

In the background of the title section, there are stylized blue and white human figures walking upwards on a set of stairs. Several yellow stars are scattered around the figures and the main title text.

IPA II CBC programmes' experience and lessons learned: Improving the management of evaluations for IPA III CBC calls

9th Regional CBC Consultative Forum

11 May 2023, Struga



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The analysis presented in this presentation derives from:

- Regular statistical data from the implemented calls under IPA II CBC, collected by CBIB+ on a regular basis
- Two reviews of the answers provided to questionnaires filled out by representatives of stakeholder institutions under the IPA II CBC programmes.

The last questionnaire was circulated among DEUs, OSs/CBC Bodies, CFCUs and JTSs on 12 September 2022. The CBIB+ project team collected 51 responses by end of November 2022.

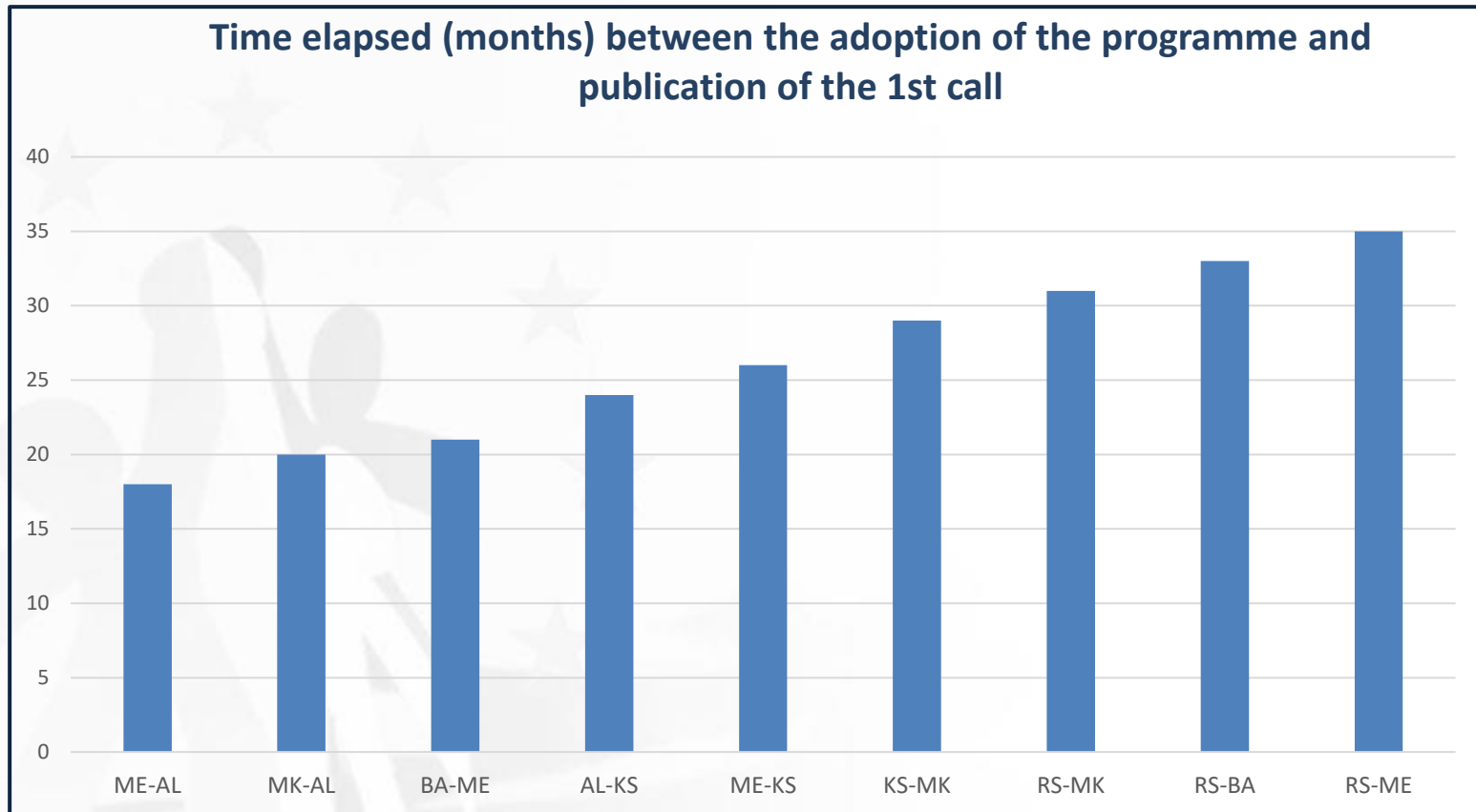


The presentation is discussing the following:

1. Launch of the 1st call for proposal
2. Launch of the 2nd and subsequent calls for proposals
3. The full cycle of calls for proposals
4. The cycle of calls for proposals
5. Contracting the grants
6. Measures that could contribute to a more efficient evaluation phase and faster start of implementation of the selected projects under a call



1. Launch of the 1st call for proposal



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1. Launch of the 1st call for proposal



Possible factors affecting the time elapsed between the publication of the Commission Implementing Decision adopting the IPA II CBC programme (December 2014 for all programmes except RS-MK) and the launch of the first call for proposals:

- Focus on the implementation of the last calls and grants under the 2007-2013 IPA CBC programmes.
- The phasing-out of the technical assistance grant contracts under IPA and simultaneously the phasing-in of the technical assistance service contract under IPA II.
- The restriction in the use of technical assistance under IPA for the management of programmes' activities only belonging to the 2007-2013 financial cycle.
- The establishment of new joint monitoring committees.
- The disputes between operating structures on the approval of the application packages and their weak coordination.
- The lengthy preparation and adoption of bilateral arrangements for the programmes implemented under indirect management.
- The endorsement of a recommended guidance application package by DG NEAR for all IPA II CBC calls for proposals.



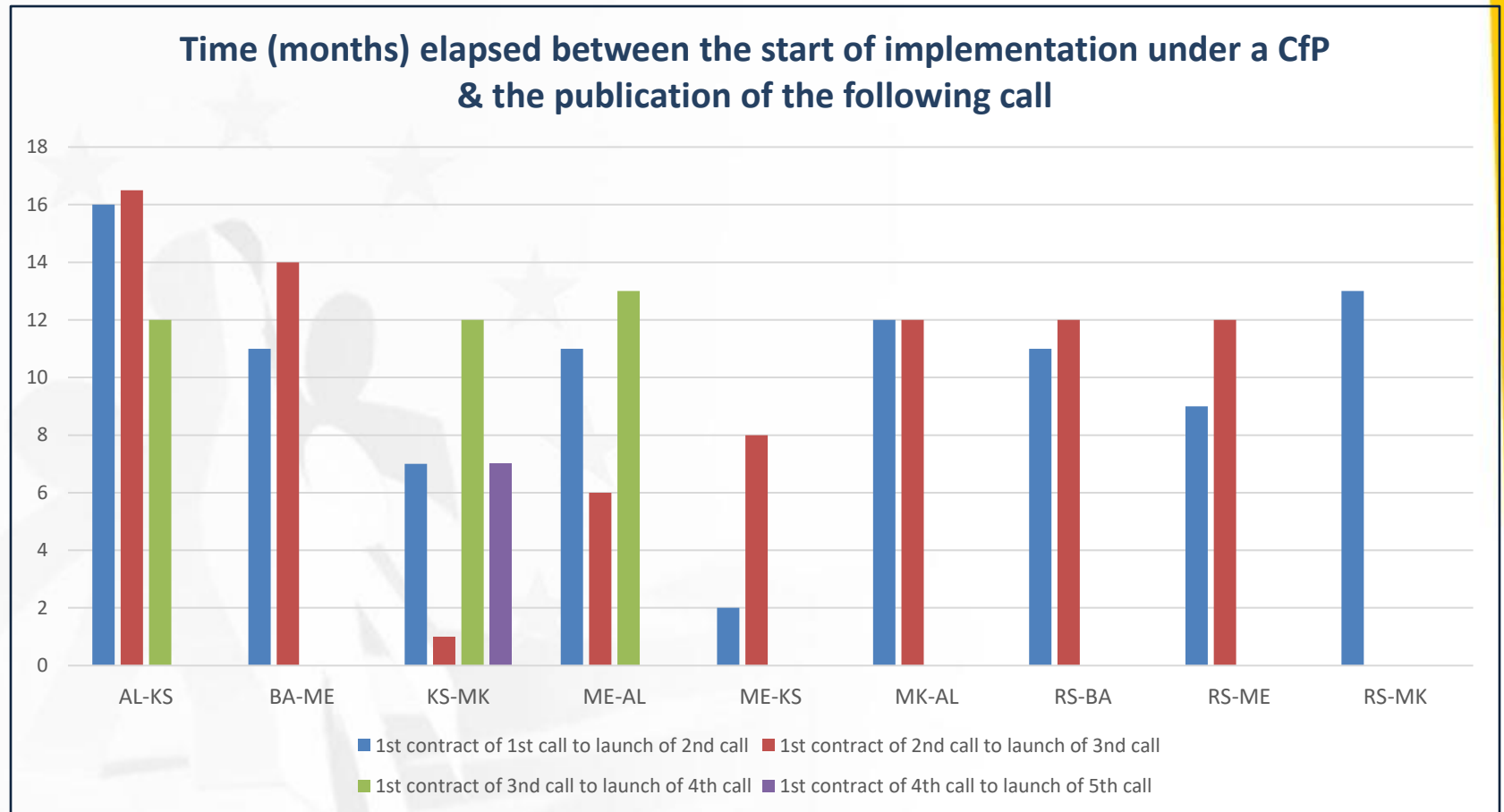
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2.Launch of the 2nd and subsequent CfPs



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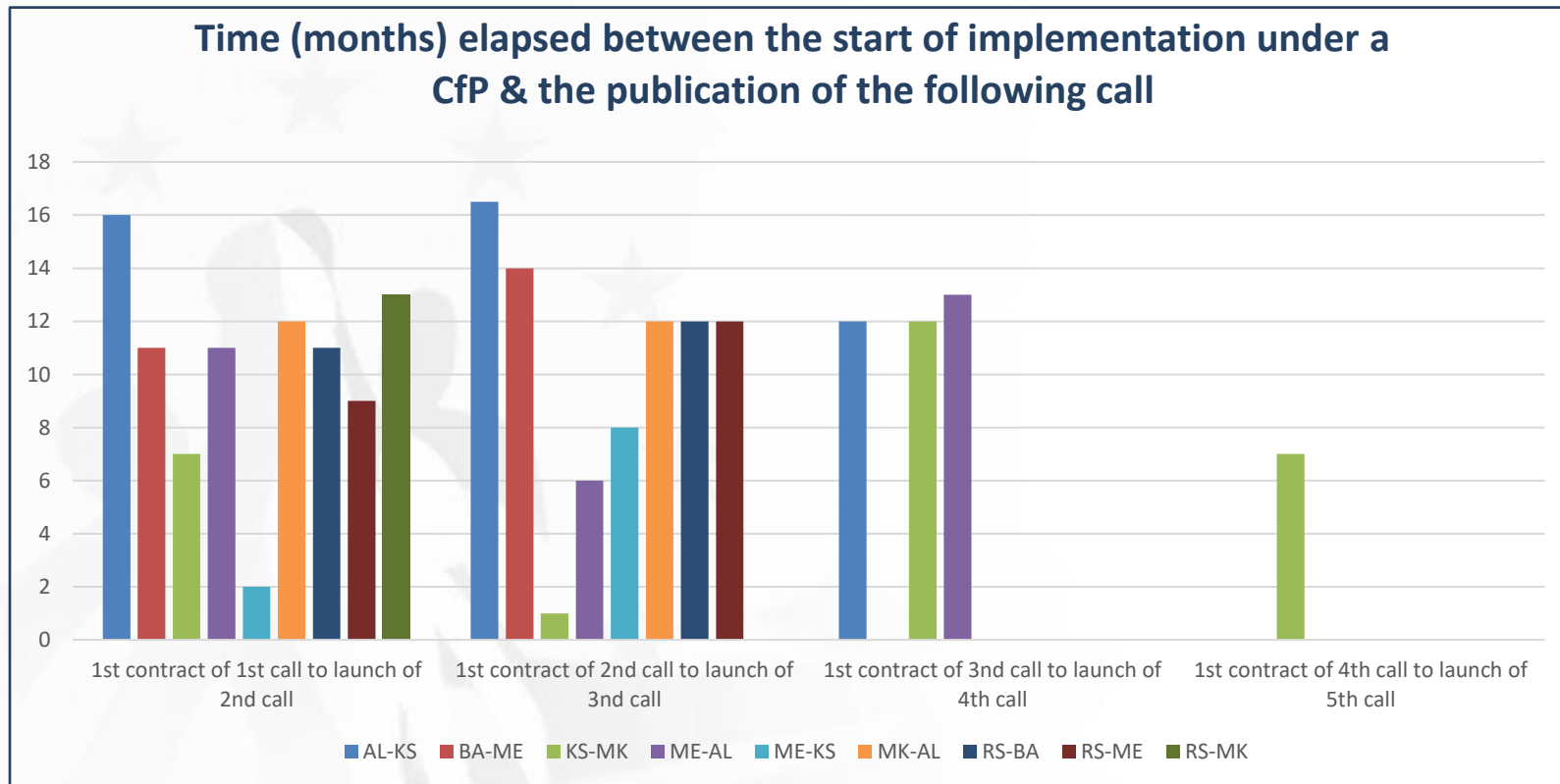
Chart 2.1 By programme



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2. Launch of the 2nd and subsequent CfPs



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Chart 2.2 By call for proposals



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2. Launch of the 2nd and subsequent CfPs

Possible causes affecting the time elapsed between the start of operations under a call for proposals and the launch of the following calls for proposals (charts 2.1 & 2.2) were as follows:

- The inconveniences of having many projects under parallel implementation from different calls in the same territory (applicable mainly for the transition between the 1st and the 2nd CfP).
- The human resources' constraints of contracting authorities.
- The human resources' constraints of management structures, particularly the JTSs (applicable mainly for the transition between the 1st and the 2nd CfP).
- Possible lack of a continuing capacity building campaign for potential grant applicants.
- The policy of having some lessons learnt and results from the projects funded under a preceding call to launch the next one.
- The late signature of financing agreements for the 2017 and 2018 action programmes.



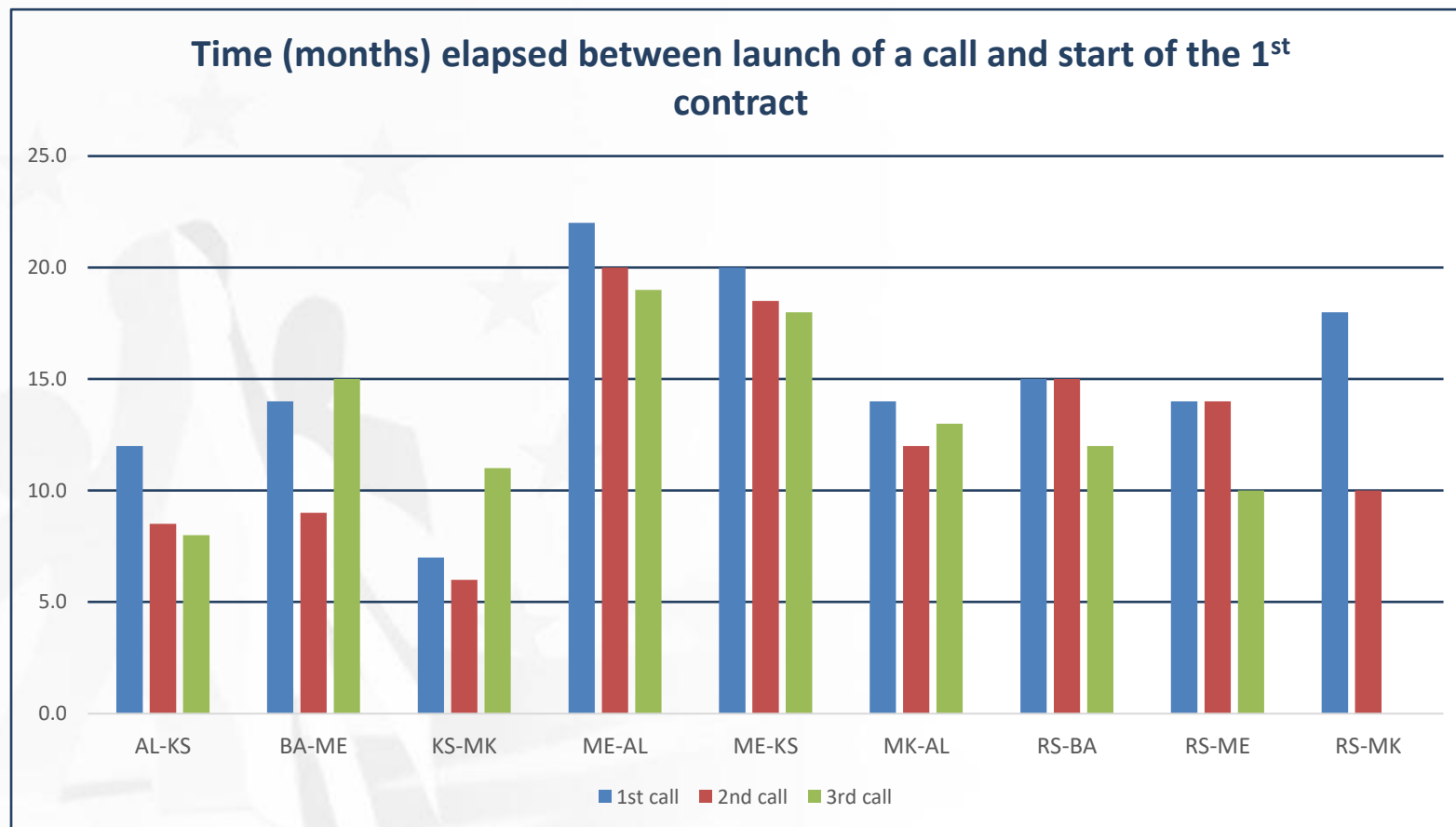
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3. The full cycle of calls for proposals



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Chart 3.1 By programme



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3.The full cycle of calls for proposals

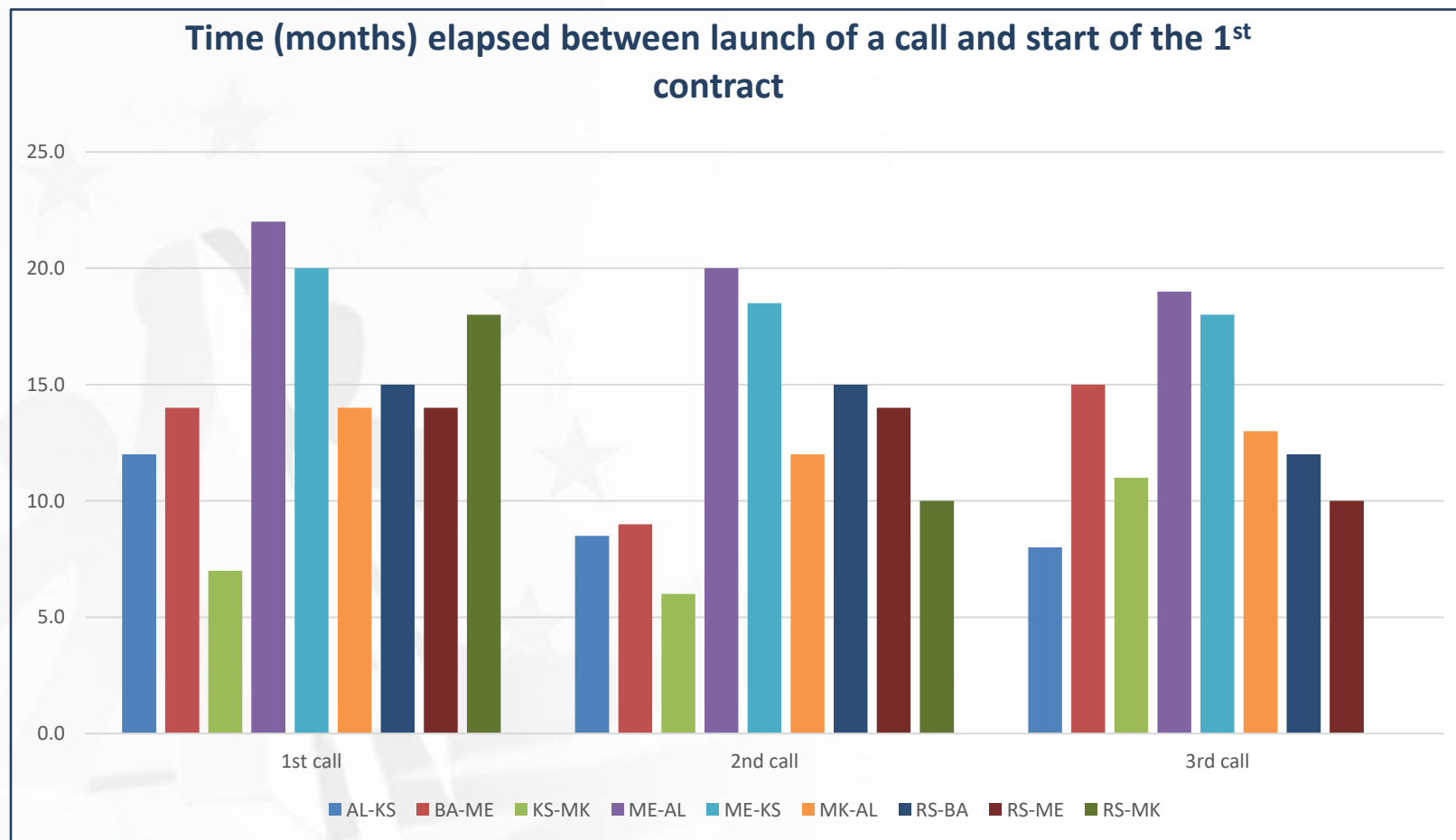


Chart 3.2 By call for proposals



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3. The full cycle of calls for proposals



Possible causes identified explaining the duration of evaluations (see charts 3.1 & 3.2 above):

- The late appointment of evaluation committees.
- The late and sometimes unsuitable recruitment of assessors.
- The rejection of evaluation reports under indirect management when the European Commission was exercising ex ante controls.
- Possible disputes within the joint monitoring committees to issue an advisory opinion on the list of selected projects.
- The circuits of approval under segregation of duties (evaluation reports, ex-ante approvals-indirect management, JMC decision, etc).
- The temporary unavailability and excessive work overload of the members of the evaluation committee.
- The lack of staff as well as the inexperienced personnel of contracting authorities under indirect management.
- The lack of timely response by beneficiaries during budget clearing.



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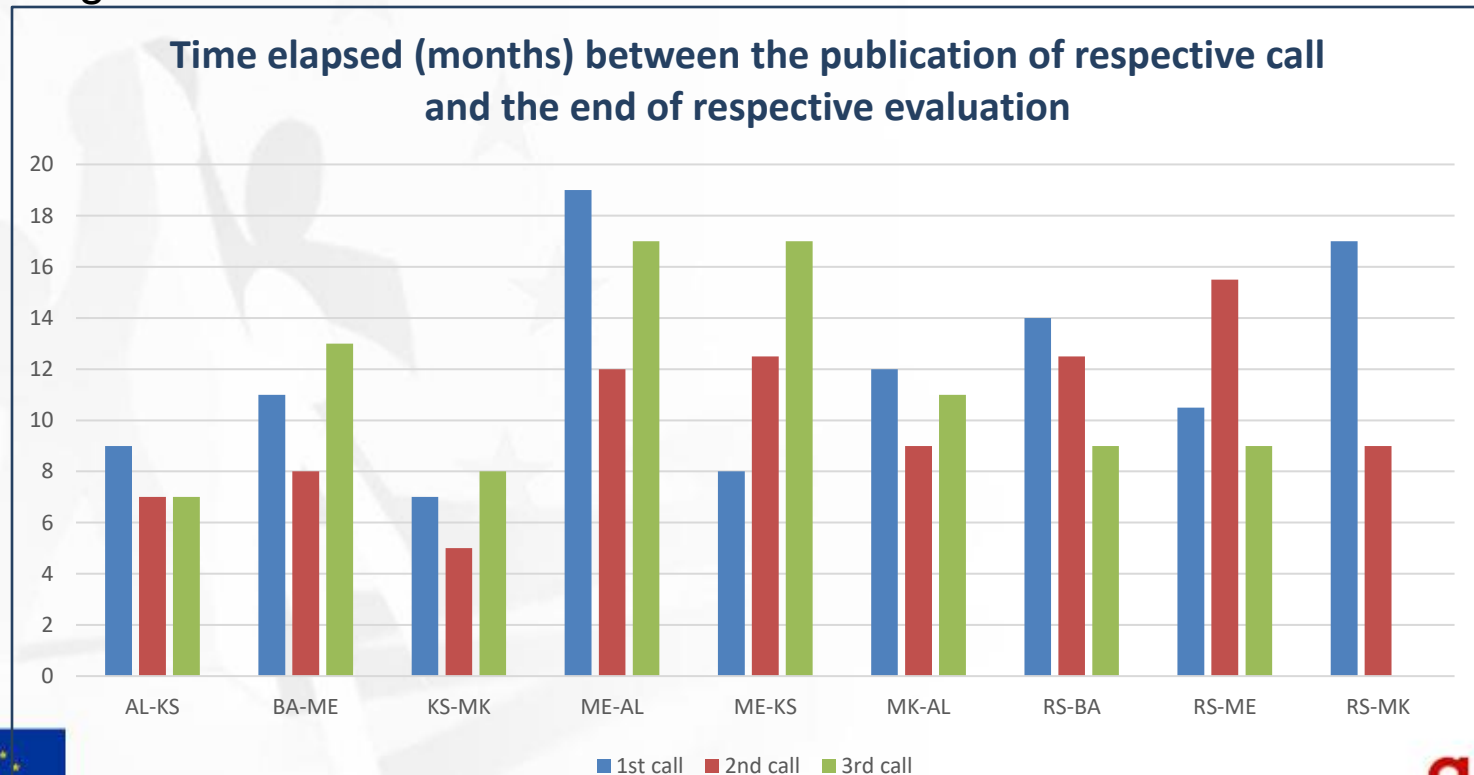
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4. The cycle of calls for proposals



In the narrow sense, we consider a cycle of a call as the time elapsed between its publication and the formal end of the evaluation process with the approval of the final evaluation report, excluding the steps leading to contracting.



4.The cycle of calls for proposals

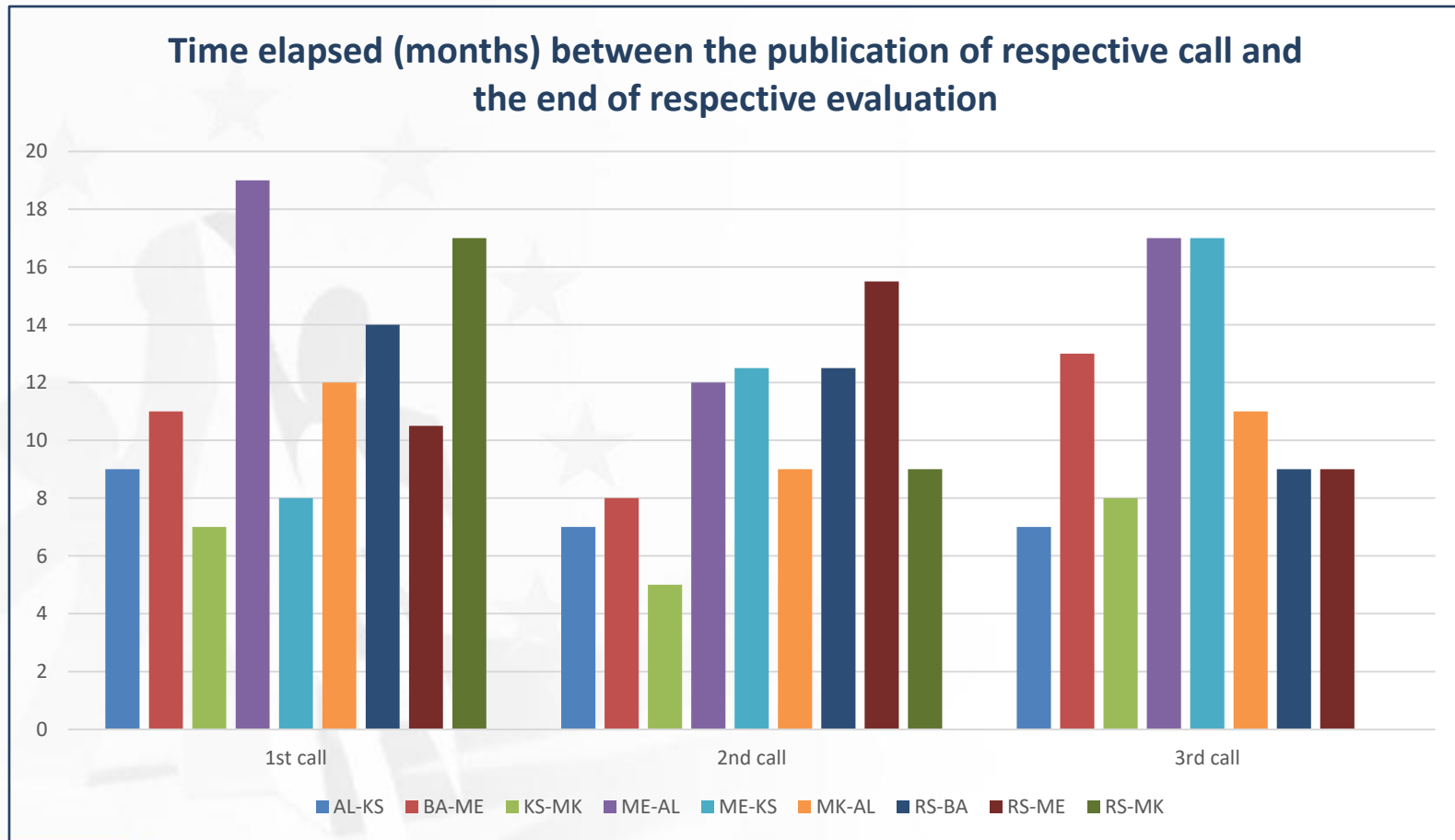


Chart 4.2 By call for proposals



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5. Contracting the grants



Following the approval of the final evaluation report, contracting authorities must carry out the contracting of grants involving:

- budget clearing and
- agreement on special conditions clauses (e.g.: the expenditure verification, and the start date of the period of implementation of the operation).

Due to different reasons of convenience for the signatories, there could be a delay between the date of signature of the grant contract and the exact date of start of the period of implementation. The charts below (5.1 & 5.2) show the time elapsed in contracting.



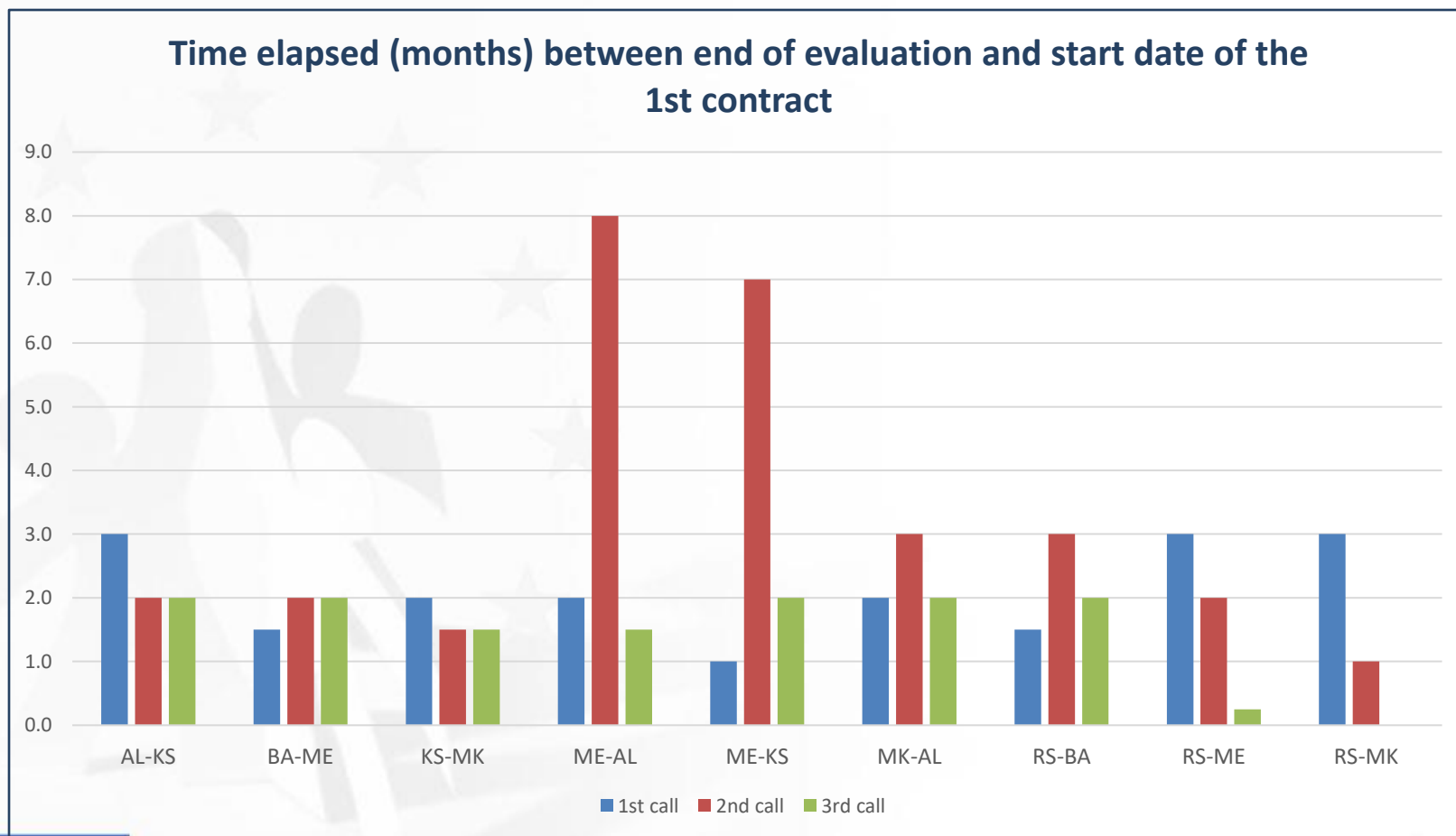
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5. Contracting the grants



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Chart 5.1 By programme



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5. Contracting the grants

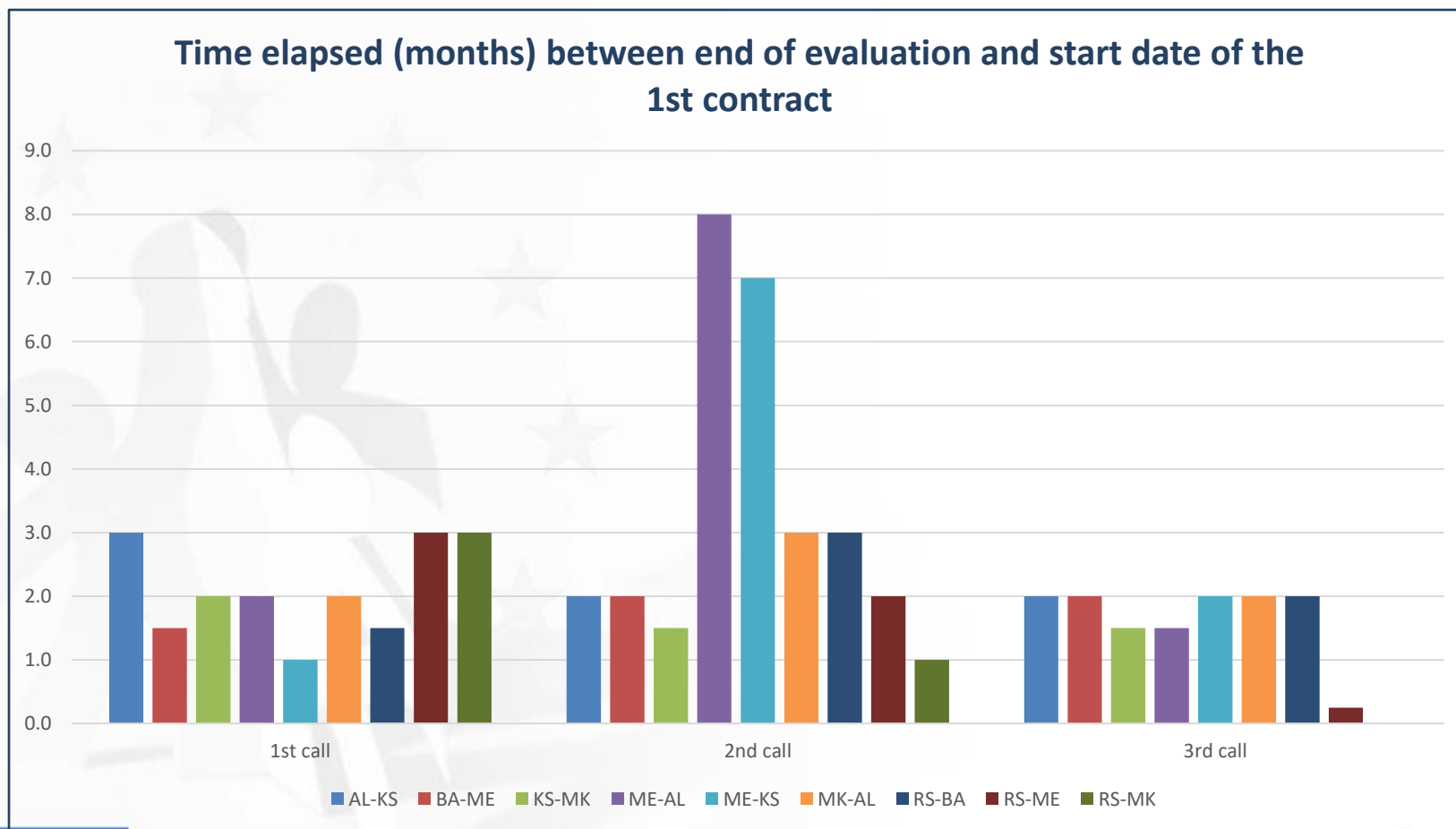


Chart 5.2 By call for proposals



5. Contracting the grants



Possible main causes identified to substantiate the lapses associated to grant contracting (see charts 5.1 & 5.2):

- The lack of coordination and cooperation between the corresponding management structures of the IPA II Beneficiaries.
- The lack of staff as well as the inexperienced personnel of contracting authorities under indirect management.
- The lack of timely response by beneficiaries during budget clearing.

The long delays for contracting of the second call under the programmes ME-AL and ME-KS can be also explained by the fact that the approval of the final reports of the evaluation took place in March and February 2020 respectively, that is, at the very beginning of the most restrictive Covid-19 quarantine measures.



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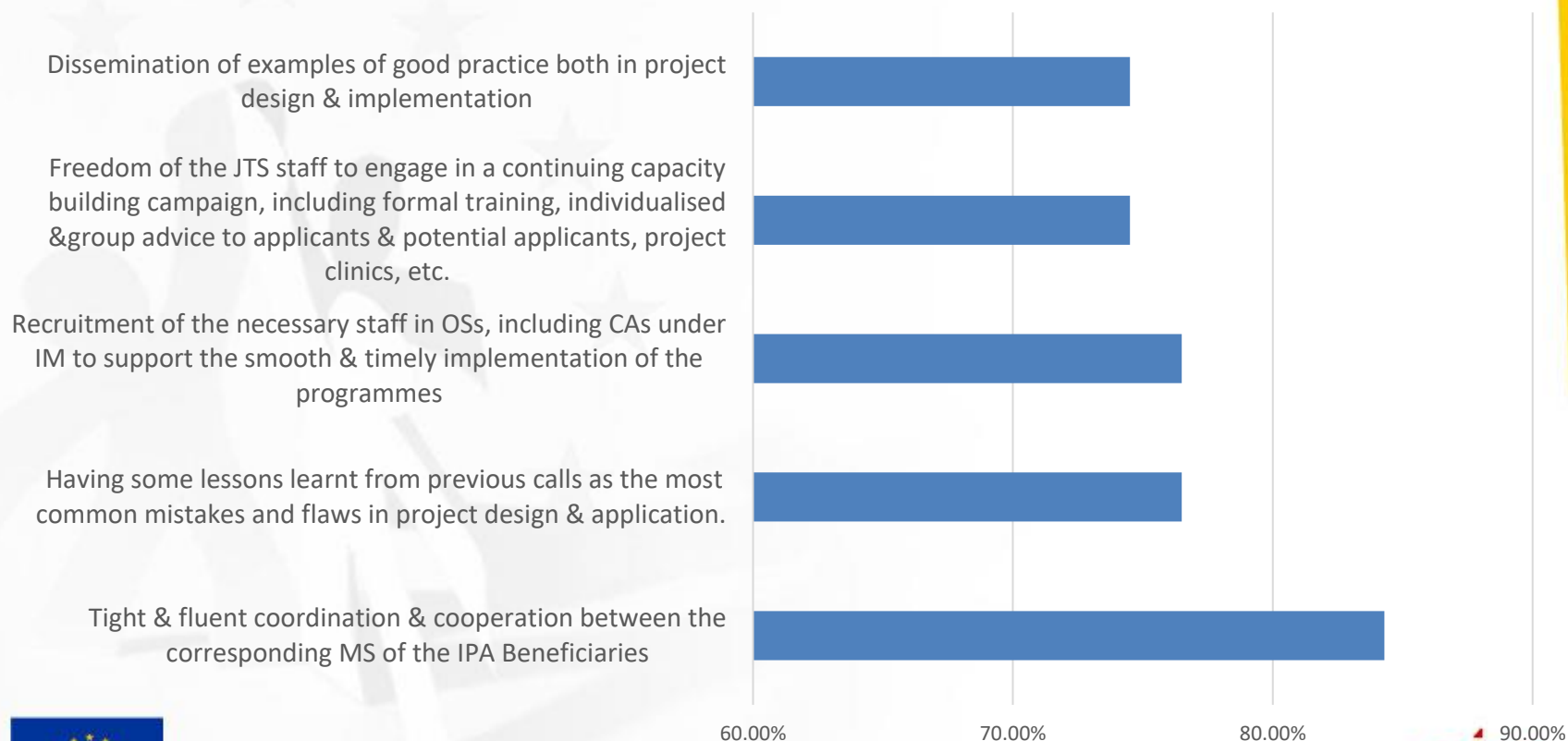
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6. Measures for improving the process



6.1 Measures to reduce time elapsing between the start of implementation of contracts under a CfP & the publication of the following call – Primary measures



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Chart 6.1. Primary measures



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6. Measures for improving the process



In ascending order and in full text, the **primary measures** supported by the respondents were as follows:

- Dissemination of examples of good practice both in project design and implementation (74.5 % or 38 responses).
- Freedom of the JTS staff to engage in a continuing capacity building campaign, including formal training, individualised and group advice to applicants and potential applicants, project clinics, etc. (74.5 % or 38 responses).
- Recruitment of the necessary staff in operating structures, including contracting authorities under indirect management to support the smooth and timely implementation of the programmes (76.5 % or 39 responses).
- Having some lessons learnt from previous calls as the most common mistakes and flaws in project design and application (76.5 % or 39 responses).
- Tight and fluent coordination and cooperation between the corresponding management structures of the IPA Beneficiaries (84.3 % or 43 responses).



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6. Measures for improving the process

As **secondary measures**, respondents also highlighted the following:

- Appointment of committed and knowledgeable members of the JMC who could contribute to raising the work standards of the programmes.
- Recruitment of the necessary staff in the joint technical secretariats, to support the smooth and timely implementation of programmes.



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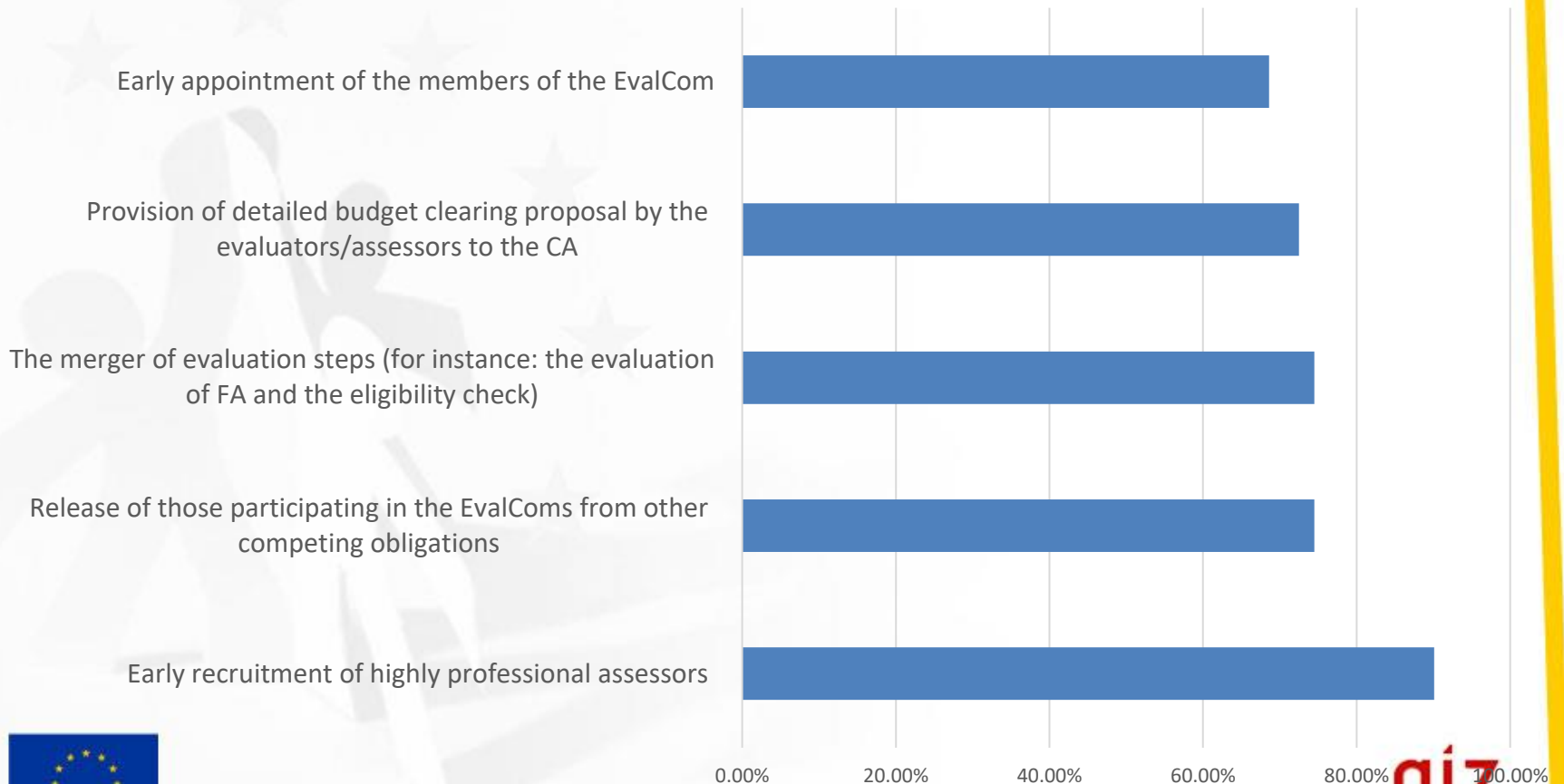
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6. Measures for improving the process



6.2 Measures for cutting the time elapsed between the publication of CfP & the start of implementation of the selected projects under the call – Primary measures



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Chart 6.2 Primary measures



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6. Measures for improving the process



In ascending order, the **primary measures** supported by the respondents were as follows:

- The early appointment of the members of the evaluation committee (68.6 % or 35 respondents).
- The provision of a detailed budget clearing proposal by the evaluators/assessors to the contracting authority (72.5 % or 37 respondents).
- The merger of evaluation steps (for instance: the evaluation of full applications and the eligibility check) (74.5 % or 38 respondents).
- The release of those participating in the evaluation committees from other competing obligations (74.5 % or 38 respondents).
- The early recruitment of highly professional assessors (90.1 % or 46 respondents).



6. Measures for improving the process

As **secondary measures**, respondents also highlighted the following:

- The organisation of physical meetings with the would-be coordinators to clear the budgets prior to contract signature.
- The adoption of a standardised method to carry out budget clearing across the region.
- The assignment of seasoned staff to discharge duties in evaluation committees.



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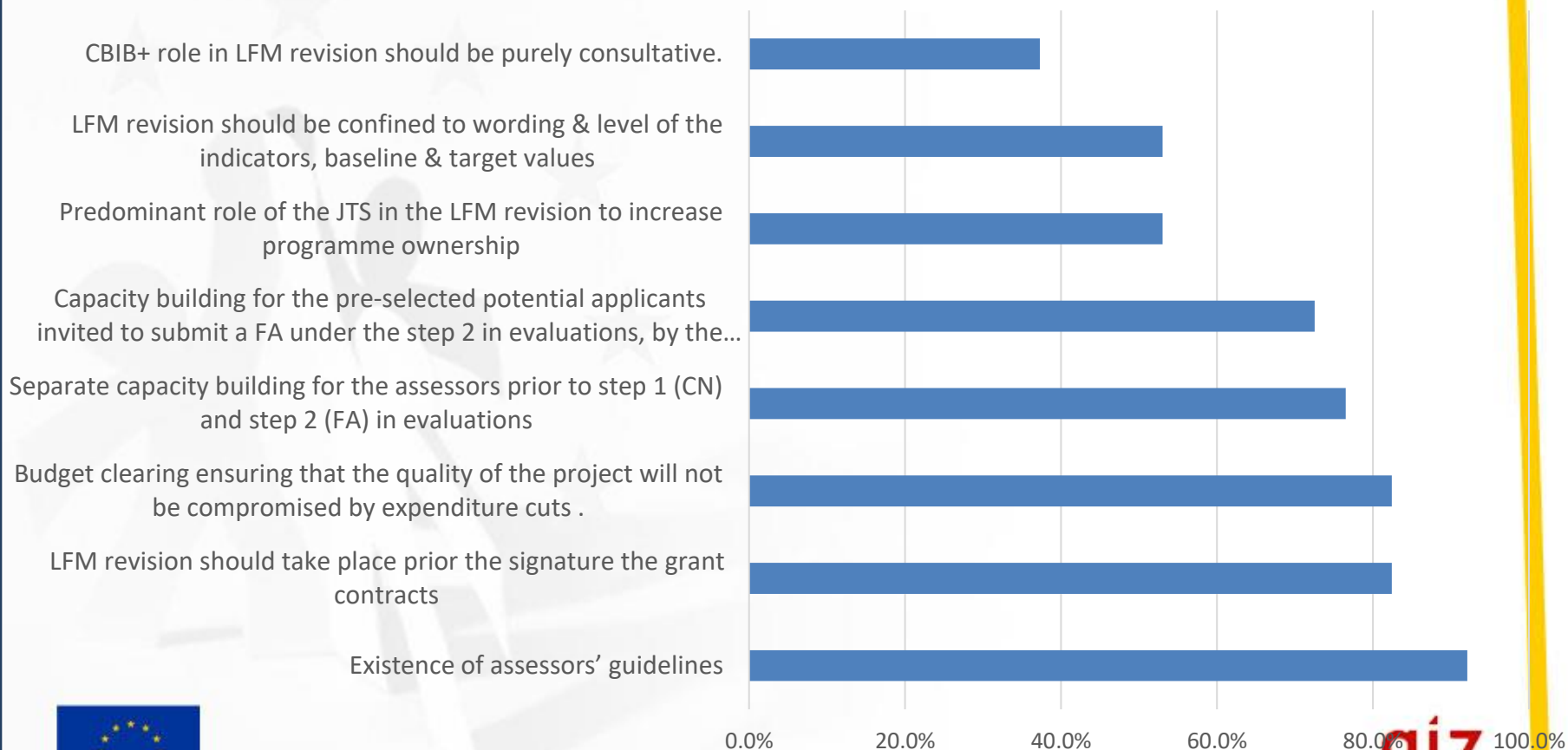
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6. Measures for improving the process



6.3 Measures for a more efficient evaluation phase & faster start of implementation of the selected projects under a call



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Chart 6.3 Most popular measures

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Measures for improving the process



In ascending order, the most popular measures supported by the respondents were as follows:

- The role of CBIB+ in the revision of logical framework matrixes should be purely consultative (37.3 % or 19 respondents).
- The revision of logical framework matrixes should be basically confined to the wording and level of the indicators, as well as the baseline and target values (53 % or 27 respondents)
- Predominant role of the JTS in the revision of logical framework matrixes to increase programme ownership (53 % or 27 respondents).
- Provision of capacity building for the pre-selected potential applicants invited to submit a full application under the step 2 in evaluations, by the CBIB+ team or other experts (72.5 % or 37 respondents).



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Measures for improving the process



In ascending order, the most popular measures supported by the respondents were as follows (continue):

- Provision of separate capacity building for the assessors prior to step 1 (concept note) and step 2 (full application) in evaluations (76.5 % or 39 respondents).
- Budget clearing ensuring that the quality of the project will not be compromised by expenditure cuts (82.4 % or 42 respondents).
- The revision of the logical framework matrix should take place before the signature of the grant contracts (82.4 % or 42 respondents).
- Existence of assessors' guidelines (92.1 % or 47 respondents).



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Thanks for your attention!



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