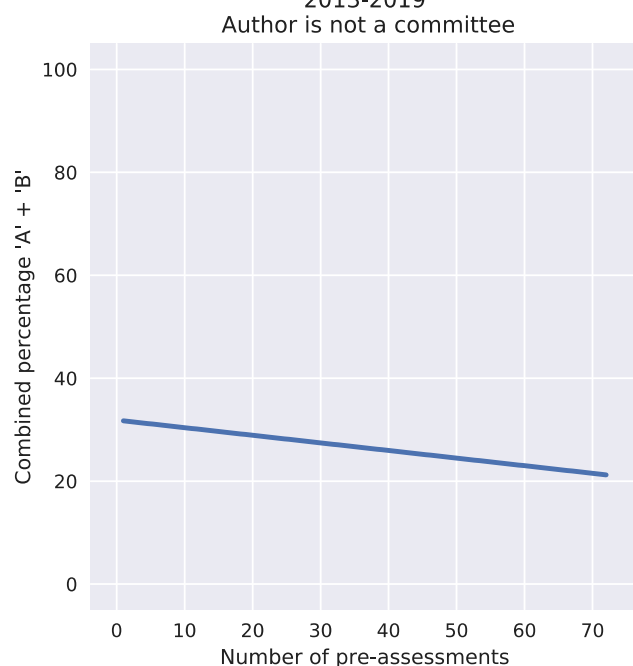
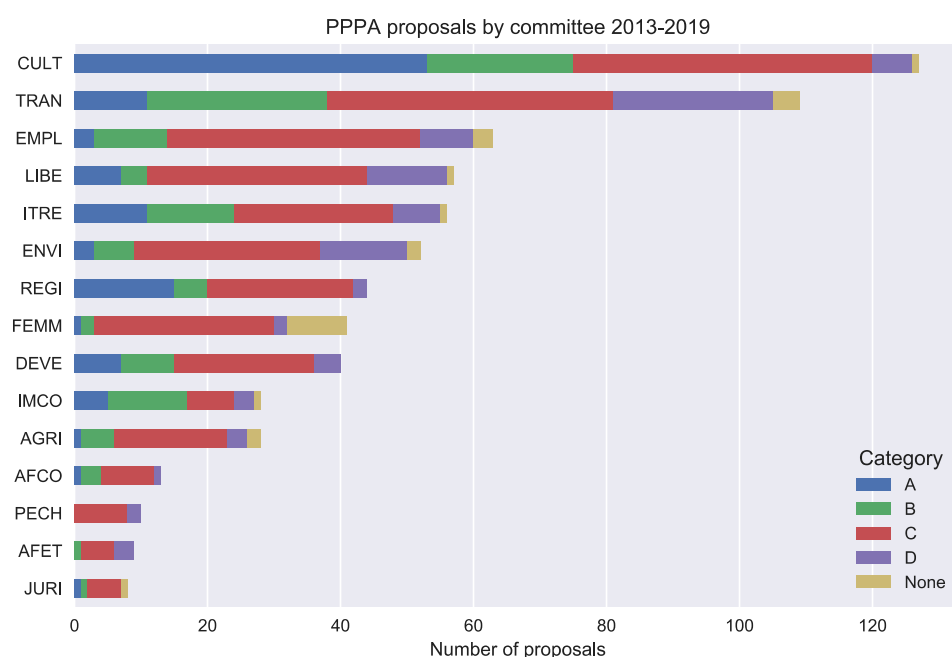


Figure 24 includes only those proposals where a Committee is indicated as the author. A notable feature is that **proposals submitted by the CULT Committee, which submitted more than any other Committee, achieved more than 50% 'A' or 'B'**. The next most prolific committee (TRAN) achieved approximately 30% 'A' or 'B'.

Figure 24: PPPA proposals by Committee 2013-2019 (604 PPPAs)



Even excluding the positive results of the CULT Committee, there appears to be a positive relationship between the number of proposals submitted and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B', where the

author is indicated as a Committee (Figure 25). In other words, **the more proposals authored by a Committee, the more likely the proposals are to be categorised 'A' or 'B'**. This could be explained by factors such as:

- More proposals are channelled to Committees dealing with subjects that are less well covered by legislation and where proposals are thus more likely to be categorised as 'A' or 'B';
- Committees dealing with more proposals have more experience and thus submit better or more relevant proposals;
- Committees dealing with more proposals are better resourced and/ or better networked with relevant line DGs or expert third parties.

Figure 25: Correlation: Number of PPPAs proposed vs percentage 'A' + 'B' (committees, excluding CULT) 2013-2019 (508 PPPAs)

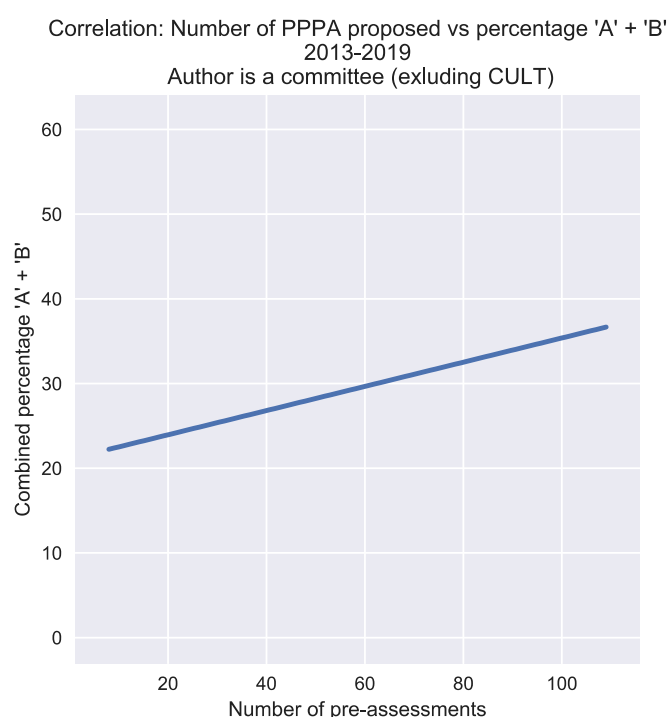
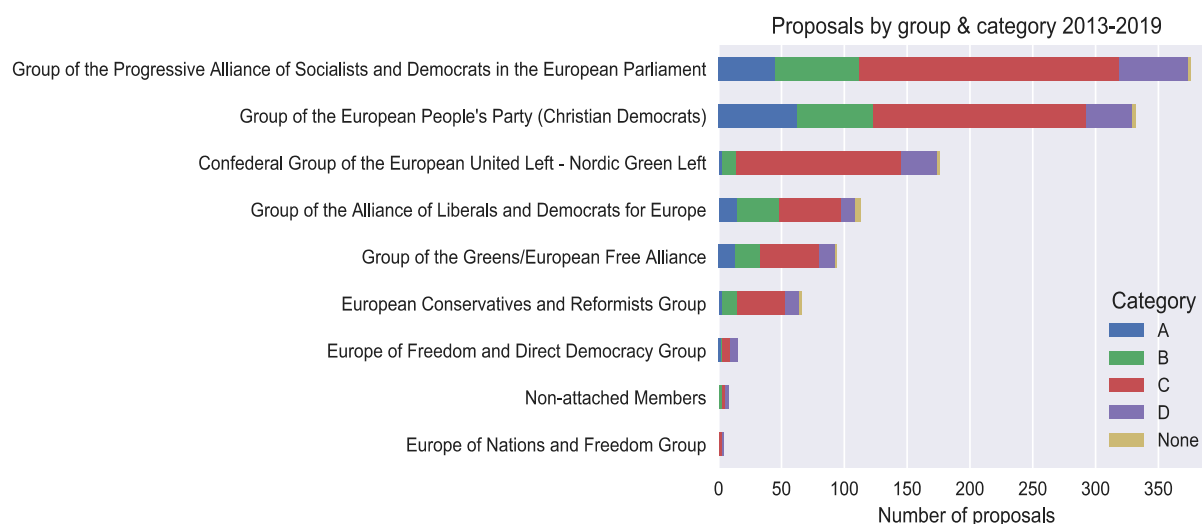


Figure 26 tentatively disaggregates proposals by political group and category. **However, due to the structure of the author information in the provided raw data, it is not possible to identify a political group where the first author indicated is a Committee.**⁶⁸ Therefore proposals where the author is indicated as a Committee are not included here. Thus, **many PPPAs are excluded**. Members of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament and the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) seem to have submitted significantly more proposals than members of other groups. Although members of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe appear to have submitted far fewer proposals, their 'success' rate in terms of 'A' and 'B' categorised projects appears to be higher than any other group.

⁶⁸ This could potentially be done manually, but given the number of PPPA proposals involved, this is not feasible within the time and budget constraints of this study. Moreover, manual processing would likely generate errors.

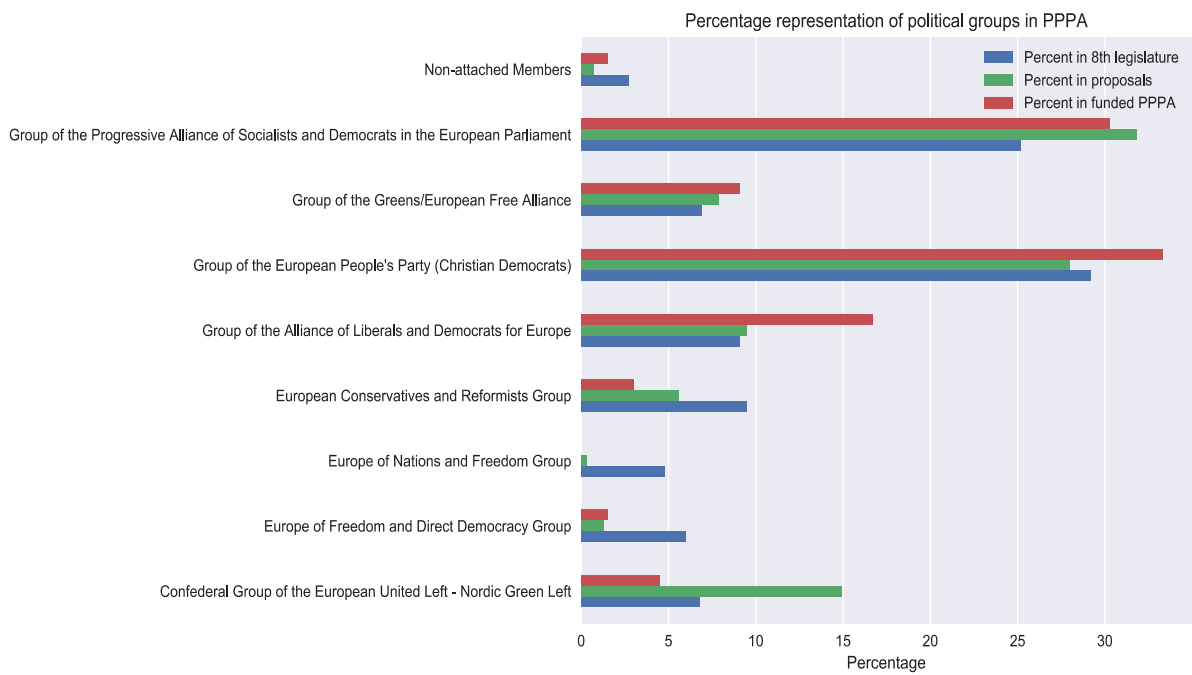
Figure 26: Proposals by political group & category

Finally, Figure 27 compares the percentage representation of political groups in the 8th Parliament,⁶⁹ in the number of PPPA proposals, and in the number of funded PPPAs. In order to link political groups to funded PPPAs, it is necessary to match PPPAs in DG BUDG's pre-assessment and financial data spreadsheets using the PPPA title and type (PA or PP) as the common key, as there is no unique ID for PPPAs. Due to numerous variations in projects titles within and between the two datasets, only 119 of 325 funded PPPA could be linked to entries in the pre-assessment dataset. When PPPAs authored by Committees are excluded, this leaves just **66 funded PPPAs** (on the basis of the data provided, it is not possible to identify a group where a Committee is given as the author). **In other words, the red bar ('Percentage in funded PPPA') in Figure 27 is based on just 66 PPPAs.**

In general, groups with fewer members in the 8th Parliament appear to be under-represented in the number of proposals submitted and PPPAs funded. This seems to be particularly the case for the Europe of Nations and Freedom Group and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group. The Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left appears to be over-represented in proposals but under-represented in funded PPPAs.

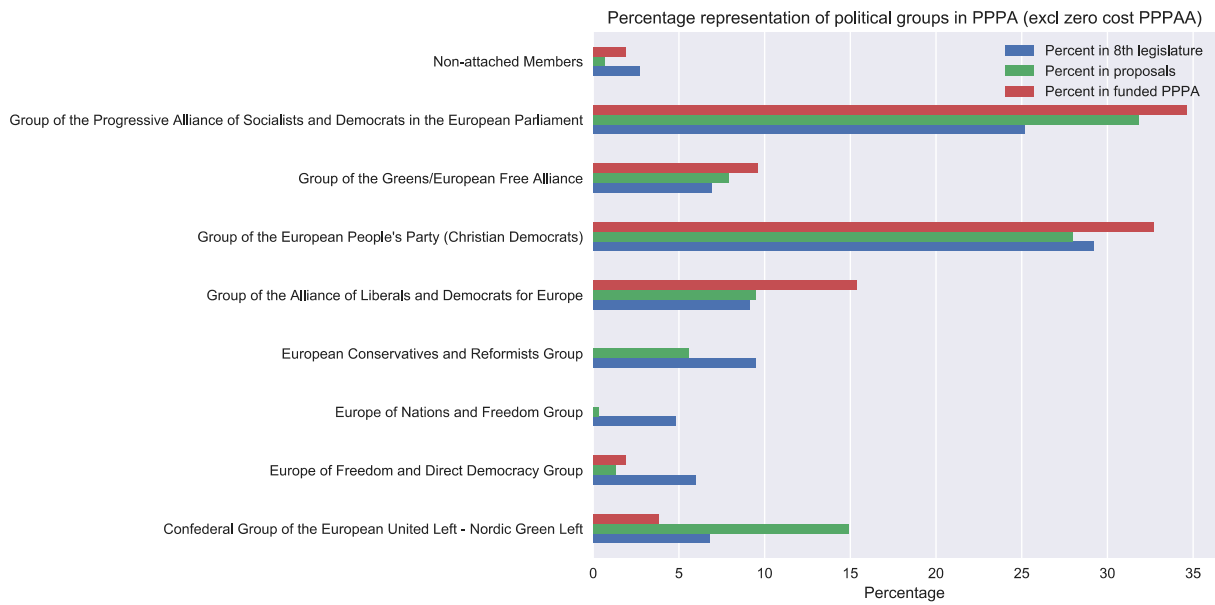
⁶⁹ A small number of authors were in the 7th legislature but not in the 8th.

Figure 27: Percentage representation of groups in 8th legislature, and in 1,184 proposals and 66 funded PPPAs



As explained below (see Table 7), some of the PPPAs included in DG BUDG’s financial spreadsheet **have not ultimately received funding although commitment appropriations were adopted in the EU annual budget**. If these **unexecuted PPPAs** are excluded from the analysis, the red bar (‘Percentage in funded PPPA’) is based on just **43 PPPAs**, which is shown in Figure 28. There are some differences compared with Figure 27. The share of the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament is higher, while the European and Conservatives and Reformists Group no longer has any share of the funded projects. The share of the Group of the Greens/ European Free Alliance is also reduced. There are small variations for other groups.

Figure 28: Percentage representation of groups in 8th legislature, and in 1,184 proposals and 43 funded PPPAs (excludes unexecuted PPPAs)



3.3.5. Pre-assessment categories of funded PPPAs

Table 7 below summarises the categorisation of PPPAs funded in budgets from 2014 to 2019. It does not include PPPAs that were allocated funding before the 2014 budget. For reasons explained above, it includes only 119 of the 324 funded PPPAs. The total value to date of these 119 PPPAs is approximately EUR 157 million (in payments outturn). The calculation of cost to date uses the methodology described in section 3.2.1 (Explanation of the main calculations used in the financial analysis).

The first row shows the number of PPPAs that were categorised as 'A' in three consecutive pre-assessment processes. There are just three PPPAs in this group and these are all PAs. The total cost to date of these three PAs is EUR 6,115,371. The second row summarises PPPAs that were categorised 'A', 'A', 'B' in successive pre-assessments. This includes one PP (Single European Sky (SES) airspace architecture) – this suggests that it was not adopted in the EU budget the first year that it was assessed. The same applies to the rows summarising 'A', 'C', 'None', and 'B', 'A', 'C'. The third row summarises PPPAs categorised 'A', 'A', and so on. 'None' indicates that the PPPA is included in DG BUDG's pre-assessment spreadsheet, but no category is provided.

On the basis of the provided pre-assessment spreadsheet, it is not possible to tell from this analysis whether or not a PPPA that was categorised as 'B' and then 'C', or 'B' and then 'D' (for example) was allocated funding after being down-categorised. It might be feasible to check this on a case by case basis using published documents, but this is not a feasible approach when considering multiple PPPAs. In several rows, there is a 'count' of PPPAs but no cost. This appears to be because **allocations were made but subsequently de-committed or reallocated elsewhere**.

Another notable point is that **13 PPPAs (11%) that were exclusively categorised as 'C' or 'D' have received funding of approximately EUR 7 million**, accounting for approximately 5% of the funding shown here.

Table 11: Pre-assessment categories of PPPAs funded in 2014-2019 budgets (values in payment appropriations outturn)

Categories in successive pre-assessments ⁷⁰	PPs		PAs		Total Count of PPPAs	Total value to date
	Count of PPs	Total value of PPs to date	Count of PAs	Total value of PAs to date		
['A', 'A', 'A']			3	6,115,371	3	6,115,371
['A', 'A', 'B']	1	1,152,657	1	2,314,839	2	3,467,496
['A', 'A']	11	10,004,984	8	12,701,980	19	22,706,964
['A', 'B', 'A']			2	11,500,000	2	11,500,000
['A', 'C', 'None']	1	97,327			1	97,327
['A', 'C']	2	1,583,318			2	1,583,318
['A']	23	18,097,891	10	22,205,288	33	40,303,179
['B', 'A', 'C']	1	350,000			1	350,000
['B', 'A']	1	214,500	1	2,435,839	2	2,650,339

⁷⁰ See 3.3.5 above.

Categories in successive pre-assessments ⁷⁰	PPs		PAs		Total Count of PPPAs	Total value to date
	Count of PPs	Total value of PPs to date	Count of PAs	Total value of PAs to date		
['B', 'B', 'C']			1	-	1	-
['B', 'B']	2	785,211	2	2,352,233	4	3,137,444
['B', 'C']	2	115,640	1	650,000	3	765,640
['B', 'D']	1	499,175	1	-	2	499,175
['B', 'None']	1	495,200	1	671,779	2	1,166,979
['B']	19	9,556,928	9	43,247,627	28	52,804,555
['C', 'C', 'C']			1	3,078,626	1	3,078,626
['C', 'C']	1	-			1	-
['C']	8	2,978,546	2	-	10	2,978,546
['D']	1	1,283,153			1	1,283,153
['None', 'B']	1	2,300,185			1	2,300,185
Totals	76	49,514,715	43	107,273,582	119	156,788,297

Table 12 below shows the same information tentatively disaggregated by political group. **However, due to the structure of the author information in the provided raw data, it is not possible to identify a political group where the first author indicated is a Committee.**⁷¹ These PPPAs are therefore grouped under 'Committee'. **Committee-authored PPPAs account for approximately 43% of the number of PPPAs and 40% of the funding** included in the table.

⁷¹ This could potentially be done manually, but given the number of PPPA proposals involved, this is not feasible within the time and budget constraints of this study. Moreover, manual processing would likely generate errors.

Table 12: Pre-assessment categories of PPPAs funded in 2014-2019 budgets, by group in order of total PPPA value to date (values in payment appropriations outturn)

Categories in successive pre-assessments ⁷²	Pilot projects		Preparatory action s		Total Count of PPPAs	Total value to date
	Count of PPs	Total value of PPs to date	Count of PAs	Total value of PAs to date		
Committee	29	18,884,982	22	43,216,885	51	62,101,867
['A', 'A', 'A']			3	6,115,371	3	6,115,371
['A', 'A', 'B']	1	1,152,657			1	1,152,657
['A', 'A']	5	4,185,232	5	6,707,255	10	10,892,487
['A', 'B', 'A']			2	11,500,000	2	11,500,000
['A', 'C', 'None']	1	97,327			1	97,327
['A', 'C']	1	887,318			1	887,318
['A']	7	5,171,040	5	16,151,389	12	21,322,429
['B', 'C']	1	115,640	1	650,000	2	765,640
['B', 'D']			1	-	1	-
['B', 'None']	1	495,200			1	495,200
['B']	8	3,497,415	4	2,092,870	12	5,590,285
['C']	3	2,000,000	1	-	4	2,000,000
['D']	1	1,283,153			1	1,283,153
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	15	13,109,989	7	42,447,594	22	55,557,583
['A', 'A', 'B']			1	2,314,839	1	2,314,839
['A', 'A']	2	2,163,942	1	2,388,770	3	4,552,712
['A', 'C']	1	696,000			1	696,000
['A']	5	4,956,013	1	855,040	6	5,811,053
['B', 'A', 'C']	1	350,000			1	350,000
['B', 'B']	1	-	1	1,000,000	2	1,000,000
['B']	3	2,643,849	2	35,888,945	5	38,532,794
['C']	1	-	1	-	2	-
['None', 'B']	1	2,300,185			1	2,300,185
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	15	9,000,384	5	8,848,859	20	17,849,243
['A', 'A']	1	343,000			1	343,000
['A']	7	5,689,956	4	5,198,859	11	10,888,815
['B', 'D']	1	499,175			1	499,175
['B']	5	2,468,253	1	3,650,000	6	6,118,253
['C']	1	-			1	-
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	7	5,012,011	4	6,269,027	11	11,281,038
['A', 'A']	1	2,602,918	1	2,480,955	2	5,083,873
['A']	1	769,482			1	769,482
['B', 'A']			1	2,435,839	1	2,435,839
['B', 'B', 'C']			1	-	1	-
['B', 'B']			1	1,352,233	1	1,352,233
['B', 'C']	1	-			1	-
['B']	3	947,411			3	947,411
['C']	1	692,200			1	692,200
Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	4	1,725,900	2	1,812,500	6	3,538,400
['A', 'A']	1	-	1	1,125,000	2	1,125,000
['A']	2	1,511,400			2	1,511,400
['B', 'A']	1	214,500			1	214,500
['B']			1	687,500	1	687,500
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left	2	286,346	1	3,078,626	3	3,364,972
['C', 'C', 'C']			1	3,078,626	1	3,078,626
['C', 'C']	1	-			1	-
['C']	1	286,346			1	286,346
Non-attached Members			1	928,312	1	928,312
['B']			1	928,312	1	928,312
(blank)	1	785,211	1	671,779	2	1,456,990
['B', 'B']	1	785,211			1	785,211
['B', 'None']			1	671,779	1	671,779
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group	1	709,892			1	709,892
['A', 'A']	1	709,892			1	709,892
European Conservatives and Reformists Group	2	-			2	-
['A']	1	-			1	-
['C']	1	-			1	-
Totals	76	49,514,715	43	107,273,582	119	156,788,297

⁷² See 3.3.5 above.

4. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

KEY FINDINGS

Preparation of PPPAs

The 'programming' of the PPPAs stands out for its shorter cycle (2-3 instead of 7 years). Indeed the 'standard' approach to EU programming derives from the current duration of the MFF (7 years).

In the EP, the Secretariat for the BUDG Committee has a coordinating role in terms of the preparation of PPPAs (issuing the calendar, organising an information session, collecting PPPA proposals, forwarding PPPA proposals for pre-assessment to the EC, assisting the rapporteur in compiling the compromise package).

The different Committee Secretariats support the MEPs on the preparation of the PPPAs, and each year, the BUDG Secretariat organises an information session on the budgetary procedure including the PPPAs. EP interviewees commented very positively on the support, though there were also recommendations for improvements. There is no comprehensive guidance document on the PPPAs. Despite the existing efforts to develop capacities on the preparation of PPPAs, there were still substantial needs for raising awareness on the tool of the PPPAs and developing MEP capacities.

The Committee Secretariats encourage MEPs to engage in consultations with the EC when preparing PPPAs as early as possible, however, this advice is not followed systematically. Feedback by the EC line DGs in the context of the preparatory consultations is not always endorsed by DG BUDG in the formal pre-assessment.

EP interviewees noted the generally poor quality of the majority of the PPPA proposals with many 'C'- and 'D'-categorised proposals, specifically noting the poor quality of financial proposals for PPPAs, with budgets not in line with implementation requirements. The generally poor quality of PPPA proposals was explained with MEP resource and time constraints.

In the course of discussions with different EP actors and the EC, the question was raised as to whether there should be a limit on the number of PPPA proposals to be submitted to the EC for pre-assessment. EP and EC interviewees considered the volume of PPPA proposals to place a substantial burden on the EP and EC in terms of processing and assessment. Different practices and positions were noted with regard to limiting the number of PPPA proposals.

The EC's DG BUDG coordinates the pre-assessment. This involves a preliminary review of the proposals by seven to ten experts. The proposals are then forwarded to the relevant line DGs. The assessment consumes significant EC resources with a total of about 3,500 working hours dedicated to the assessment each year. DG BUDG provides internal guidance on the pre-assessment, however, EP interviewees pointed to inconsistencies in the feedback provided by different line DGs, and suggested that more detail should be provided. The EC's pre-assessment is to be mainly guided by aspects of legality and feasibility. The pre-assessment process is also constrained by the tight schedule.

Further to the pre-assessment by the EC, the PPPAs need to be tabled as budgetary amendments. Moreover, amendments are required to 'top up' the resources of existing PPPAs. This need depends on the volume of commitment appropriations adopted when the PPPA was first introduced. Notwithstanding, in cases where additional commitment appropriations are required, EP feedback suggested that MEPs did not systematically re-introduce the required amendments.

Following the pre-assessment, there are different approaches to tabling amendments for the introduction of the PPPAs in the budget, e.g. some Committees vote on the PPPAs to be tabled as amendments.

In general terms, EP interviewees found the selection of PPPAs tabled as amendments not to respond to any specific EP priorities.

The process of tabling amendments is also affected by a tight time schedule.

Further to the votes on the EU budget including the package of PPPAs in the Committee on Budgets and then in the Plenary, a Conciliation Committee meeting between the EP and the Council is organised to agree on the final 'compromise' budget package, including the final selection of PPPAs to be included and their respective budget allocations. Again, EP interviewees suggested that the final set of PPPAs maintained in the context of the 'compromise' package on the budget often does not reflect a clear set of (EP) priorities.

Implementation and follow-up

EP interviewees all pointed to the limited involvement of the EP when it comes to the actual implementation of the PPPAs. The regulatory framework for the PPPA does not foresee any role for the EP in terms of implementation. It is also not standard practice that MEPs take an interest in the implementation of the PPPAs. In the cases where MEPs take an interest in the implementation of a specific PPPA, they often struggle to identify EC contacts to follow up on the implementation of a PPPA or to find EC contacts willing to inform or involve them. Successful PPPAs are not systematically showcased in the EP. Some EP Committees invite the EC to a Committee meeting to present the state of play with the PPPAs.

EP interview feedback suggested that beside the inherent quality of a PPPA, implementation performance was also a reflection of the importance that the EC is willing to attribute to a PPPA. Some PPPAs experience gaps in commitment / payment appropriations. At times, the EC decides to block/discourage the EP from proposing follow-up appropriations, arguing that results of the first year of implementation are not yet available and hence it is impossible to assess the usefulness of adding more commitment appropriations. EP feedback on this practice underlines that this amounts to terminating PPPAs unilaterally (given the EC interpretation of the notion of 'consecutive years' in Article 58 of the Financial Regulation). EP interviewees also considered the EC, on some occasions, to implement a PPPA in ways that departed substantially from the originally intended idea as proposed by a MEP. Moreover, MEPs were reported to struggle to relate an output / outcome with a specific PPPA. Finally, EP interviewees commented on the EC's role in terms of reporting on progress with the PPPAs. Feedback suggested that the reporting was lacking detail.

EP interviewees questioned defining success of a PPPA exclusively in terms of follow-up with a legislative action. EP feedback suggested that the absence of any follow-up could also be a valid outcome for various reasons. In this context, EP interviewees emphasised the 'experimental' nature of the PPPAs. Moreover, the absence of any follow-up could also be considered a success in terms of having validated that there is no need for follow-up; a PPPA can thus contribute to avoiding 'wasting' efforts in terms of more substantial or costly follow-up actions. However, DG BUDG considered the identification of a legislative gap to be the core of a successful PPPA.

This section comprises the qualitative assessment of the PPPAs in the period 2014-2019. The section is organised in line with the different steps in the lifecycle of a PPPA. The adoption cycle is first introduced; then the discussion moves from the preparation of the PPPAs, to their implementation and the follow-up on completed PPPAs.

4.1. INTRODUCING THE ADOPTION CYCLE OF A PPPA

Table 9 presents the adoption cycle of PPPAs in a 'standard' year. The process is somewhat different in election years (e.g. 2014, 2019), when there are two rounds of preparation of PPPAs / pre-assessment of PPPAs, one before the elections, and one after the elections (to allow new MEPs to introduce PPPAs). The 'programming' of the PPPAs stands out for its shorter cycle (2-3 instead of 7 years) with annual exercises of preparing PPPAs and introducing them as budgetary amendments. Indeed, the 'standard' approach to EU programming is multi-annual and derives from the current duration of the MFF (7 years).

Table 13: The adoption cycle of PPPAs

When?	What?		Actors	Normative basis
	EP action	EC action		
January (N)	Calendar for the preparation of the budget of year N+1		EP BUDG Secretariat	
February (N)		EC Interim Report on PPPAs with CA in year N	EC DG BUDG in cooperation with all EC services	
February / March (N)	EP Working Document on PPPAs in years N and N+1		EP BUDG Rapporteurs for Section III of the EU budget N and N+1	
February / March (N)	EP Committee Secretariats solicit / collect proposals for PPPAs			
March / April (N)	Presentation and discussion of EC interim report and EP working document		EP BUDG Rapporteurs for Section III of the EU budgets N and N+1, BUDG Members, EC DG BUDG	
March / June (N)		Preparation of Working Document IV on PPPAs	EC DG BUDG in cooperation with all EC services	Article 41. 3 (f) Financial Regulation
April / May (N)	MEPs submit proposals to a specialised Committee or directly to BUDG / Collection and communication to the EC (DG BUDG) of a list of proposals to create / extend PPPAs		MEPs assisted by EP Committees Secretariats and political group advisers (BUDG Secretariat coordinates)	Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 December 2013 (Part D, points 10 / 11)
May / June (N)		EC Working Document IV (accompanying the Draft Budget)	EC DG BUDG	EC submits together with draft budget: 'working document on pilot projects and preparatory actions which also contain an assessment of the results and the follow-up envisaged' Financial Regulation (Article 41(3)f, Article 58(2) a, b)
June / July (N)		Assessment of EP proposals for PPPAs	EC DGs (DG BUDG coordinates)	Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 December 2013 (Part D, points 10 / 11)
July (N)	Budgetary trilogue		EP, EC, Council	Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 December 2013 (Part D, points 10 / 11)
July / August (N)	Revise draft PPPAs to address EC assessment (if applicable)		MEPs	
September (N)	PPPAs are tabled as any other budgetary amendments		Individual MEPs, Committees and / or Political Groups	

When?	What?		Actors	Normative basis
	EP action	EC action		
September (N)	Elaboration of a proposal for a compromise package of PPPA budgetary amendments		EP BUDG Rapporteur for Section III of the EU budget N+1 with authors of relevant amendments	
September / October (N)		PPPA annex to Commission "letter of executability"	EC DG BUDG in cooperation with all EC services	Interinstitutional agreement of 20 December 2013 (Annex, Part E, point 20)
September / October (N)	Vote on the EU budget N+1 including package of PPPAs		EP BUDG	
September / October (N)	Vote on the EU budget N+1 including package of PPPAs		EP Plenary	
November (N)	Conciliation Committee		EP, EC, Council (Budgetary Conciliation)	
November (N)	Joint text with a final PPPA package		EP, EC, Council (Budgetary Conciliation)	

4.2. PREPARING A PPPA

4.2.1. Scheduling the preparation of PPPAs

The Secretariat for the BUDG Committee triggers the process of the preparation of PPPAs by issuing the calendar for the budget's preparation with deadlines for submitting, inter alia, proposals for PPPAs. The Committees follow up on this by agreeing on the Committee-specific calendars (this is done by the Committees' Political Group Coordinators).

The Secretariats of the different Committees then solicit proposals for PPPAs between February and mid-April (this is usually done via the Coordinators). However, some Committee Secretariats already send an email on the PPPA to political advisors towards the end of November and early December (year N-1) when the budgetary procedure is completed; this is then followed up by a second email in January or February (year N), now including the detailed timetable for the PPPAs.

4.2.2. Assisting MEPs with the preparation of PPPAs

The different Committee Secretariats reported good cooperation between the Secretariats and the political level in terms of preparing the PPPAs. Indeed, some Committee Secretariats assist 'their' MEPs with the drafting process / reviewing proposals prior to the submission of the PPPA proposals for pre-assessment by the EC. For example, the Committee Secretariats provide advice on:

- the process of preparing the PPPAs and the corresponding adoption of budget amendments;
- avoiding the preparation of PPPAs in areas / with objectives that can be covered by existing legislation / policies / programmes;
- lists of existing PPPAs to ensure that MEPs don't prepare proposals for interventions that already exist;
- identifying relevant budget line(s) under which the PPPAs can be adopted as budgetary amendments;
- the adequate volume of budget allocations for individual PPPAs;
- EC contact details for discussing PPPA proposals (prior to their submission for pre-assessment by the EC, see also section 4.2.4 on preparatory consultations with the EC);
- examples of successful PPPAs (and past pre-assessment feedback) to illustrate good practices in terms of preparing PPPAs.

The BUDG Committee rapporteurs for the EU budget N+1 visit selected Committees to exchange views on the future budget. In this context, the policy priorities for PPPAs are presented.⁷³ Until 2019, the practice was to visit all Committees, however, the visits are now organised for a selection of Committees.

Following the collection of all PPPA proposals, the Committee Secretariats review the proposals and sometimes suggest improvements. For example, MEPs are advised on problematic issues such as PPPAs targeting one specific country or mentioning a specific implementing organisation.

Moreover, every year, the Secretariat for the BUDG Committee organises an information session on the budgetary procedure and this dedicates some time to the PPPAs. The target audience are Political

⁷³ Committee on Budgets, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020.

Advisors, Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and staff in the Committee Secretariats. The 2019 information session on PPPA (for the 2020 budget) was supported by a set of 40 slides. The set of slides was organised in four sections: 'Definition and procedure for PPPA', 'Steps and timetable', 'How to fill in the form for pre-assessment', 'The do's and don'ts'.⁷⁴ This year's information session was scheduled for two hours on 6 March 2020, equally distributed between the 2021 budget and PPPAs.

EP interviewees commented very positively on the information sessions. The sessions bring together staff from the Secretariats (usually those focusing on budgetary affairs), MEP Assistants and Political Advisers, and it is a positive feature that all participants receive the same information. Secretariat staff ensure that relevant Political Advisers and MEP Assistants receive information on the sessions and attend, though it was noted that, generally, only few MEP Assistants attended. Interviewees voiced a series of recommendations:

- Some EP interviewees suggested that the information on PPPAs is designed for an expert audience, and that there might be benefit in also presenting information in a way that is more accessible for EP actors with limited 'budgetary' experience. It was therefore recommended to organise two separate sessions, one for EP actors with substantial experience with the budgetary process, and one for 'newcomers'.
- Some interviewees considered the sessions to be too short.
- One interviewee recommended that the sessions place stronger emphasis on good practices in terms of drafting proposals.
- One interviewee recommended organising the session earlier in the year to allow for more time for preparations (in February instead of in March).

There is no comprehensive guidance document on the PPPAs. However, in 2019 and 2020 the Secretariat for the BUDG Committee issued a document with frequently asked questions on the PPPAs / checklist on what to pay attention to and the detailed slides of the presentation given during the information session are available to all EP staff on the intranet.

Finally, despite the existing efforts to develop capacities on the preparation of PPPAs, most interviewees agreed that there were still substantial needs for raising awareness on the tool of the PPPAs and developing MEP capacities, considering that the 2019 EP elections saw many new MEPs elected.

4.2.3. PPPA application form

PPPA proposals need to be submitted by using a specific PPPA application form. The form has comments to guide the process of completion. The template includes a section with 'remarks' to present the PPPAs ('what?'), and a section 'justification' ('why?'), the latter limited to a maximum of 500 characters.⁷⁵ EP interviewees considered the form to be user-friendly.

However, MEPs were reported to still make many mistakes when completing the forms. Some interviewees suggested that the application form might benefit from allowing for more space (there is no character limit for the remarks and text can be added on a separate sheet, however, it is not possible to include graphs). However, other interviewees suggested that excessively long proposals would place an additional burden on the assessment process.

⁷⁴ EP (2019) Info session on PPPA 2020.

⁷⁵ EP (2016) Template for submission of PPPA; EP (2017) How to fill in the form; EP (2017) Template for submission of PPPA.

Text box 2: Preparatory Action: Governance and quality of software code — Auditing of free and open-source software

Soon after being elected, the MEP successfully launched the PP that preceded this PA. The MEP subsequently proposed a series of PPPAs on other subjects that were not successful. Unlike the situation with the successful PP and PA on Governance and quality of software code, neither the MEP nor her staff had relevant contacts at the EC, and they did not know who to contact to discuss proposals. The MEP felt that the EC's responses to the later proposals reflected a lack of understanding of the subjects, and this in turn was at least partly attributed to the view of the MEP that the proposal form did not allow sufficient space to explain the proposals (as discussed above, this might suggest a misunderstanding of the application form, underlining the need for capacity development).

Lesson learnt: Facilitate contacts in the EC to allow for preparatory consultations. Ensure that MEPs understand how to use the PPPA application form.

4.2.4. Preparatory consultations with the EC

The Committee Secretariats encourage MEPs to engage in consultations with the EC when preparing PPPAs as early as possible. Indeed, interview feedback suggested that prior consultations with the EC greatly improve the prospects that a PPPA be assessed positively and adopted as an amendment. However, this advice is not followed systematically.

EP interviewees noted that on some occasions the 'line DGs' of the EC provided positive feedback on a PPPA in the context of the preparatory consultations with the EC, however, later DG BUDG communicated a 'C'- or 'D'-categorisation. EP interviewees therefore recommended for DG BUDG to participate in the preparatory consultations. However, other interview feedback noted that this might constrain the freedom of the line DGs, and recommended for DG BUDG to categorise PPPAs in line with the line DGs' feedback. DG BUDG does not pronounce itself before issuing the formal categorisation when completing the pre-assessment, and when MEPs approach DG BUDG in the context of the preparatory consultations, DG BUDG ask MEPs to respect the central pre-assessment procedure and not to approach line DGs. If requested, DG BUDG does however advise on the procedure and general requirements of PPPAs. DG BUDG considered preparatory consultations with line DGs to be problematic and voiced the following concerns:

- Preparatory consultations before the formal pre-assessment add another layer of workload in an already excessive procedure which DG BUDG considers questionable in terms of administrative efficiency;
- EC staff approached by MEPs may not be aware of the requirement for PPPAs according to the Financial Regulation, thus conflicting messages and unclarity may add to further inefficient use of EC resources;
- Inequal treatment of proposals – i.e. providing an unfair advantage to MEPs with 'good connections';
- A 'politicisation' of proposals which then may not be assessed based on legal and technical feasibility but based on prominence and influence of the MEP author;

- It can be a potential access point for lobby groups co-drafting a proposal leading to a covert earmarking for a pre-determined beneficiary which is against the rules and principles of EU funding.⁷⁶

DG BUDG considered that consultations with line DGs should only start after receiving the results of the assessment, with a focus on enhancing 'B'-categorised proposals. DG BUDG underlined that MEPs have the opportunity to clarify proposals and exchange additional information during the 'feedback period' after the transmission of the official EC pre-assessment – i.e. from July to August. This time can be used to alter proposals and agree on a re-categorisation which can then be considered in the formal assessment of the proposals: the Commission letter of executability – PPPA annex. The EC also underlined that while the 'pre-assessment' is of an informal nature, the assessment finally provided in the *letter of executability* is the formal EC position and serves as a contribution to the budget Conciliation Committee in accordance with the Inter-institutional agreement of 2 December 2013 (Annex, Part E, point 20).

However, the following two cases show how preparatory consultations can be of significant benefit for the quality of PPPAs, e.g. testing at an early stage whether an idea can take the form of a PPPA / avoiding the tabling of poor proposals, checking whether additional commitment appropriations are useful (for an ongoing PPPA) or whether a given budget is sufficient/realistic etc.

Text box 3: Preparatory Action: Governance and quality of software code — Auditing of free and open-source software

For the original PP on free and open source software (FOSS), a member of the MEP's staff had a contact in the relevant department at DG DIGIT with whom they could discuss the project. It also helped that the action was concrete and practical rather than theoretical.

Lesson learnt: Early consultations with the EC on concrete aspects of an action.

Text box 4: Preparatory Action: Urban Agenda for the EU

The proposal for this PA was drafted by MEP Mr Olbrycht's office and submitted through the REGI Committee for pre-assessment by the relevant Unit at DG REGIO. The proposal was fully prepared by the MEP's office, which held experience about the matter following the launch of other PPPAs in the past, and no major drafting support was requested from the EP administration.

Upon an informal submission of the proposed PPPA to the responsible DG REGIO desk officers, the EC's preliminary reaction was not immediately favourable on grounds of lack of resources to manage the eventual PPPA on top of the ongoing workload.

Following a couple of informal meetings and following the eventual endorsement by the concerned DG REGIO Head of Unit, the EC agreed to support the PA. The compromise found on the PA scope did not deviate much from the EP's initial proposal, but the EP-EC dialogue allowed to fine-tune the PA's content, fundamentally in order to make sure that the EP application aligned with the requirements of the Framework Contract that the EC had in mind for launching a Secretariat to support the workings of the UAEU.

The MEP's office highlights that i) involving the EC from an early stage (prior to the submission of a 'formal' proposal), ii) holding a direct contact with the responsible desk officers (and not only

⁷⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/rules-and-principles_en

corresponding officially with the EC management), iii) offering some flexibility to accommodate EC's comments and remarks, and iv) proposing the PPPA as a solution for promoting EC policy priorities lacking funding, are recipes for a successful PPPA.

Lesson learnt: Early and direct consultations with the EC.

4.2.5. Quality of PPPA proposals

EP interviewees noted the generally poor quality of the majority of the PPPA proposals. This was further exacerbated by sometimes inadequate translations of PPPA proposals, originally drafted in languages other than English. One of the main weaknesses is that MEPs often propose interventions that already exist or that can be funded under existing programmes. Indeed, MEPs were reported to struggle to ascertain what exists or is possible under current legislation, the many 'C'- and 'D'-categorised proposals quoted as evidence to support this view (though this is not the only reason for a 'C'- or 'D'-categorisation, see section 4.2.7 on the EC's pre-assessment below).

EP interviewees specifically noted the sometimes poor quality of financial proposals for PPPAs, with budgets not in line with implementation requirements. In this context, one interviewee suggested that the BUDG Secretariat's information sessions on PPPAs might benefit from including more information on designing a budget for a PPPA. However, other EP feedback suggested that the BUDG Secretariat would not be well placed to provide more than generic advice on budgeting for a PPPA and that the Secretariats of the 'sectoral' Committees or the EC's line DGs would be better placed to help on this aspect. EP feedback suggested that the shrinking financial volume of PPPAs that has been observed in recent years might be a function of MEPs pre-emptively shrinking the budgets of the PPPAs they propose, in a belief that a smaller budget might make it more likely for them to be accepted in to the package.⁷⁷

Most EP interviewees explained the generally poor quality of PPPA proposals with MEP resource constraints (and the lack of preparatory consultations as discussed in section 4.2.4 above). Often, PPPA proposals were prepared at the very last minute. However, it was also noted that MEPs were free to prepare their proposals at an earlier stage.

4.2.6. Limiting the number of proposals for PPPAs?

In the course of discussions with different EP actors and the EC, the question was raised as to whether there should be a limit on the number of PPPA proposals to be submitted to the EC for pre-assessment. Indeed, Figure 13 above has shown that the number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment doubled from approximately 150 in 2014 to 300 in 2015, with a further increase in 2016, when the number peaked at approximately 360. However, Figure 16 has shown that the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' category PPPAs fell from approximately 40% in 2013 and 2014, to approximately 25% in 2015. The quantitative assessment also suggests that there is a strong inverse relationship between the number of proposals submitted and the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals, i.e. the more proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals (see Figure 17). However, EP feedback also noted that low categorisations might be motivated by the EC fearing resource constraints in the context of implementing a large number of PPPAs.

The EC responded to the increase in the number of proposals in 2015 by noting: 'Such a large number is hardly compatible with the spirit of the IIA and calls for a review of the procedures through which

⁷⁷ DG BUDG feedback on this point suggests that if these budget reductions occur between the pre-assessment and the formal tabling as an amendment, then this can decrease the chance for an 'A'- or 'B'-categorisation in the Executability Letter.

proposals are made and processed within the European Parliament, too'.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding, the following years saw similarly high numbers (367 for the 2017 budget; 344 for the 2018 budget), and the EC reiterated its concerns.⁷⁹ Most notably, DG BUDG suggested a preference for limiting the number of proposals sent for assessment.

EP interviewees also considered the volume of PPPA proposals to place a substantial burden on the EP administration in terms of processing, and on occasions, translating PPPA proposals,⁸⁰ and sometimes these proposals were voted down by the 'proposing' Committee, i.e. they never reach the BUDG Committee.

Different practices and positions were noted with regard to limiting the number of PPPA proposals.

- Most Committees have no limits on the number of proposals (e.g. AGRI, ENVI, ITRE, LIBE, REGI, TRAN). In some cases, it is argued that a limit is not required because of the small number of proposals, e.g. around 20 per year, though other actors rightly pointed out that if all of the EP's 20 Committees were to submit 20 proposals each for pre-assessment, there would be an even higher number of PPPA proposals submitted for pre-assessment than when the number peaked in 2016. Some EP actors argued against limits on the number of proposals, noting that in their view this might be contrary to the regulatory framework governing amendments to the budget. EP interviewees also argued that it is better to have the pre-assessment than tabling/adopting PPPAs that have not undergone this quality control since this might lead to a waste of funds. Other EP actors argued that there should be no limit in order not to stifle the creativity of MEPs, and that it was the EC's task to assess the proposals to provide an indication as to which proposals should not be tabled as amendments. For example, the Group 'European People's Party', though this has not always been the established practice, limits the number of PPPA proposals by only tabling 'A' and 'B'-categorised proposals as amendments. Only exceptionally other proposals are tabled as amendments, but only after the EC confirms its re-consideration of a proposal, upgrading it to 'A' or 'B'. Other Groups have a different approach, tabling on occasion 'C'-categorised proposals, e.g. the PPPA 'Inventory of species and habitats in the French outermost regions' (07 02 77 34) or 'Child Guarantee Scheme' (04 03 77 25); this is either explained by the perception that the EC 'C'-categorised the proposal for political reasons, or the MEP maintaining the proposal for political reasons, or both.
- In at least one Committee, the Coordinators take a decision on the selection of PPPA proposals to be forwarded to the Committee on Budgets for submission for pre-assessment by the EC. Other Committees organise a vote on the PPPA proposals to be forwarded to the BUDG Committee for submission for pre-assessment by the EC. EP interviewees suggested that Committees with a small number of proposals (five to ten proposals per year) don't organise a vote in the Committee but directly forward all proposals to the BUDG Secretariat.
- The AFET Committee limits the number of PPPA proposals to two per Group. This number is set by the AFET Rapporteur (rapporteur on the Committee's opinion on the budget). Usually, only the two largest Groups prepare proposals, with a total of five to six proposals prepared per year.

⁷⁸ EC (2015) Commission response to the list of draft proposals for Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in Budget 2016.

⁷⁹ EC (2016) Commission response to the list of draft proposals for Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in Budget 2017; EC (2017) Commission response to the list of draft proposals for Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in Budget 2018.

⁸⁰ The Secretariat for the Committee on Budgets encourages PPPA to be submitted in one of the EC working languages (English, French, German) to allow for speedy pre-assessment by the EC, however, PPPA can be submitted in all EU official languages at the stage of the budgetary amendments.

The limit on the number of proposals is based on Committee practice and is communicated via email; there is no formal document on this; this practice has been in place since about 2010. The AFET Secretariat then collates all proposals for the EC pre-assessment, and later reports back to the Committee for the amendments. Similarly, the DEVE Committee used to limit the number of proposals to one per Group (though in 2020, there were 12 proposals). This was based on a decision by the Coordinators, and the practice was in place for the last two years. Some of the EP interviewees approached in the context of the case study work also recommended limiting the number of PPPA proposals. For example, one former MEP found that there should be limits on the number of PPPAs that each MEP can propose. MEPs are very busy and realistically can't follow more than one PPPA. It is important that each PPPA has at least one real 'owner', an MEP who can actively follow and facilitate the action.

Finally, the EC's DG Budget also recommended to set minimum budgets for PPPAs to allow for effective implementation and promote prospects for actual impact / sustainability. Figure 4 above has shown that there has been a steady decline in the median value of PPPAs since 2015. However, EP actors commented that determining a minimum budget was difficult because PPPAs pursued different categories of objectives, e.g. some are limited to feasibility studies whilst others are piloting new interventions. Moreover, the quantitative analysis has not identified any inherent inefficiencies in smaller PPPAs,⁸¹ but on the contrary shown that there is a strong positive relationship between the duration of PPPAs and their level of funding. This suggests that the overall 'monitoring load' for smaller projects is less (lasting for fewer years) than for larger projects (see section 3.2.1 above).

4.2.7. Pre-assessment by the European Commission

Further to the preparation of the PPPA proposals, the BUDG Secretariat transmits all PPPA proposals to the EC for pre-assessment. This procedure has been in place since 2011.⁸²

In this context it is worth noting that not all PPPAs undergo pre-assessment: 'It is possible to table a proposal for a pilot project or preparatory action as a budgetary amendment (...) without the proposal having been pre-assessed by the EC'.⁸³ This appears to be in contradiction to the Interinstitutional Agreement: 'A trilogue shall be convened in good time before the Council's reading, to allow the institutions to have an exchange of views on the draft budget. In order for the Commission to be able to assess in due time the implementability of amendments, envisaged by the European Parliament and the Council, which create new preparatory actions or pilot projects or which prolong existing ones, the European Parliament and the Council shall inform the Commission of their intentions in this regard, so that a first discussion may already take place at that trilogue'. However, EP feedback indicates that it is somewhat exceptional that a PPPA is not pre-assessed. For example, this can be the case for proposals with a strong political backing in the EP and considerable 'lobbying' (both towards the EC, to push for

⁸¹ DG BUDG feedback on this point suggests that there are inefficiencies to consider in terms of administrative burden in pre-assessment, financial decision, call for tender, award decision and implementation: a EUR 10 million PPPA requires the same steps in the procedure and number of persons involved in the EC as a EUR 500,000 PPPA. Thus, if the overall number of PPPAs adopted in a budget year is 14 (i.e. $14 * 10 \text{ million} = 140 \text{ million}$) it makes a huge difference in terms of administrative burden and administrative costs compared to 280 PPPAs adopted (i.e. $280 * 500.000 = 140 \text{ million}$). Of course, smaller PPPAs (e.g. feasibility studies) may be useful and balanced by bigger PPPAs but limiting the number of PPPAs adopted in any budget year also lead to tremendous efficiency – and ultimately financial – savings on the administration side. EP feedback suggests that in view of the experimental nature of the PPPAs process, a balanced assessment of its overall efficiency should include consideration of outcomes e.g. Erasmus and the European Solidarity Corps started as PPPAs.

⁸² EP (2014) Working document on pilot projects and preparatory actions in budget 2014 and 2015 and Commission's first interim report on the implementation of PPPA 2014.

⁸³ EP (2019) Committee on Budgets, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020

an exceptional pre-assessment after the deadline, and towards the budget rapporteur). The BUDG Secretariat dis-encourages this practice. Indeed, EP interviewees noted that whilst the pre-assessment is not mandatory, this tends to be the standard. The slides used in the information session on the PPPA notes: 'Pre-assessment is not mandatory, but it is meant to help!'.⁸⁴ Moreover, EP feedback also suggested that there have been experiences of Committees voting against forwarding a proposal as an amendment to the BUDG Secretariat because the PPPA was introduced after the summer and had not undergone EC assessment.

DG BUDG suggested that there might be benefit in allowing for more time for quality control of the PPPA proposals in the EP (both within the Committee Secretariats and in the BUDG Secretariat) before their submission for pre-assessment by the EC, noting inter alia that there was only very limited time between the deadline for sending PPPA proposals to the BUDG Secretariat and forwarding to the EC; EP feedback suggested that the proposals are usually forwarded to the EC two to three days after the deadline for submission to the BUDG Secretariat. BUDG Secretariat feedback also suggested that quality control should primarily be the role of the political advisors; the BUDG Secretariat's role is more limited for reasons of impartiality.

DG BUDG, more specifically DG A2 Unit A1 'Budgetary procedures and execution, relations with the budget committees', coordinates the pre-assessment. The first step involves a preliminary review of the proposals by seven to ten experts. The proposals are then forwarded to the relevant line DGs, and the latter have some 21 days to conduct their assessment. On average, some ten EC staff per PPPA proposal are involved in the review - besides the person(s) working on the assessment, the file also goes through the hierarchy, involving Heads of Unit, Deputy Directors and Directors, both in the line DG and in DG BUDG. The assessment thus consumes significant EC resources. EC feedback suggests that some 600 to 800 officials can be involved in the assessment process, with a total of about 3,500 working hours dedicated to the assessment each year (calculating some ten hours per proposal; 350 proposals).

DG BUDG provides internal guidance on the pre-assessment, including an overview of procedures, and Frequently Asked Questions (there are Circulars on the annual budget procedure for the year N+1, usually in December N-1, a Circular requesting the pre-assessment, usually in April year N). Moreover, the EC conducts two training sessions on the pre-assessment in March. The target audience are not only the 'PPPA correspondents' in the different line DGs but also potential assessors. In this context, DG BUDG noted that it was difficult to target specific desk officers, since any desk officer can be asked to get involved in the pre-assessment. This can be related to a point raised by some EP interviewees, suggesting that there was no consistent approach to the pre-assessment between the different line DGs, with some DGs providing adequate, but others very limited information to support their categorisation of a PPPA proposal. This point was also touched on in the context of case study work on the PPPAs. In this context, interviewees recommended for DG BUDG to review the application of pre-assessment guidelines and criteria across different DGs to check for possible asymmetries in approaches. In particular it was recommended for DG BUDG to review if all DGs understand and apply the concepts of 'experimental', 'innovation', and 'preparation' in the same way. This point can be illustrated with the example of DG CNECT. As noted in the quantitative assessment, the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' for proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT is generally high. In the case of DG CNECT, this combined percentage never fell below 60%, whereas for all DGs together, it never exceeded approximately 42%. In other words, proposals pre-assessed by DG CNECT are more likely

⁸⁴ EP (2019) Info session on PPPA 2020.

than not to be categorised as 'A' or 'B'. However, there might of course be other reasons explaining the DG CNECT data, e.g. the more innovative nature of proposals.

The assessment categories are:⁸⁵

- A = PPPA could be implemented as suggested by the Parliament;
- B = PPPA might under certain conditions be fully or partially implementable but the project would need to be re-designed (it could be the case if part of the suggested action is already covered by a legal base); or more information might be needed before the Commission can assess the proposed project;
- C = PPPA is fully covered by a legal base or the ideas are otherwise being addressed;
- D = PPPA cannot be implemented or similar actions have already been carried out in the past.

The EC's assessment is to be mainly guided by aspects of legality and technical feasibility. The EC explains: 'The Commission applies the Treaty's general provisions of *sound financial management* and has therefore (...) assessed whether the proposed projects fall under an existing legal base. When that is the case, it makes reference to the relevant legal base, or illustrates how the proposed project/action could be re-designed to meet the legal requirements'.⁸⁶ DG BUDG feedback confirmed the focus on legal and technical aspects, emphasising that political considerations should play no role in the assessment.

During the past two years, DG BUDG has used a standardised form for the pre-assessment by the line DGs with standard sentences and additional room for detail. DG BUDG can change the categorisation proposed by the line DG. This happens for about 25% of all categorisations, and usually involves a 'down-categorisation' by DG BUDG. DG BUDG explains this with the fact that the line DGs tend to focus on substance and not on the legal requirements. Most often, there will have been an oversight by the line DG with regard to the question as to whether a legal basis already exists. On this point, EP feedback suggested that there are also other non-technical / legal motivations behind the down-categorisations, e.g. concerns over the line DGs' capacity to ensure the implementation of the PPPA with the currently available staff (in this context EP feedback referred to the last years' restrictions on recruitment / 5% staff reduction).

Discussing the pre-assessment, several EP interviewees considered the timing of the assessment to be problematic. The results of the assessment are only communicated in June, however, the amendments take place in September (in the BUDG Committee), and often it is difficult to reach the competent EC officials for clarifications on the assessment during the summer months, exacerbated by the fact that often the knowledge on a specific PPPA is concentrated amongst a very small number of EC officials or just one single individual. EP interviewees suggested that the timelines are particularly problematic for Committees other than the BUDG Committee, since the Committee-internal deadlines for forwarding amendments to the BUDG Committee are usually the end of July, and if assessment results are only provided in June, this leaves very limited time to re-visit the proposals. On this point, the BUDG Secretariat clarified that the July deadlines are 'self-imposed' by the respective Committees to avoid processing PPPA / amendments during the summer.

Looking at the substance of the pre-assessment, EP interviewees considered the assessment feedback to lack detail and often, MEPs struggled to use the feedback to improve their proposals. EC feedback differs a lot depending on DG, with some DGs providing very limited detail in their assessments. EP

⁸⁵ EC (2014) Annex 3, Commission Assessment of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, Budget 2015.

⁸⁶ EC (2014) Annex 3, Commission Assessment of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, Budget 2015.

interviewees also found the EC assessments to be affected by inconsistencies. Interviewees noted PPPAs that were repeatedly 'C'-categorised; then a MEP made a speech noting the intervention, and subsequently the PPPA was 'B'-categorised, though there was no change in the content of the PPPA or the wider context. In this context it was noted that on occasions, MEPs approach Commissioners to advocate for positive categorisations by the relevant line DG. In more general terms, EP interviewees found the quality of the EC assessments to have been decreasing. For example, EP interviewees noted one recent occasion when the EC assessment did not relate to the proposed PPPA.

EP interviewees also commented specifically on the 'A'-categorised PPPA. In this case, the assessment usually provides no explanation / comment. Indeed, the corresponding assessment is limited to the phrase 'The proposal could be implemented as proposed by the Parliament' or similar. This presents the EP with a difficulty when a decision has to be taken on the amounts of funding for different 'A'-categorised proposals. EC feedback suggested that more detail had been provided in the past, however, in more recent years, the provision of detailed feedback was constrained by the volume of proposals. Moreover, providing more detail on 'A'-categorised proposals was difficult because the PPPAs relate to areas that first require experimentation; however, in principle there was some room for discussing the 'A'-categorisation in more detail in the course of the follow-up on the assessment (note however the time constraints for this as discussed above). Other EP feedback suggested that in more recent years there was a trend to include all 'A'- and 'B'-categorised proposals and reduce individual funding rather than to exclude any of these PPPAs.

Moreover, the EC assessment tables do not identify an individual 'author' of the pre-assessment with contact details, and therefore MEPs struggled to follow up. Other MEPs were reported to be able to identify relevant contacts by approaching the line DG. EC feedback on this point clarified that contact details for relevant units are provided with the assessment to the Secretariat for the BUDG Committee, however, this information is not made directly available to MEPs for data protection issues, and MEPs are expected to ask the Secretariat for the BUDG Committee for the contact details. The latter provides information on the possibility to facilitate contact details for the line DGs in the context of the information sessions on the budgetary procedure.

On rare occasions the proposals are revised to address EC feedback received during the pre-assessment. The 're-assessments' are not part of a formal procedure. MEPs can follow up on the assessments during the two months between the issuing of the assessments and the deadline for proposing amendments (this falls mostly into August). This is mostly relevant for 'B'-categorised proposals. In the case of improvements, DG BUDG confirms the re-categorisation in the letter of executability, issued in October. However, EP feedback also suggested that many MEPs simply do not make use of the possibility of having a re-assessment. EP interviewees suggested that the EC provides limited explanation for its re-assessment in September / and only a limited number of PPPAs is sent for re-assessment. The lack of feedback discourages MEPs to improve proposals. Moreover, when they improve the proposal the PPPA goes to the vote with the original categorisation despite the improvements (the re-categorisation is only formally confirmed with the executability letter). On this point EP feedback also suggested that on occasions the proposed re-categorisation by a line DG (in reaction to improvements) is not endorsed by DG BUDG. Other EP interviewees recommended formalising the re-assessment. This could be limited to PPPA proposals that have at least been 'B'-categorised).

Turning to the 'outcome' of the EC's assessment, EP interviewees agreed on the generally poor quality of proposals, considering that 'C'- or 'D'-categorisations were largely justified. Indeed, the quantitative assessment confirms that 66% of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment from 2013 to 2019 were categorised as 'C' or 'D', and only 14.2% as 'A', and 17.6% as 'B' (see Figure 14). EP feedback also

suggested that there was a serious deterioration between 2019 and 2020, mainly due to the high turnover of MEPs following the EP elections in 2019 with many new MEPs with no prior PPPA experience, and the even shorter time available for preparing PPPAs than in a normal year (only one week between their start in the EP and the deadline for pre-assessment). This was due to the fact that it was difficult to fit in a second round of proposals / assessments before the deadline for amendments in early September. Indeed, several EP interviewees agreed that the generally tight timetable for preparing PPPAs explained the substantial number of 'D'-categorised proposals. Notwithstanding, other EP interviewees considered that MEPs were free to start with the preparation of PPPAs at an earlier stage if they wished.

Reviewing the EC assessments conducted for PPPAs for the 2020 budget, and focusing specifically on 'D'-categorised projects, allows identifying what the EC considers to be the main deficiencies:⁸⁷

- 25 PPPAs (21 PPs and 4 PAs) touch on areas that are **already covered by existing interventions**;⁸⁸
- 12 PPs touch on areas that fall under the **exclusive competence of the Member States**;⁸⁹
- 6 PPs **'earmarked' for specific organisations**: 'It should thus be recalled that, as a general rule, earmarking or reference to funding for a concrete beneficiary/applicant is against the basic principles of the Financial Regulation and in particular the principles of transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination';⁹⁰ EC feedback on this point notes that only in cases where the earmarking is an essential part of the proposal is category D assigned as a result of the earmarking. Where by removing the reference to a pre-determined beneficiary the proposal is opened up to other potential beneficiaries the earmarking is not considered a blocking reason for a category A or B assessment;

⁸⁷ EC (2019) 2020 budget – PPPA assessments round I. EC (2019) 2020 budget – PPPA assessments round II.

⁸⁸ This deficiency is noted for the following proposals: 'European Open Source Platform on Fortification Knowledge Research and Development for EU Cities and Regions', 'Zero Waste Tourist Accommodation', 'Countering IT Security threats to next generation networks, connected devices, and European microprocessor designs', 'EU-India Policy Network' – promoting a closer, comprehensive joint-strategic partnership between the EU and India', 'Biomeiler (Woodchip) Heated Greenhouse - innovative composting practice under the same roof', 'Observation.org: Empowering and engaging European citizens in monitoring biodiversity', 'Explore and travel in the EU', 'ECCSIT (European Centre for Cybersecurity in Transport)', 'Support to European regions and their cities implementing SDG policy frameworks', 'European Database in order to support the recruitment of the top positions in the European Agencies with the objective of gender-balanced teams', 'Youth Participatory Budget', 'Cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries in the use of electronic system for identifying illicit trafficking of art and cultural heritage', 'Mapping Anti-Gypsyism – Establishment of a EU-wide Online Reporting Tool', 'Digital Hansa Project', 'Better integration of genetics and genomics in fisheries control for improved management, conservation and consumer protection in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)', 'Implementation of Single and Multimodal Ticketing Systems', 'Support measures for small-scale, artisanal and coastal fishing sector', 'Peers' Primary Prevention of drug use and STD', '70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration', 'Rapture of Europe', 'Participatory Budget for Young Citizens ("Young Citizens Lab")', 'European Observatory for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health', 'Establishing a European Platform for Endometriosis Awareness', 'Hotel rating system among Europe. Developing a EU common standard of quality', 'Safe cars for our kids - A feasibility study on the introduction of automatic alarm devices as mandatory systems on vehicles in order to prevent child abandonment'.

⁸⁹ This deficiency is noted for the following proposals: 'Feasibility study of an observatory dedicated to history teaching in Europe', 'HIV/AIDS prevention in schools', 'Enhancing safeguards against abusive recourse to the Interpol notice system', 'Assessing the state of play of school education in minority languages', 'A Europe-wide rapid response mechanism for the protection of writers and artists at risk as a measure to promote freedom of expression', 'Facilitating asylum applicants' access to higher education', 'Development of an EU Code of Police Ethics', 'Assessing the possibility for Thalidomide survivors to access EU funds to support them in their health and everyday life challenges', 'Union Fund to support litigation cases on criminalisation of humanitarian action in the EU', 'EU Search and Rescue Fund', 'Project Pilot - Study "Fare Free Public Transport - Impacts and replicability"', 'Development of primary and secondary school curricula on EU citizenship education'.

⁹⁰ This deficiency is noted for the following proposals: 'European Open Source Platform on Fortification Knowledge Research and Development for EU Cities and Regions', 'Biomeiler (Woodchip) Heated Greenhouse - innovative composting practice under the same roof', 'Observation.org: Empowering and engaging European citizens in monitoring biodiversity', 'ACT - a global conversation between the arts and the world', 'Rapture of Europe', 'Establishing a European Platform for Endometriosis Awareness'.

- 2 PPs with **implementation issues**, e.g. 'the Commission considers the usefulness (effectiveness), efficiency and implementability / feasibility to be too questionable for implementation',⁹¹
- 1 PP that falls outside the competency of the EU and the Member States;⁹²
- 1 PA that **continues a PA for which no basic act is planned**, e.g. 'This proposal aims to continue an existing preparatory action, for which the funded projects will start at the end of 2019 and be implemented over 18 months. According to the Financial Regulation Article 58 (4), for preparatory actions, "the procedure for the adoption of the relevant basic act shall be concluded before the end of the third financial year." Hence, a continuation could only be supported if a follow up new basic act was planned. However, at this stage, there is no plan to present such a new basic act, as it is too early to anticipate on the results of the existing preparatory action'.⁹³

4.2.8. Amendments

Further to the pre-assessment by the EC, the PPPAs need to be tabled as amendments to the budget.

Moreover, amendments are required to 'top up' the resources of existing PPPAs ('continuation' as 'second-year' PPs or 'second-' or 'third-year' PAs). Indeed, the Financial Regulation stipulates in Article 58: [for PPs] 'the relevant commitment appropriations may be entered in the budget for not more than two consecutive financial years' and [for PAs] 'The relevant commitment appropriations may be entered in the budget for not more than three consecutive financial years'.

This need of course depends on the volume of commitment appropriations adopted for the first year, i.e. if the first-year appropriations are sufficient to ensure implementation over the entire intended duration of the PPPA, then there is no need for a re-introduction of the PPPA as a budgetary amendment. Notwithstanding, in cases where additional commitment appropriations are desirable, EP feedback suggested that MEPs did not systematically table amendments to this effect. For example, MEPs on occasions failed to propose amendments for topping up the resources of a PPPA, and this might cause the PPPA to end before completing all intended activities / achieving objectives. Indeed, the quantitative assessment has shown that for the period under review, approximately half of all PPPAs are voted commitment appropriations in only one year; only approximately 25 of the 94 PAs have received commitment appropriations in three years; only approximately 60 of the 231 PPs have received commitment appropriations in two years. Therefore, the Committee Secretariats remind MEPs of the possibility of 're-proposing' the PPPA (tabling a new amendment) to secure additional resources. However, despite the reminders MEPs often failed to follow up ('don't see their email'). One difficulty with the topping up of resources for PPPAs is that at the time of proposing amendments to secure additional funding, only little is known in terms of outputs / outcomes of the PPPAs. Indeed, there is very limited time between the adoption of the budgetary amendment in November and the preparation for next year's budget, starting some three to four months later.

⁹¹ This deficiency is noted for the following proposals: 'Development and validation of an innovative online platform that promotes better eating habits for kids aged 6 to 12, through engagement, interactions, and with a progressive approach that accompanies the kids over the years', 'Easy access to finance from member states for clean energy solutions along the innovation value chain from R&D to market mature products and services'.

⁹² This deficiency is noted for the following proposal: 'Accelerator for Belarusian Online Education Ecosystem'.

⁹³ This deficiency is noted for the following proposal: 'Reducing youth unemployment - setting up co-operatives to enhance working opportunities in the EU'.

Following the pre-assessment, some Committees organise a vote on the PPPAs, i.e. which PPPAs should be tabled as amendments. Whilst the rapporteur recommends voting only for 'A'- and 'B'-categorised proposals, EP feedback suggested that at times, also 'C'- and 'D'-categorised proposals receive a supportive vote to be tabled as amendments. Indeed, the quantitative assessment (Table 7) has shown that 13 PPPAs that were exclusively categorised as 'C' or 'D' have received funding. In this context, the BUDG Secretariat slides for the information session on PPPAs mention that 'A's and B's are prioritised, but sometimes C's and D's get adopted into the budget'.⁹⁴ However, not all Committees organise votes on the PPPAs to be tabled as amendments. For example, the rapporteur for the ECON Committee 'automatically tables all 'A'-categorised proposals as amendments. Other EP feedback suggested that 'A'-categorised PPPAs are not automatically tabled as amendments. For example, in 2018 (preparation of the 2019 budget), the rapporteur for the budget (Committee on Budgets) decided not to include any of the amendments proposed by one Group in the final set of amendments that were put for the vote, despite this including amendments for 'A'-categorised PPPAs.

EP interviewees also commented on the timing of the amendments. Interviewees suggested that at the meeting of the Committees' shadow rapporteurs at the end of August and just before the tabling of budgetary amendments in the BUDG Committee in September there is very little time to discuss PPPAs. 80% of the time during the meeting of the shadow rapporteurs is dedicated to the Opinions on the budget and 20% to the budgetary amendments, focusing on the large programmes, budget for the Agencies etc. However, there is never any discussion on PPPAs, and there is no time to come up with compromise solutions on PPPAs. In this context it was recommended that the deadline for forwarding budgetary amendments to the BUDG Committee is postponed by at least one week to the second week of September. However, feedback from the BUDG Secretariat noted similar time constraints, indicating that it would not be realistic to postpone the deadline by one week without jeopardising the calendar of the entire budgetary procedure (plenary vote, start of conciliation). Indeed, the same deadline applies for 'regular' budgetary amendments and PPPA amendments. Regular amendments could arguably also benefit from additional time, however, time is required to process them, prepare a package and prepare the voting lists for the end of September vote in the BUDG Committee.

4.2.9. Conciliation Committee meeting / 'Compromise' budget package

Further to the votes on the EU budget including the package of PPPAs in the Committee on Budgets and then in the Plenary, a Conciliation Committee meeting between the EP and the Council is organised to agree on the final budget, including the final selection of PPPAs to be included and their respective budget allocations.

With regard to the final selection of PPPAs, the EP's Working Document on PPPAs for 2019 and 2020 specifies: 'In addition, the Commission's positive pre-assessment should be one of the main pre-conditions for PP-PAs to be included in the compromise package. Projects and actions falling under category A and B will be favoured'.⁹⁵ However, EP interviewees confirmed that the compromise package has occasionally included 'C'-categorised PPPA. For example, the compromise package for the 2015 budget included three 'C'- and one 'C/D'-categorised proposals (out of a total of 59 proposals).⁹⁶ On the other hand, EC feedback suggested that on occasions 'A'-categorised proposals are deselected

⁹⁴ EP (2019) Info session on PPPA 2020.

⁹⁵ EP (2019) Committee on Budgets, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020.

⁹⁶ EP (2014) PPPA compromise package as adopted by Plenary

by the rapporteurs. EC feedback also suggested that the Conciliation Committee rarely discusses the package of PPPAs.

EP interviewees suggested that the final set of PPPAs maintained in the context of the ‘compromise’ package on the budget often fails to reflect a clear set of (EP) priorities. Negotiations on the final package of PPPAs are not guided by any strategy / specific priorities. The usual approach is to include as many PPPAs as possible in the budget, accepting that available resources for individual PPPAs are reduced. For example, the compromise package for the 2015 budget (as adopted by the Plenary) shows that the budget was reduced from an average per PPPA of EUR 1,468,814 to EUR 1,159,661 (the total budget was reduced from some EUR 86.7 million down to 68.4 million).⁹⁷ In this context it is worth noting EP feedback suggesting that there are examples of PPPAs that found their budget reduced to levels that rendered their implementation unrealistic, e.g. the PPPA ‘Model social impact approaches to social housing and empowerment of Roma’. EP feedback on this point suggested the need for a new approach whereby all relevant EP actors (including Committee Secretariats and Political Groups) are involved in a process of prioritisation and minimum required funding levels. EP feedback also suggested that the EC could include a systematic comment on the proposed funding level in the pre-assessment feedback.

4.3. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

4.3.1. EP role in implementation of PPPA

EP interviewees all pointed to the limited role of the EP when it comes to the actual implementation of the PPPAs. Several issues were noted:

- The regulatory framework for the PPPAs does not foresee any role for the EP in terms of implementation, and many EP interviewees pointed to the need for a meaningful role for the EP in the context of the implementation of the PPPAs. For example, EP interviewees suggested that the EP (MEPs) should have a ‘droit de regard’, such as a consultation on the design of terms of reference etc, whilst respecting the EC’s autonomy in terms of executing the budget.
- However, it is not standard practice that MEPs take an interest in the implementation of the PPPAs. MEPs don’t usually read the EC reports on PPPAs, however, some interviewees also suggested that it might rather be the role of the Secretariats and / or political advisors to brief the MEPs on relevant developments regarding the PPPAs.
- In some cases where MEPs take an interest in the implementation of a specific PPPA, they often struggle to identify EC contacts to follow up on the implementation of a PPPA. On rare occasions, the EC contacts a MEP to provide information on the progress of a PPPA. For example, this was the experience with the PP ‘Promoting alternatives to animal testing’ (07 02 77 41). However, EP feedback also suggested that in other cases there was a good flow of information between the EC and the MEP and a good involvement of the MEP in the implementation and/or follow-up of the PPPA.
- Successful PPPAs are not systematically ‘promoted’ in the EP, and EP feedback suggests that this might be explained by limitations in the reporting on PPPAs. EP interviewees recommended the organisation of final events on PPPAs, to be hosted by the relevant Committee. One Secretariat pointed to a good experience of visibility of a PPPA in the context of the Committee’s work and a related mission of MEPs, namely the PP ‘Investing in sustainable

⁹⁷ EP (2014) PPPA compromise package as adopted by Plenary.

peace and community rebuilding in the Cauca area — Colombia’ (21 02 77 18) – followed up by the PA ‘Investing in sustainable peace and community rebuilding in the Cauca region of Colombia’ (21 02 77 36). Similarly, the PA ‘Subtitling European cultural television content throughout Europe’ was presented by DG CNECT before the CULT Committee.

- Some EP Committees invite the EC to a Committee meeting to present the state of play with the PPPA. For example, the TRAN Committee had scheduled a meeting on 16/17 March 2020 for the EC to present progress with PPPA. Other Committees don’t do this, but feedback suggested that they might consider organising similar exchanges in the future.

Text box 5: Preparatory Action: Governance and quality of software code — Auditing of free and open-source software

Implementation of this PPPA benefited from close contact between the EP and EC. For example, the transition from PP to PA is reported to have been smooth, as the MEP’s office had established a strong working relationship with DG DIGIT. It also helped that the team at the EC remained stable throughout the life of the two related PPPA. For DG DIGIT, this type of intensive dialogue throughout the process was essential and they very much welcomed it. This dialogue led to improvements in the PA. It was not possible to establish a webpage for the action so information about it was published on the MEP’s website.⁹⁸

Lesson learnt: Implementation benefits from close contact between the EP and EC.

Text box 6: Preparatory Action: Urban Agenda for the EU

The EP has been involved in the Steering Committee of the PA, and its participation fundamentally concentrated around dissemination support to the UAEU. The EP is of the opinion that not enough recognition was credited to the EP throughout the PA’s execution despite having been a major driver behind the PA’s funding. The EC noted the EP’s presence in ‘political’, high-level meetings, but an under-representation of EP delegates in the more ‘technical’, implementation meetings, even if several direct encounters were held with several Thematic Partnerships.

It must be noted that the EP took action to communicate to urban stakeholders its role in the PA launch and organised a dedicated event at the EP. In addition, two meetings were held with the PA’s Secretariat contractor so as to introduce the EP’s views on the PA. At a later stage, the EC allowed the inclusion of an EP-funded breakfast meeting in the official programme of the 2018 edition of the EC-driven annual conference for the Urban Agenda.

Lesson learnt: Dissemination of PPPA outputs / outcomes benefits from EP involvement.

⁹⁸ <https://juliareda.eu/fossa/>

4.3.2. EC role in the implementation of PPPA

EP interview feedback suggested that besides the inherent quality of a PPPA, implementation performance also reflects the importance that the EC is willing to attribute to a PPPA. To support this view, EP interviewees noted examples of PPPAs suffering from very limited progress with implementation, e.g. in the context of 'Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European child guarantee and financial support' (04037725) it reportedly took the EC two years to launch the required procurement process. For some PPPAs EP feedback suggested uncertainty as to the reasons explaining why the EC decided not to follow up on a PPPA.

Some PPPAs experience gaps in commitment / payment appropriations. At times, the EC decides to 'suspend' follow-up appropriations, arguing that results of the first year of implementation are not yet available. Apparently, this affected the PA 'Child Guarantee Scheme' (04037725). This puts the PPPAs at risk as implementation can suffer in the absence of appropriations in successive years. EP interviewees explained the EC decision with political reasons and administrative resource constraints.

It is only in 2019 that the EC clarified that, for PAs, there cannot be a gap year in commitment appropriations, i.e. when no funding was added in the second year, this automatically excludes additional funding in the third year. This is the EC's interpretation of the financial regulation, which says 'three consecutive years'. The EP's interpretation has always been that this does not mean there could not be a gap year, but that any funding cannot exceed those three years (but within those three years anything is possible, including a gap).

EP interviewees also considered the EC, on some occasions, to implement a PPPA in ways that departed substantially from the originally intended idea as proposed by a MEP.

Moreover, MEPs were reported to struggle to relate an output / outcome with a specific PPPA. EP interviewees suggested that in the context of the presentation of the output / outcome there is often no mention of the MEP behind the original proposal for a PPPA (relating outputs / outcomes with MEPs is likely to motivate MEPs to follow up). The difficulty of identifying outcomes was explained by the fact that many PPPAs don't trigger 'stand-alone' legislation, but rather lead to more minor adjustments / finetuning of existing legislation or policy / allocation of additional funding, and this does not necessarily involve the EP.

Finally, EP interviewees commented on the EC's role in terms of reporting on progress with the PPPAs. Feedback suggested that the reporting was lacking detail. Moreover, MEPs struggled to find information on PPPAs implemented earlier in the period 2014-2019, or before this period, and the absence of a database on PPPAs was noted. In his answer to a parliamentary question on 19 June 2017, the Commissioner for Budget stated: "The European Commission does not keep records of the follow-up of the pilot projects and preparatory actions and can therefore not provide statistics on how many of them have become permanent programmes or initiatives or been incorporated into existing programmes."⁹⁹ EP feedback suggested that the EC was planning to modify its approach to reporting on the PPPAs. In reply to EP requests for further details on the follow-up of PPPAs, the EC has started providing more detailed information as to how and why a follow-up to a PPPA is / is not considered in the Working Documents (initially since the Working Document IV accompanying the draft budget 2019 and more systematically since the Working Document IV accompanying the draft budget 2020). In the view of the EC there were concerns over duplication between the Interim Report and the Draft Budget Working Document IV, and the limited time between the issuing of the two documents. However, in response to EP insistence on maintaining the Interim Reports the EC decided to provide the Interim

⁹⁹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2017-003041-ASW_EN.html

Reports in a condensed version, i.e. a table format with less text, describing only the main steps in implementation and the timeline (e.g. 'call for tender second to be launched in quarter 2020'). At this stage it is not clear how the EC will report on PPPAs in the future.

Text box 7: Preparatory Action: Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European child guarantee and financial support

This PA aims to combat child poverty, focusing on five areas (access to free health care, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition). Areas of activity include: (1) selecting comparative measurable criteria to assign funds in accordance with the Investing in Children EC's recommendation; (2) assessing existing national and communitarian interventions tackling multidimensional aspects of child poverty and mapping best practices; (3) delineating the typology of programmes to be funded; (4) establishing financial capacities of the fund; (5) and governance mechanisms including monitoring and evaluation.

In 2017, the EC started to implement the PA as a study on the Child Guarantee Scheme, accompanied by workshops and conferences.

EP interview feedback suggested that the EC's approach to implementation deviated from the original plan of the MEPs behind the initiative, specifically noting frustrations over the conducting of feasibility studies over several years instead of piloting the initiative in more practical terms.

Lesson learnt: Allow for EP role in implementation of PPPA to ensure that PPPA is implemented in line with original objectives.

Text box 8: Pilot Project: Independent on-road real-driving emissions (RDE) testing to ensure broad information and transparency for better market surveillance

The main purpose of the PP is to finance independent Real Driving Emissions (RDE) tests performed by third parties (i.e. neither the manufacturer nor the type-approval granting authorities) under the rules for in-service conformity checks described in the 4th Real-Driving Emissions package (the so-called "RDE4 act"). These tests can be complemented with WLTP (Worldwide Light-duty Test Procedure) tests.

The handling of the PP comes on top of DG GROW's regular work, with no internal help to handle the contract. The PP adds up to an already overloaded work schedule and therefore the launch of the contract was delayed significantly. In order to overcome this obstacle, DG GROW believes specific resources should be made available in-house to handle the additional workload brought in by the PP.

Lesson learnt: Allow for adequate resources in EC line DG to ensure timely implementation of PPPAs.

4.3.3. Follow-up in the form of legislative or other action

EP interviewees questioned the definition of success of a PPPA exclusively in terms of follow-up with a legislative action. EP feedback suggested that the absence of any follow-up could also be a valid outcome for various reasons, e.g. because the PPPA had already contributed to important lessons learnt. Some PPPAs might be designed from the outset to only last for one year, e.g. PPPAs aiming to establish a network or a civil society organisation or to prepare a study. In this context, EP interviewees emphasised the 'experimental' nature of the PPPAs. Moreover, the absence of any follow-up could also

be considered a success in terms of having validated that there is no need for follow-up; a PPPA can thus contribute to avoiding 'wasting' efforts in terms of more substantial follow-up actions.

However, DG BUDG considered the identification of a legislative gap to be the core of a successful PPPA. In the past, the question on legislative follow-up in the EC Working Document on the draft budget only allowed for the answers 'Yes' or 'No'; in recent years, the content-DGs have been encouraged to be more explicit, providing more detail on the intended follow up, including follow-up with changes in policy, programming, funding etc.

Text box 9: Preparatory Action: Governance and quality of software code — Auditing of free and open-source software

The PA did not lead to new legislation, but this was not the intention. Rather, it was to develop a sustainable institutional approach to addressing free and open-source software (FOSS) vulnerabilities. At the end of the PA, the authors wrote to the EC asking it to continue the action (or something similar) to address future exploitations. Commissioner Gabriel replied to them indicating that the EC considered the PA a success and stating that *'the European Commission Services will evaluate the feasibility of different follow-up paths to make sure this action will continue bringing value in the future'*.¹⁰⁰ DG DIGIT is currently reflecting on how to repeat this type of action in future.

The EC is also looking into speeding up the process for getting permission to share intellectual property in cases where Commission staff find bugs in FOSS and wish to contribute fixes to the software. At present, this is difficult because getting permission is very slow, and in practice it is rarely done. This is important because the EC and other EU institutions make heavy use of FOSS (e.g. Drupal¹⁰¹ to run websites) and it is felt that they should be contributing to the maintenance and improvement of the software.

The main outcomes of the PPPA were:

They found a way of running bug-bounties within EU procurement rules and both parties confirm that this was the result of dialogue between DG DIGIT and the MEP. The approach involved contracting three intermediaries to run bug bounties involving vetted hackers;

Several hundred vulnerabilities were identified and fixed in 15 software applications, benefiting not only EU institutions, but all users worldwide.¹⁰² DG DIGIT reports that some of these vulnerabilities had existed for many years.

The action included the biggest ever hackathon¹⁰³ organised by a public institution;

The EC received a lot of positive feedback from the tech press, which is not normally the case, and from EU institutions.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can make an important contribution to sustainable institutional approaches to using IT resources.

¹⁰⁰ Mariya Gabriel (22/05/2019), letter to Julia Reda, Marietje Schaake, and Max Andersson, https://juliareda.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-05-22_Reply-to-MEPs-Letter-Commissioner-Gabriel.pdf

¹⁰¹ Drupal is a widely used open-source content management system. See <https://www.drupal.org/home>

¹⁰² These are listed at <https://juliareda.eu/2018/12/eu-fossa-bug-bounties/>

¹⁰³ Wikipedia provides the following definition of 'hackathon': 'A hackathon (also known as a hack day, hackfest or codefest; a portmanteau of hacking marathon) is a design sprint-like event; often, in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including graphic designers, interface designers, project managers, domain experts, and others collaborate intensively on software projects.' <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hackathon>.

Text box 10: Preparatory Action: Subtitling European cultural television content throughout Europe

No new legislation was envisaged. The activity is being continued under the existing Media Programme from 2019 onwards.

There has been no 'scientific evaluation', as indicated in the PA description and this is apparently not envisaged by DG CNECT, which points to analysis of audience statistics undertaken by the two grantees. While both grantees collect extensive audience statistics, one points out that it is not possible to make inferences from this data about changes in its audience's perceptions about a 'new European cultural narrative'. This is important in view of the experimental nature of the action. It is suggested that this could be done to some extent by analysing the discussion threads under each documentary. However, the focus has been on expanding the audience, not on interpreting sentiment towards the EU or analysing perceptions of a new European cultural narrative. Indeed, this does not seem to have been a requirement of the grant. The other grantee has undertaken a qualitative survey focusing on new language audiences and the feedback was very positive, although it is not known if the survey addressed the issues of a new European cultural narrative and European integration.

One aim of the PA was to test new business models for broadcasters. However, there seems to have been **no analysis of the results of the different approaches used by the two grantees**. One of the grantees expressed an interest in this type of analysis.

A general aim of the PA was to provide information to support future policy decisions. Although PA results have been disseminated, it is **not known if or how the results of the PA or the preceding PP have influenced policy**. However, one grantee notes that there is a lot of discussion around the need for a European platform to broadcast European content (e.g. scientific and historical). The same grantee notes that it is in touch with MEPs to promote the continuation of funding of this activity through the Media Programme under the new MFF.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can support policy decisions, however, there might be a need for more systematic evaluation of PPPA outcomes to facilitate this.

Text box 11: Preparatory Action: Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European child guarantee and financial support

A European Child Guarantee is expected to be introduced in the next EU budget of 2021-2027. The EP is proposing that the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) allocates EUR 5.9 billion to the Child Guarantee Scheme over the upcoming seven-year period.¹⁰⁴ Interview feedback suggested that discussions on earmarking funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds for the Child Guarantee have been ongoing for a while.

EC President Ursula Von der Leyen has declared that the Child Guarantee is among her Commission's priorities and the EC Communication on a Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions published on 14 January 2020 outlines the following: 'In 2021, the Commission will present a Child Guarantee to make sure that children have access to the services they need and are supported until they reach adulthood'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ European Parliament legislative resolution of 4 April 2019 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) (COM(2018)0382 – C8-0232/2018 – 2018/0206(COD)).

¹⁰⁵ Brussels, 14.1.2020 COM(2020) 14 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the Committee of the regions - A strong social Europe for just transitions.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can support the setting of political priorities and facilitate decision making on the allocation of funding to programmes.

Text box 12: Preparatory Action: Urban Agenda for the EU

The PA was launched to support a Secretariat for the creation of 12 different Thematic Partnerships (TPs), each composed of around 15-20 members representing various governmental levels and stakeholders. At the end, 17 TPs in total have been launched in several “waves”, addressing a wide range of social, environmental and economic issues, such as Housing, Air Quality, or Digital Transition, to name but a few.

Each TP was tasked with developing an Action Plan to identify and address key issues under three “pillars” of EU policymaking and implementation: Better Regulation, Better Funding, and Better Knowledge. Each Partnership has followed a process along five major phases: 1) stocktaking, 2) preparatory actions, 3) objectives definition, 4) implementation of the action plan and 5) evaluation of the partnership. The top three types of actions that were taken up by the Partnerships consist of guidance documents and handbooks (22%), policy recommendations (21%), and data and indicators (18%).

The initiating MEP’s office is currently following the 17 Partnerships put in motion thanks to the PPPA, and in addition introducing the Urban Agenda initiative (UAEU) to the MEPs of the 9th legislature (more than 50% of the total seats reached). The funding of a similar action (a Secretariat for the UAEU) not being possible anymore (the PA has come to its end and a similar action cannot be repeated), the MEP’s office is reflecting about potential future actions in consultation with stakeholders; they anticipate a new PPPA could be tabled in 2-3 years’ time, also bearing in mind ongoing staff changes at the relevant DG REGIO Unit (the desk officers in charge of the PPPA implementation are no longer serving there).

Overall the EC is adamant in expressing its appreciation for the support received thanks to the PPPA. The EC recognises it is challenging to promote legislation in an inter-governmental context such as the UAEU, yet it is committed to work towards a continuation of the ongoing exercise beyond 2021.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can provide important insights for policy making; Involving relevant stakeholders across the EU and disseminating outputs across the EU.

Text box 13: Pilot Project: Creation of a European coastguard function

The aim of this 18-month PP was to test the cooperation mechanism that allows for inter-agency cooperation between the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Border Control Agency (Frontex). A set of legislative proposals under the European border and coastguard package provides a joint mandate for cooperation between these agencies. The PP was the first trial for the cooperation mechanism.

The final report of the PP concludes that the results have been positive and that the cooperation does provide added value. According to the report, the benefits of sharing information between the agencies are apparent. Throughout the PP activities, the agencies developed guidelines and supporting documents to facilitate the continued implementation of joint actions.

The results of the PP were presented to representatives of the EP and relevant EC services, and to members of the respective Administrative Boards of the three Agencies, at the closing workshop organised at EMSA's premises in Lisbon on 2 June 2017.

Outcomes of the PP include:

- A practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions has been prepared, in close cooperation with the Member States and the three Agencies, which contains guidelines, recommendations and best practices for the exchange of information.
- An annual Strategic Plan on Coastguard cooperation is approved by the respective Administrative Boards of the three Agencies, setting the objectives in the aforementioned areas and integrated by each Agency in its respective work programme.
- A joint European Coast Guard event is held on an annual basis.
- A joint hearing at the European Parliament in 2020 on the outcome of the interagency cooperation was planned.

Moreover, the lessons learned were used to form the basis for a Tripartite Working Arrangement (TWA) that defines the modalities for advanced cooperation. The TWA entered into force in early 2017, and in addition, a Steering Committee and three Technical Subcommittees were established in line with the arrangement for management purposes. The focus areas of these subcommittees are the following: communication services, capacity building, risk assessment and capacity sharing.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can contribute to enhanced cooperation / coordination between relevant EU Agencies, and support the development of operational tools.

Text box 14: Pilot Project: Investing in sustainable peace and community rebuilding in the Cauca area — Colombia

The PP targeting a small-scale farming economy in the Cauca area was aimed at facilitating conflict-settlement in a region that is strongly affected by conflict and violence. A strategy allowing for the communities to exit the conflict was drafted, and it was based on a business plan to commercialise the agricultural products produced by local communities by setting up a distribution centre.

In connection with the PP, an EU delegation to Colombia in 2016 visited farming land in the municipalities where the project had been implemented (Villarrica, Caloto, and Guachene), as well as the rural market of Caloto, a trading venue that has benefited directly from the project, increasing sales of small farm products. The EU has stated that the initiative has helped strengthen local farmers' marketing processes and added value to their products (e.g. fruits, coffee, cocoa).¹⁰⁶

The EU Delegation has kept in touch with projects partners for policy dialogue, as well as beneficiaries to assess the impact of the action. A final evaluation was included in the project budget. According to written answers provided by the EC, the evaluation showed a clear impact on income generation and economic empowerment in the region.

Whilst the PP did not lead to any legislative follow up, related activities can be implemented via the Development Cooperation Instrument.

¹⁰⁶ EEAS (2016) Unión Europea visita desde hoy nuevas iniciativas de Vallenpaz y el proyecto "Cosechas de paz". Available here: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/colombia/15534/union-europea-visita-desde-hoy-nuevas-iniciativas-de-vallenpaz-y-el-proyecto-cosechas-de-paz_es

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can generate insights that support the programming of future interventions under existing funding instruments.

Text box 15: Preparatory Action: DiscoverEU: Free travel pass for Europeans turning 18

The PA offers 18-year-old European citizens regardless of their background an opportunity to take advantage of the freedom of movement and travel around Europe. Turning 18 years marks an important step to European citizenship as well as to becoming an adult, which is why the initiative is directed at Europeans of that age. On this journey, which is mainly taken by rail, young people have the chance to explore the European culture and make friends across borders. To date, four rounds of applications have been organised with almost 350,000 young people applying for the 70,000 passes that were made available.¹⁰⁷ The feedback from beneficiaries has been positive, with 85% of surveyed persons indicating that their expectations were met to a large extent.¹⁰⁸

DiscoverEU was planned to be implemented in 2020 but has been postponed until further notice due to the pandemic affecting travel globally. While the PA is not completed and is still ongoing, the European Commission has proposed to include DiscoverEU in the future Erasmus programme for 2021-2027. More specifically, DiscoverEU is included in the Commission proposal - COM(2018)367 on future Erasmus+ programme under Youth, Key Action 1 Learning Mobility.

However, taking into account the ongoing negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, and the uncertainties related to the political decision-making processes, it is not clear yet if DiscoverEU will be taken up under future Erasmus+.

Lesson learnt: PPPAs can generate substantial outputs and outcomes, motivating their inclusion as part of larger existing EU funding programmes; the latter benefit from enhanced articulation in line with newly identified needs.

4.3.4. Control and audit of PPPA

The CONT Committee has not specifically focused on PPPAs during the period 2014-2019. There are several explanatory factors. In the context of the budget discharge, the CONT Committee focuses on issues identified by the European Court of Auditors (ECA). However, during the period 2014-2019 (or before), ECA has not focused specifically on PPPA. The absence of any specific control / audit activity by the CONT Committee / ECA is also explained by the comparatively limited budget of the individual PPPAs. Finally, EP feedback suggested that the CONT Committee largely relies on the BUDG Committee when it comes to the PPPA.

¹⁰⁷ European Commission: DiscoverEU factsheet. Available here: https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/discovereu_factsheet.pdf

¹⁰⁸ European Youth Portal, DiscoverEU Communication and promotion materials: #DiscoverEU Explore More factsheet. Available here: https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/discovereu_factsheet_final.pdf

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This final section presents a series of recommendations to the EP and EC. Recommendations were drafted in the spirit of providing first inspiration for further enhancing the use 'of PPPAs as a strategic political tool for the EP' (Terms of Reference). In this context it is worth noting possible room for the EP to develop its 'legislative initiative'.¹⁰⁹

The case studies and interview feedback have shown that PPPAs can lead to important outcomes in terms of triggering new or fine-tuning existing legislation or policy. PPPAs can also enhance the design of funding programmes and, more generally, generate important lessons learnt. PPPAs have thus proven their worth in the spirit of the Financial Regulation ('to test the feasibility of an action and its usefulness' / 'to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions'). However, to date there is no systematic data to assess the extent to which the tool of the PPPAs has actually been effective. This study has identified seven serious constraints, undermining the potential effectiveness of the PPPAs:

- The setting of priorities for PPPAs is not clear;
- MEPs often lack sufficient capacities for preparing PPPAs, and too many PPPA proposals are affected by quality constraints and are 'C'- or 'D'-categorised by the EC in the pre-assessment;
- PPPAs are being prepared and pre-assessed in the framework of a very tight time schedule;
- In the context of the preparation of the PPPAs, there is no systematic approach to consultations between MEPs and relevant EC line DGs (DG BUDG dis-encourages consultations with line DGs prior to the preassessment);
- There appear to be inconsistencies in the way that different EC line DGs approach the pre-assessment of PPPAs;
- The large number of PPPA proposals implies a significant administrative burden on the EP and EC, and quantitative data confirms that the more proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the combined percentage of 'A'- and 'B'-categorised proposals;
- There is no systematic and efficient approach to data handling, both on the pre-assessments of PPPAs and the subsequently adopted PPPAs; as noted above there is no systematic stock-taking of PPPA outputs and outcomes.

The following recommendations present a first attempt to address these points. However, this can only serve as preliminary inspiration for future efforts in terms of re-designing the use of the PPPAs. Indeed, it is proposed that the EP (BUDG Secretariat) and EC (DG BUDG) engage in a structured dialogue to discuss the recommendations and consider their feasibility. It is beyond the scope of this assignment to propose detailed recommendations for future operational arrangements on the PPPAs. This requires a systematic and participatory effort by the institutions (and a generous time schedule), well worth the effort considering the substantial resources at stake.

¹⁰⁹ Ursula von der Leyen (2019) A Union that strives for more, My agenda for Europe, Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf

5.1. SETTING PRIORITIES

Section 2.1.3 of the introduction to this study found that there is limited guidance as to the policy priorities that PPPAs should focus on. Whilst the EP's annual Working Documents on the PPPAs accept the notion of priorities, these are phrased in rather general terms. For example, the Working Document for 2019 and 2020 specifies: 'priority will be given to PP-PAs that aim at improving competitiveness, innovation and research, internal and external security, as well as boosting the effectiveness and quality of development aid and neighbourhood policies'.¹¹⁰ In the view of the authors of this study, setting priorities is a useful approach in terms of focusing limited resources on areas where maximum impact is desirable. However, if the annual Working Documents aim to set priorities, it is not clear how this is being achieved with the current approach to phrasing the priorities. Interview feedback also suggested that the final selections of PPPAs maintained in the context of the 'compromise' package on the budget often failed to reflect a clear set of (EP) priorities. It is therefore recommended that the authors of the annual Working Documents engage in a reflection on more specific priorities (this could be specific thematic priorities and / or transversal priorities such as climate change, innovation, gender etc.). This should include a participatory process to establish consensus on priorities. When it comes to tabling amendments for PPPAs and the preparation of the compromise package, there should be a clear alignment between the selected PPPAs and the priorities. This is of course a time-consuming process and further below we recommend that the EP allows for more time for the preparation of PPPAs (section 5.3) or introduces limits as to the number of PPPAs (section 5.6).

5.2. DEVELOPING CAPACITIES

Interview feedback and the quantitative assessment clearly pointed to capacity constraints amongst MEPs involved in preparing PPPAs, noting, inter alia, that the 2019 EP elections saw many new MEPs elected. Discussing capacity development, EP interviewees commented very positively on the efforts of the Committee Secretariats, and in particular, the annual information session on the budgetary procedure organised by the BUDG Secretariat. It is recommended that the BUDG Secretariat considers further strengthening its efforts to develop capacities on PPPAs amongst MEPs and their Assistants and Advisors by:

- Organising more frequent information sessions during the year, for example, starting with an introductory session focusing on EP actors with limited 'budgetary' experience (e.g. new MEPs and their Assistants), and following up on this later in the year with a session targeting a more experienced audience.
- Considering placing stronger emphasis on good practices; this could involve inviting selected 'successful' PPPAs (including the relevant EC representatives and implementing partners) to present their experience at the information session.
- Finally, there is no comprehensive guidance document on the PPPAs, and the BUDG Secretariat could consider developing a manual on the preparation of PPPAs, including materials from the information session, references to relevant documentation on PPPAs etc, contact details in the Committee Secretariats and line DGs (PPPA correspondents in the line DGs or the relevant Heads of Unit).

¹¹⁰ EP (2019) Committee on Budgets, 28 February 2019, Working Document on Pilot projects and Preparatory actions in budget 2019 and 2020.

Similarly, some Committee Secretariats already provide substantial advice on PPPAs, and other Secretariats might integrate the following elements in their support for MEPs:

- the process of preparing the PPPAs and the corresponding adoption of budget amendments;
- lists of existing PPPAs to ensure that MEPs don't prepare proposals for interventions that already exist and do not forget to request additional commitment appropriations for ongoing PPPAs, where relevant;
- advice on identifying relevant budget lines under which the PPPAs can be adopted as budgetary amendments;
- advice on the adequate volume of budget allocations for individual PPPAs;
- EC contact details for discussing PPPA proposals (prior to their submission for pre-assessment by the EC);
- examples of successful PPPAs to illustrate good practices in terms of preparing PPPAs.

5.3. ALLOWING FOR MORE TIME

Interview feedback clearly pointed to time constraints affecting the process of preparing PPPAs. All stages of the preparation appear to be affected by very tight deadlines, not allowing for sufficient reflection on the objectives and design of PPPAs, the corresponding consultations between MEPs and relevant EC line DGs, revisions of PPPA design to address the pre-assessment findings by the EC, and the development of amendments and the compromise package in alignment with EP priorities.

We therefore recommend allowing for more time for the preparation of PPPAs by starting the preparation of PPPAs at an earlier stage or moving to a multi-annual approach to PPPAs, only introducing new PPPAs every two or three years, e.g. with preparations and pre-assessments in the first year, improvements and selection in the second year, unless agreement can be found on limiting the number of PPPAs to be prepared / submitted for pre-assessment (see recommendation 5.6 below). Should the EP decide to introduce limits on the number of PPPAs, it might still be worth exploring changes to the time schedule. For example, preparing PPPA proposals during mid-November to mid-March. This would allow for a minimum of one month of dialogue between Committee Secretariats and proponents to adjust proposals and still allow factoring in the EC interim report of February.

5.4. PREPARATORY CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE EP AND EC

Section 4.2.4 on the preparatory consultations between MEPs and EC line DGs found that there was no systematic approach on this aspect of the preparation of PPPAs. The Committee Secretariats' advice to engage in consultations as early as possible is not followed systematically. It is recommended that PPPA 'promoters' systematically engage in preparatory consultations with the relevant line DGs and that DG BUDG supports this process (in the context of allowing more time for the preparation of PPPAs and / or limitations to the numbers of PPPAs – see 5.6). This could be considered as a condition for submission of the PPPAs for formal pre-assessment. These consultations should always involve the line DG's 'PPPA correspondent' to ensure that consultations cover not only the substance of the PPPA but also technical and legal considerations (compliance with Article 58 of the Financial Regulation). It is recognised that the preparatory consultations also present an additional workload for the EC, however, systematic preparatory consultations might help discarding unsuitable PPPAs at an early stage (saving resources in the context of the formal pre-assessment). Moreover, the recommendation on allowing for more time for the preparation of PPPAs also implies more time for organising the preparatory

consultations. Finally, further below we also recommend limiting the number of PPPAs (section 5.6), and this would also relieve the burden in terms of preparatory consultations.

5.5. SYSTEMATISING THE EC APPROACH TO PRE-ASSESSMENT

The quantitative assessment found indicators of differences in the implementation of the pre-assessment between EC line DGs, and explained this with possible differences in the interpretation and application of the EC guidelines on the pre-assessment; differences in available resources; and differences in the level and quality of dialogue between the EP and individual DGs (for example to clarify and fine-tune proposals). The quantitative assessment also found that when two or more DGs were involved in the pre-assessment, the assessment was more likely to result in 'C', 'D', or 'None' (i.e. no category). This suggests that more time / resources might need to be allocated to PPPAs that cannot be specifically related to one DG.

Moreover, EP interviewees considered the pre-assessment feedback by the EC to lack detail, and MEPs often struggled to use the feedback to improve their proposals. EP interviewees also commented specifically on the 'A'-categorised PPPAs. In this case, the assessment usually provides no explanation / comment, and this presents the EP with a difficulty when a decision has to be taken on the amounts of funding to be allocated between different 'A'-categorised proposals.

We therefore recommend follow-up research on the differences in the patterns of pre-assessment categories by different DGs. This might help identifying needs for further capacity development on PPPAs in line DGs. We also recommend that more substantial comments on the comparative added value of 'A'-categorised proposals are provided. Again, whilst these recommendations imply additional efforts on the side of the EC, this might be mitigated by a lower number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment as recommended below.

Moreover, there is no formal procedure for 're-assessments', i.e. revising proposals to address feedback from the pre-assessment. The EP and EC could consider agreeing on a formal procedure focusing on 'B'-categorised proposals in July/August/September.

5.6. LIMITING THE NUMBER OF PPPA PROPOSALS

One of the main concerns raised by EP and EC interviewees was the substantial number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment. Indeed, the number of PPPAs submitted for pre-assessment doubled from approximately 150 in 2014 to 300 in 2015, with a further increase in 2016, when the number peaked at approximately 360. However, the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' category PPPAs fell from approximately 40% in 2013 and 2014, to approximately 25% in 2015. The more proposals submitted for pre-assessment in a year, the lower the combined percentage of 'A' and 'B' proposals (there might of course also be other reasons for the drop in quality). The volume of PPPA proposals places a substantial administrative burden on the EP and EC. Interviewees also noted that MEPs had limited capacities for following up on the implementation of PPPAs, and this would benefit from a reduced number of PPPAs.

This study has identified different existing practices on limiting the number of PPPAs. Some Committees organise a vote on the selection of PPPAs to be submitted for pre-assessment; one Committee limits the number of proposals for PPPAs to two per Group. EP interviewees noted further ideas with a view to limiting the number of proposals:

- Limit the number of PPPA proposals by requiring preparatory work: Proposals for PPPA should be made conditional on a linkage with a previously prepared (Own-initiative) report. This would ensure that the PPPA is based on somewhat more solid ground work / needs assessment.

- Introduce a maximum amount for PPPA proposals per Committee; however, this would possibly require identifying relevant criteria other than relating the amount to the size of the Committee.
- Introduce a two-stage proposal process with a preparatory selection process in the Committee to reduce the number of proposals to a certain numerical limit; and then sending only the 'pre-selected' proposals for pre-assessment by the EC.

We recommend that the different EP Committees consider these practices and ideas to establish a reasonable limit on the number of PPPAs to be developed and then submitted for pre-assessment. The BUDG Secretariat and / or the Budget Rapporteur could organise a structured process to establish a 'harmonised' and consensus-based approach to limiting the number of PPPAs.

5.7. ENHANCING DATA HANDLING

The quantitative assessment identified a series of serious weaknesses with regard to the handling of data on PPPAs (including the pre-assessment) and found that the system for proposing and monitoring PPPAs is essentially using a 'paper logic', where much information is entered manually, including copying between documents. This is unnecessarily resource intensive and prone to errors, and significantly undermines strategic learning and decision-making. It would be highly desirable to move away from the use of multiple standalone documents. It would be more reliable and less labour intensive to manage PPPAs through a multi-user, server-based database, where PPPAs are assigned a unique ID as soon as they are entered into the system.¹¹¹ The EC and EP should have access to this database. This could then be used to (among other things):

- Submit proposals, including description of objectives, budget, expected duration, supporting documentation, etc.;
- Contact persons at the EP and the EC to enable dialogue about specific PPPAs;
- Provide pre-assessment feedback and categories for every year that a PPPA is proposed;
- Communicate between PPPA authors and the EC to fine tune proposals and provide clarifications;
- Provide regular progress reports on each PPPA to inform decision making;
- Record pre-assessment and funding information for each PPPA in one place, rather than in different documents or separate systems;
- For each PPPA record funds committed and utilised;
- Record information about outputs and outcomes;
- Record information about why PPPAs have been continued or discontinued (e.g. a drop-down list of options enabling subsequent quick analysis);
- Provide MEPs and other actors with a summary of all the PPPAs they have proposed or are associated with, and the status of those PPPAs, including during implementation;

¹¹¹ Among other things, this type of approach would enable the implementation of data validation rules that would ensure that manually entered information is consistent and meets requirements.

- Send automatic alerts to PPPA authors e.g.: to remind them of the need to submit amendments for ongoing PPPAs;
- Automatically generate different types of analyses and reports for different users.

ANNEX 1 – MAIN REFERENCES

- Benedetto, G. (2019) 'The European Parliament as budgetary extractor since the Lisbon Treaty' in *Journal of European Integration*, 329-345
- European Commission (2020) Commission interim report on the implementation of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions 2020
- European Commission (2019) 2020 budget – PPPA assessments round I; EC (2019) 2020 budget – PPPA assessments round I
- European Commission (2019) Draft General Budget of the European Commission for the financial year 2020, Working Document Part IV Pilot projects and preparatory actions
- European Commission (2019) Commission interim report on the implementation of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions 2019
- European Commission (2018) Draft General Budget of the European Commission for the financial year 2019, Working Document Part IV Pilot projects and preparatory actions
- European Commission (2018) Commission interim report on the implementation of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions 2018
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- European Parliament (2014) PPPA compromise package as adopted by Plenary
- European Parliament (2014) Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions 2009-2013
- European Parliament (2009) Factual study on the follow-up of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, p. 3
- Héritier, A., Meissner, K., Moury, C. and Scholler, M. (2019) 'The European Parliament in the Budgetary Process' in European Parliament Ascendant, p. 81-110
- von der Leyen, U. (2019) A Union that strives for more, My agenda for Europe, Political guidelines for the next European Commission

ANNEX 2 – INTERVIEWS

In the course of the study, interviews were conducted with the following:

- European Commission DG Budget (DG A2, Unit A1 - Budgetary procedures and execution, relations with the budget committees).
- European Parliament Secretariat representatives for the Committees AFET, DEVE, INTA, BUDG, CONT, ECON, EMPL, ENVI, ITRE, IMCO, TRAN, AGRI, LIBE, FEMM, PETI.¹¹²
- Policy advisors for the Groups 'European People's Party', 'Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats', 'Renew Europe', 'Greens-European Free Alliance', 'European United Left – Nordic Green Left'.
- In the context of the case studies interviews were conducted with DG CNECT, DG DIGIT and DG REGIO, whilst DG DEVCO, DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG GROW and DG MARE provided written feedback. Moreover, the case studies were supported by interviews with current and former MEPs and their Assistants / Political Advisers and civil society organisations and other actors involved in the implementation of the PPPAs.

¹¹² All Committee Secretariats were contacted for interviews.

ANNEX 3 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were used for interviews with European Parliament actors.

Preparation of PPPAs

- What is your (the Secretariat's) role in the context of the preparation of the PPPAs?
- To what extent do MEPs communicate with the European Commission on planned PPPAs? (before, during assessment)
- What are the main bottlenecks / obstacles encountered during the process of preparing the PPPAs? (within the European Parliament, between the European Parliament and the European Commission)
- What can be done to address any identified obstacles?

Implementation of PPPA

- What is your role in the context of the implementation of the PPPAs?
- To what extent do MEPs take an interest in the PPPAs during their implementation?
- What are the main challenges facing PPPAs in the course of their implementation?
- What can be done to address any identified obstacles?

Follow-up on completed PPPA

- What is your role in the context of the follow-up on completed PPPAs?
- To what extent do MEPs take an interest in completed PPPAs?
- Are there any obstacles in terms of following up on completed PPPAs?
- What can be done to address any identified obstacles?

ANNEX 4 – CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

The following format was used for the case studies.

Description of the PPPA

- Please describe the PPPA in five to ten lines, noting the title, main objective, main outcomes, stakeholders, implementation period and budget

Preparation of the PPPA

- How did the idea / concept behind the proposed PPPA arise in the first place?
- How did you go about preparing the proposal for the PPPA?
- To what extent did the European Parliament administration (Committee Secretariat or other) support you with the preparation of the PPPA? Was this helpful and in what way?
- Did you engage with the European Commission in the context of preparing the PPPA? Was this helpful and in what way?
- What were the main bottlenecks / obstacles encountered during the process of preparing the PPPA? (within the European Parliament, between the European Parliament and the European Commission)
- What was/can be done to address any identified obstacles?

Implementation of the PPPA

- What was your role in the context of the implementation of the PPPA?
- What were the main challenges facing the PPPA in the course of implementation?
- What was/can be done to address any identified obstacles?

Follow-up on the completed PPPA

- What was your role in the context of the follow-up on the (completed) PPPA?
- How did the PPPA lead to legislative follow up?
- Were there any obstacles in terms of following up on the (completed) PPPA?
- What was/can be done to address any identified obstacles?

ANNEX 5 – CASE STUDY SELECTION

The following approach was used to select the case studies.

Approach to case selection:

- (1) Focus the selection on more recent PPPAs (2018-2020 budgets) to ensure that EC stakeholders can be easily identified, and that there is good recent knowledge on the preparation and implementation of the PPPAs;
- (2) Identify cases where EC draft budgets suggest (the possibility of) follow-up with a legislative proposal (indicating the sustainability of the PPPAs);
- (3) Prioritise PPPAs with payments stretching over the years 2016-2020, and with budgets over EUR 5 million¹¹³ (indicating sustainability; avoid cases that have only started in 2019);
- (4) Ensure coverage of different budget headings (at least 1 PPPA per heading; more for heading 1a);
- (5) Ensure coverage of different EC DGs;
- (6) Ensure balance between PPs and PAs;
- (7) Prioritise PPPAs highlighted by the EP / EC during discussions with the researchers In January 2020 (e.g. DiscoverEU, Child Guarantee).

The proposed cases are shown in **bold font** in the table below.

¹¹³ For spending of over EUR 5 million, the DG BUDG feedback noted that the EC is required to report on the spending; focusing on this type of PPPA is likely to facilitate desk research. In the past, Article 18(3) RAP set this threshold for reporting. The authors were not able to identify the regulatory source for the current threshold.

Table 14: Case study selection

PPPA with EC confirming existing legislative follow up or intention / possibility of legislative follow up ¹¹⁴	Budget Heading	EC DG	Budget (payments during 2016)	Budget (payments during 2017)	Budget (payments during 2018 to 2020 in EUR million, PPPA without payment allocations in 2018 are shown in brackets)
Pilot Projects					
02 03 77 07: Pilot project — Independent on-road real-driving emissions (RDE) testing to ensure broad information and transparency for better market surveillance	1a	GROW			2.2
02 03 77 08: Pilot project — Assessing alleged differences in the quality of products sold in the single market	1a	GROW			1.8
04 03 77 26: Pilot project — A European framework for apprentice mobility: developing European citizenship and skills through youth integration in the labour market	1a	EMPL		1.5	0
06 02 77 17: Pilot project — Single European Sky (SES) airspace architecture	1a	MOVE		0.4	1.6
06 02 77 20: Pilot project — Human behaviour in connection with autonomous driving	1a	MOVE			0.5
06 02 77 22: Pilot project — OREL — European system for limiting odometer fraud: fast-track to roadworthiness in the Union	1a	MOVE			0.4
08 05 77 01: Pilot project — Research into reducing CO2 emissions in steel production	1a	RTD			(1.1)
10 02 77 03: Pilot project — Implementation of the research methodology 'Multidimensional Inequality Framework' research methodology for the European Union	1a	JRC			(1.3)
12 02 77 06: Pilot project — Horizontal Task Force on Distributed Ledger Technology and government use cases	1a	FISMA		0.4	1.7
10 02 77 04: Pilot project — Integrated techniques for the seismic strengthening and energy efficiency of existing buildings	1b	JRC			(1.3)
02 04 77 05: Pilot project — Testing retrofit technologies	2	GROW			(1.2)

¹¹⁴ The Draft Budget documents include brief descriptions of the PPPAs; this includes for each PPPA the question 'At this stage, is it envisaged to follow up this project/action with a legislative proposal?' Note that the EC responses to the question on legislative follow up appear inconsistent; to ensure more systematic answers it might be useful to introduce specific categories of answers for the concerned DG to choose from, and supported with a text box for elaborating on any intended follow-up.

PPPA with EC confirming existing legislative follow up or intention / possibility of legislative follow up ¹¹⁴	Budget Heading	EC DG	Budget (payments during 2016)	Budget (payments during 2017)	Budget (payments during 2018 to 2020 in EUR million, PPPA without payment allocations in 2018 are shown in brackets)
07 02 77 34: Pilot project — Inventory of species and habitats in the French outermost regions	2	ENV	0.5	0.4	0.7
11 06 77 12: Pilot project — Creation of a European coastguard function	2	MARE	0.4	0.4	
11 06 77 16: Pilot project — Union platform for fishery and aquaculture producer organisations	2	MARE			0.6
33 02 77 10: Pilot project — Fundamental rights review of Union data-collection instruments and programmes	3	JUST	0.4	0.4	
Preparatory Actions					
02 04 77 03: Preparatory action on Defence research	1a	GROW	0	10	75
02 04 77 07: Preparatory action — Preparing the new EU GOVSATCOM programme	1a	GROW			(10)
04 03 77 25: Preparatory action — Child Guarantee Scheme / Establishing a European child guarantee and financial support¹¹⁵	1a	EMPL			14.4
09 04 77 05: Preparatory action — Open knowledge technologies: mapping and validating knowledge	1a	CNECT	0.7	0.75	3.1
12 02 77 05: Preparatory action — Capacity building for end-users and other non- industry stakeholders in connection with Union policymaking in the area of financial services	1a	FISMA	1.5	0.75	
15 02 77 20: Preparatory action — DiscoverEU: Free travel pass for Europeans turning 18	1a	EAC			33
15 02 77 21: Preparatory action — Exchanges and mobility in sport	1a	EAC			1.6
15 04 77 18: Preparatory action — Music Moves Europe: Boosting European music diversity and talent	1a	EAC			5.6
01 02 77 01: Preparatory action — Capacity development and institution building to support the implementation of economic reforms	1b	SRSS	2	1	
13 03 77 18: Preparatory action — Cohesion policy and synergies with the research and development funds: the stairway to excellence — the way forward	1b	REGIO	0.5	1	5.5

¹¹⁵ EC reporting foresees no legislative follow up.

PPPA with EC confirming existing legislative follow up or intention / possibility of legislative follow up ¹¹⁴	Budget Heading	EC DG	Budget (payments during 2016)	Budget (payments during 2017)	Budget (payments during 2018 to 2020 in EUR million, PPPA without payment allocations in 2018 are shown in brackets)
13 03 77 19: Preparatory action — Support for growth and governance in regions whose development is lagging behind	1b	REGIO	0.5	1	5.1
13 03 77 23: Preparatory action — Urban agenda for the EU	1b	REGIO	0	1.125	3.2
18 03 77 06: Preparatory action — Enable the resettlement of refugees during emergency situations	3	HOME	0.3	0.1	
09 02 77 08: Preparatory action — Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era	3	CNECT			2.1
09 05 77 05: Preparatory action — Subtitling European cultural television content throughout Europe	3	CNECT		0.75	3.3
15 04 77 12: Preparatory action — Europe for festivals, festivals for Europe (EFFE)	3	EAC	0.175	0.175	0.5
21 02 77 18: Pilot project — Investing in sustainable peace and community rebuilding in the Cauca area — Colombia	4	DEVCO	1.2	1	1.1
21 02 77 02: Preparatory action — Business and scientific exchanges with India	4	DEVCO	1.1	0.7	
26 03 77 06: Preparatory action — Governance and quality of software code — Auditing of free and open-source software	5	DIGIT			2.5

This study focuses on Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions and aims to perform a “reality check” of what they achieved over 2014-2019 and of their use as a strategic political tool. It covers 324 PPPAs with an aggregate value of EUR 337 million to date. PPPAs can lead to triggering new or fine-tuning existing legislation or policy and generate important lessons learnt. However, there is no systematic data to assess PPPAs’ effectiveness. The study identifies a series of areas for improvement.
