



Implementation of Eco-schemes. A European comparison of National 28 Strategy Plans

Eco & Fair? - Are the Eco-schemes fulfilling their role?

March 27, 2024 | Max Meister | Agricultural Policy Officer

What are eco-schemes?

- New, central instrument of the "green architecture"
- Objective: Stabilise the conservation status of widespread habitats and species and regenerate them as far as possible
- 25% of the 1st pillar budget earmarked for this purpose
- 158 eco-schemes designed in 27 EU Member States
- High diversity of measures in terms of programming, level of ambition and financial resources

Different types of programmed designs

- A.) **Farm-level approach:** uniform requirements for all participating farms, funding the same for all farms and eligible hectares of a farm (CZ, SK)
- B.) **Menu approach:** farms can choose from a menu, measures are linked with point value and/or unit amount, thresholds for participation and gradual build-up possible (FR, IE, NL)
→ budgetary evaluation not currently possible due to these approaches
- C.) **Fixed premium amount for each hectare of implemented measure**, premiums differ per measure (DE and many more)
- D.) largely corresponds to c.); for eco-schemes a fixed total budget is foreseen, **measures linked to point value**, budget distributed to farms according to points registered (HU, PL partly)

Number of eco-schemes

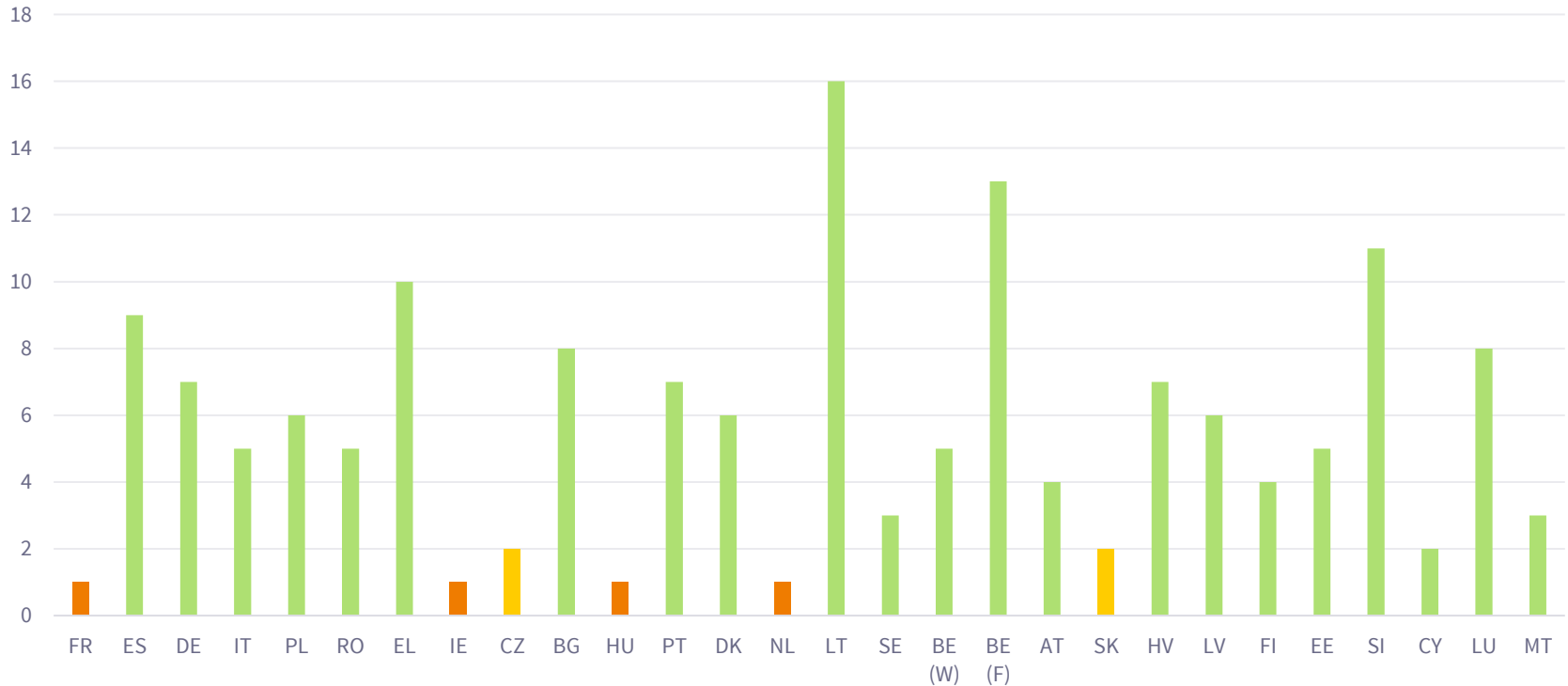


Fig.2: Number of eco-schemes per Member State, sorted in descending order by total eco-scheme budget

Interaction between eco-scheme and GAEC 8 (selection)

Member State	ES-Designation	Brief description	Cond. and ES combined
Denmark	Non-productive area on arable land	3 % under cond.; total min. 7 % on arable land	3 % Cond. + 4 % Eco-scheme
Estonia	Ecological focus areas and landscape elements	4 % on arable land, a total of at least 10 % of arable land as fallow or N-fixing crops	4 % Cond. + 6 % Eco-scheme
France	Non-productive area	At least 4 % on arable land; Basic Level: at least 7 % in total, Superior Level: at least 10 % non-productive land	4 % Cond. + 3 % or 6 % Eco-scheme
Ireland	Non-productive area	At least 4 % (incl. grassland) conditionality, at least 7 % basic level or 10 % superior level	4 % Cond. + 3 % or 7 % Eco-scheme
Spain	Non-productive area and biodiversity areas	3 % conditionality, total 7 % and 4 % on irrigated land	3 % Cond. + 4 % or 1 % Eco-scheme
Germany	Non-productive area	4 % conditionality on arable land, maximum 6 % staggered (total 10 %) eligible with eco-schemes	4 % + or 6 % Eco-schemes

Commission 's proposal on GAECs

Measure	Before	After
GAEC 1 Permanent grassland	Preservation of permanent grassland in relation to total agricultural surface in reference area	Member states allowed to grant specific exemptions where there is a risk that requirements would run counter to their objectives
GAEC 5 Soil erosion	Provisions on tillage management, reducing the risk of soil degradation and erosion	Also weakened through a general exemption mentioned above (also GAECs 6 and 7)
GAEC 6 Minimum soil cover	Minimum soil cover bare soil in sensitive periods	This shall be determined by member states , offering more flexibility
GAEC 7 Crop rotation	Crop rotation in arable land, except for crops growing under water	Crop rotation in arable land, except for crops growing under water. Member States may in addition decide to allow farmers and other beneficiaries to fulfil this standard with crop diversification → Rollback to 2013 levels
GAEC 8 Non-productive areas and landscape features	Minimum share (4%) of agricultural area devoted to non-productive area or features – Retention of landscape features – Ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season	All aspects of the former Ecological Focus Areas apart from maintaining landscape features deleted. → pesticides can be used on them. Estimated 9 million ha of pesticide free land (2019 figures) lost

Biodiversity-promoting eco-schemes (selection)

Member state	Brief description
Germany	Flowering strips and old grass strips Result-based scheme, 4 identification types of regional plant species
Estonia	Landscape elements (incl. rock gardens, ponds, etc.) with weighting factor
Portugal	Landscape elements (incl. rock gardens, ponds, etc.) with weighting factor
France	Hedge bonus in combination with "Environmental Certification Track"
Netherlands	Buffer strips and grass strips on field margins, incl. ponds, landscape elements
Belgium (F)	Buffer strips (optionally with flowering areas) comparable with ES in Germany
Ireland	Planting of hedges and trees; improved option with higher planting rate
Belgium (W)	Creation of landscape elements; incl. aquatic elements, isolated trees, etc.
Lithuania	Creation and maintenance of landscape elements; new planting of trees separately
Luxembourg	Establishment of flower strips and grass strips

Budget share of biodiversity-promoting measures

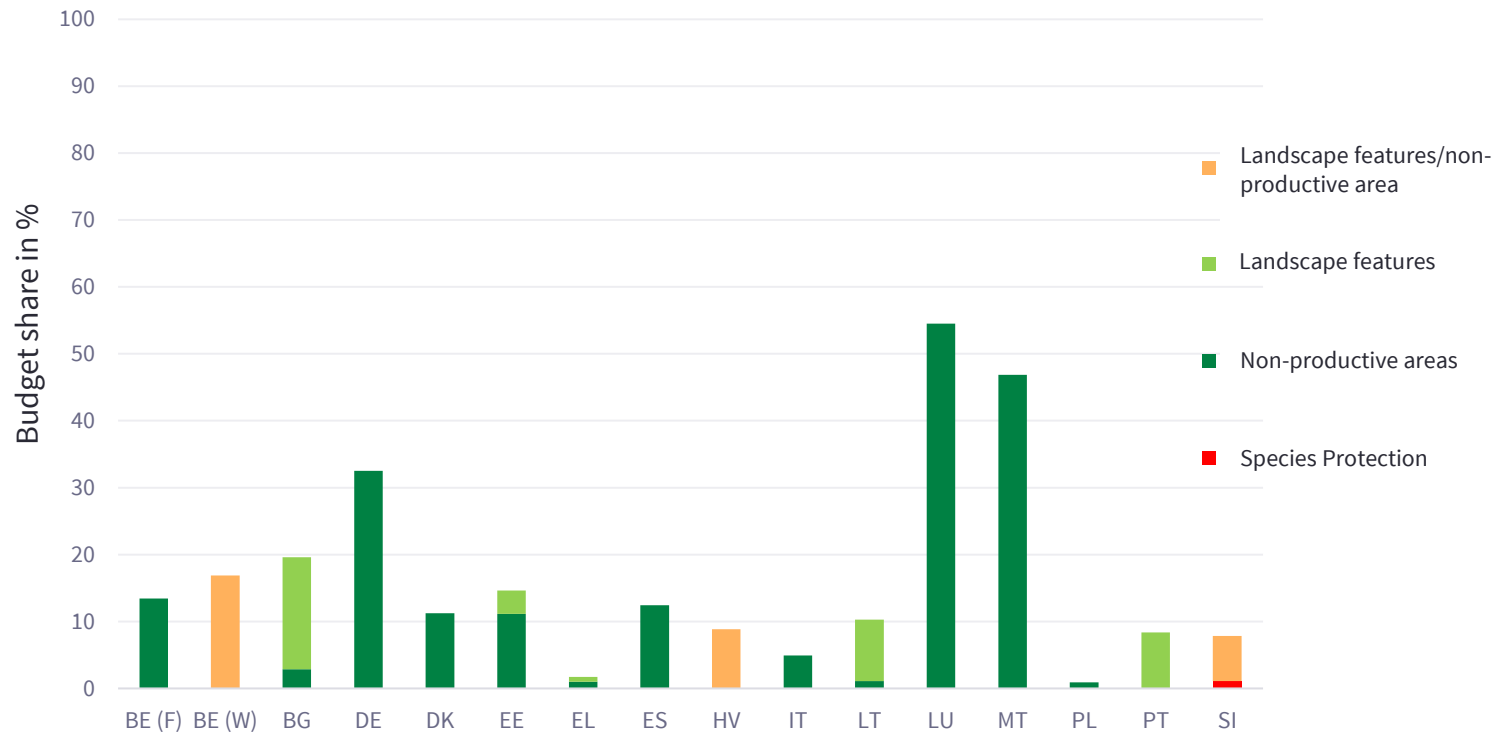


Fig.4 : Eco-regulation budget for biodiversity-promoting measures

Budget share for organic farming of the 1st pillar

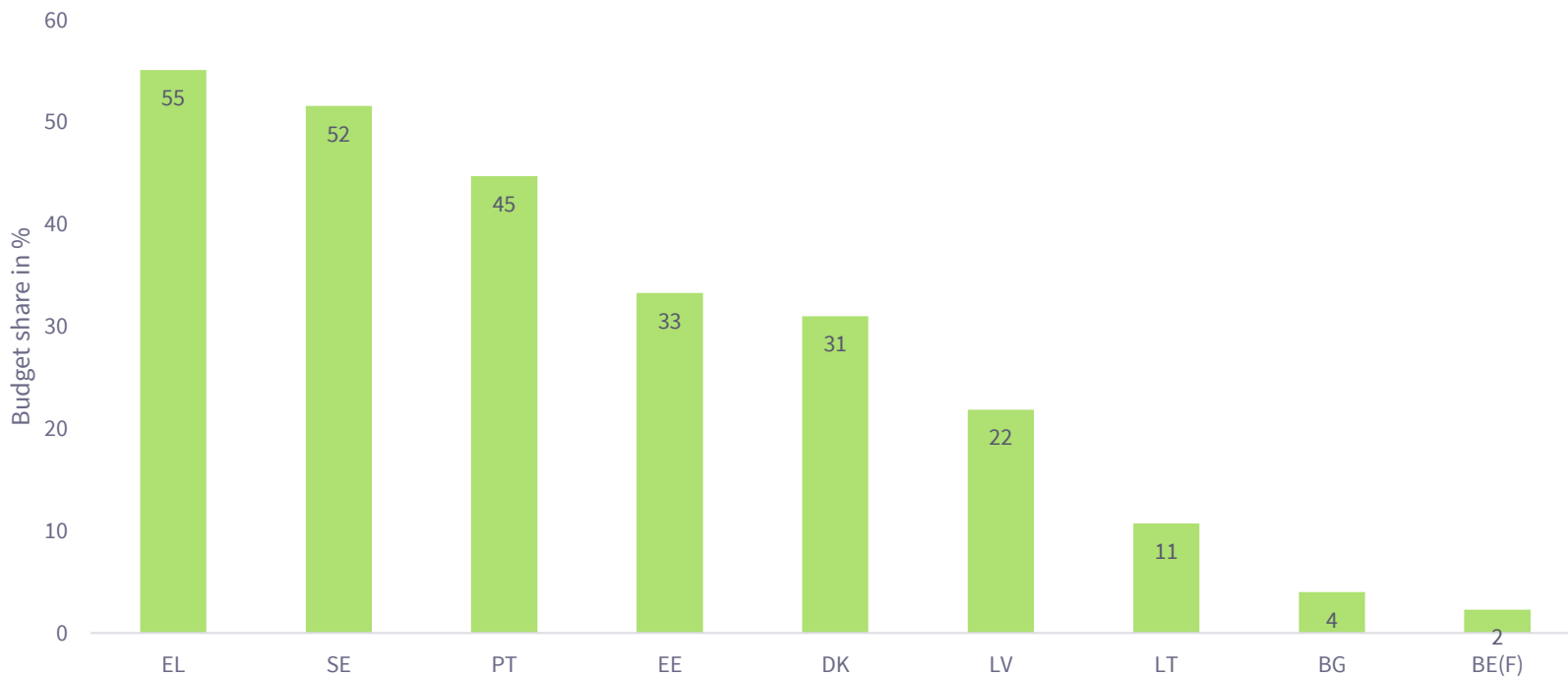


Fig. 3: Budget as a proportion of the total budget for organic farming schemes

Promotion of organic farming

Member state	Conversion	Maintanance	Brief description
Denmark	X	X	Basic premium + supplements for N reduction, conversion or permanent crop, 4 - 5 years, conversion max. 2 years
Estonia		X	Broken down by crop, Conversion premium also by crop (+ 10 %)
France	X	X	No separate measure; certified organic farming automatically fulfils the conditions for "environmental certification pathway".
Netherlands		X	SKAL-certified organic farming, Dutch certification
Portugal	X	X	Broken down by crop, conversion premium also by crop (+ 10 %)
Bulgaria		X	Area-based premium and support for livestock farming
Belgium (F)		X	3 Premiums depending on the area
Sweden		X	Promotion of organic production, Premiums broken down into crops
Greece	X	X	Broken down by crop and region, conversion premium also by crop
Lithuania	X		Premium broken down by crops and permanent pasture, 2 - 3 years

Income-effective? – Payment programming via Art. 31 7 a)

- First time **Incentive payment vs. previous compensatory payment** (7 b)
- Payment for ecosystem services
- Possibility of more freedom in setting premiums, WTO conformity must be observed
- Criteria of programming: no discriminatory conditions according to the type of land use, but territorial boundaries are possible
- Which Measures programmed via 7 a)? Ex.: Farm-level approach (CZ, SK), menu approach (FR), point-linked whole budget approach (HU), approach c.) (Germany and some more)
- Majority biodiversity enhancing measures: Fallows, landscape elements, precision agriculture, organic farming
- → **Lack of Consistency in programming over 7 a) on the part of EU-COM**

Budget share for Article 31 (7) a) of CAP-STP Regulation

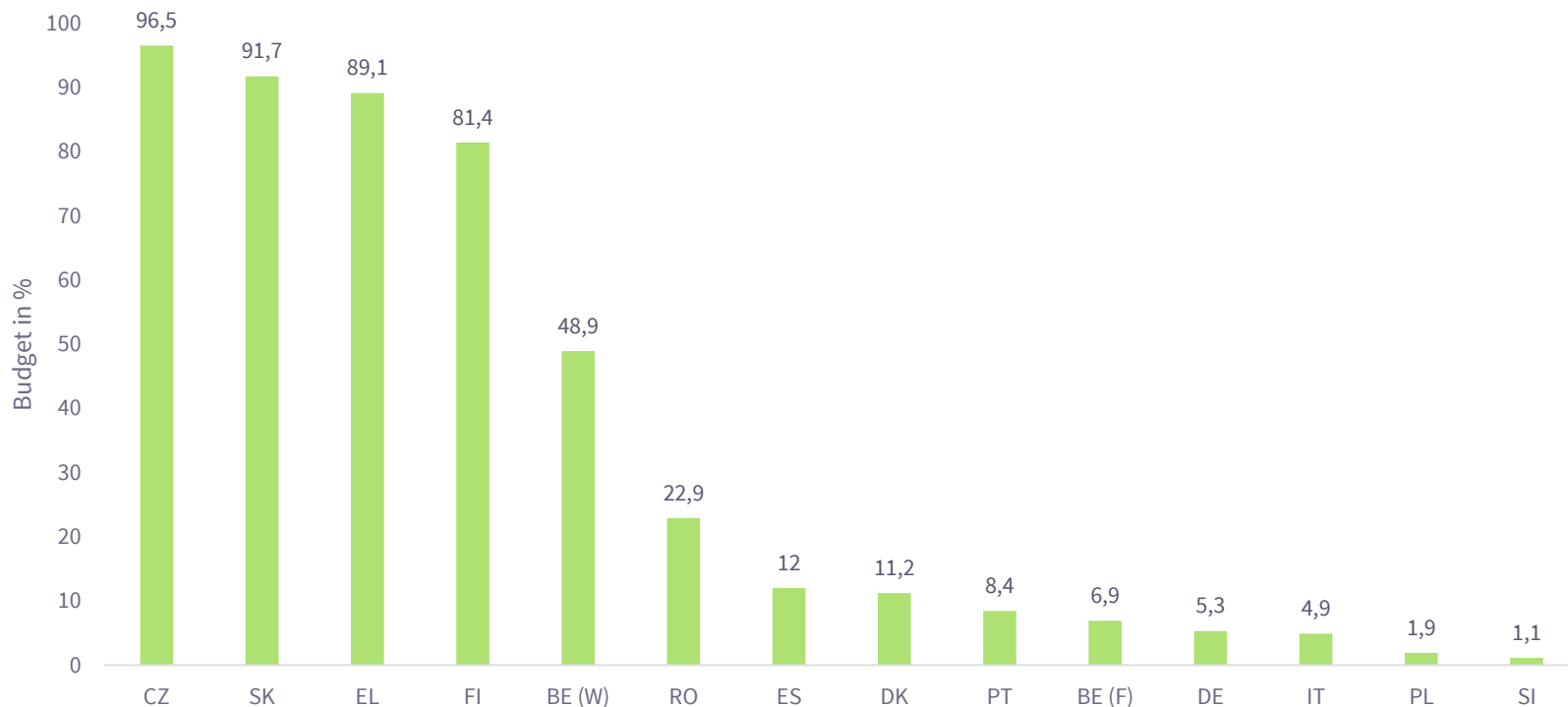


Fig.5 : Budget as a proportion of the total budget for eco-schemes for measures programmed in accordance with Art. 31 (7 a)

Summary - Are eco-regulations living up to their role?

- Extremely **great diversity in the design of the various measures**
 - Despite the focus of many member states on biodiversity, the budget and scope of measures for this is low
 - → Expected environmental impact (predominantly) low, because too little budget has been earmarked
 - **Interest-driven instead of evidence-based policy design**
 - Intervention logic appears to be a black box, **connection between policy priorities and interventions not clear**
 - No strong connection between 7a programming and environmental impact
- **lack of consistency of EU-COM on 7(a) programming**

BirdLife/NABU preliminary analysis of eco-schemes uptake

- **Data query by BirdLife partners in 12 Member States so far**
- Very **mixed uptake of biodiversity targeting schemes**
 - Some schemes reached only 15 % of planned area
 - Few were oversubscribed by up to 140 %
- **Most frequent reason for low uptake:**
 - Insufficient/unattractive payment
 - Promotion of implementation too late/too little, too little consultancy regarding practical implementation
 - Flawed design of schemes regarding technical details of scheme designs
- **Lack of data regarding the eco-schemes´ monitoring**

Adjustment of the NSP in the current funding period/design of the eco-schemes

1. **Systematic design** of STP with systemic impact using e.g. holistic approaches
2. Significantly **expand eco-schemes budget and increase premiums** with an impact on income (increase share over the course of the funding period); increase scope for MS to reallocate funding from the 1st pillar to AECM of 2nd pillar
3. Ensure **planning security and reduce bureaucracy** in order to increase uptake and thus environmental impact and outflow of funds, e.g. through:
 - Implicit multi-annuality(e.g. gradual and staggered build-up) for more planning security
 - Expand results-oriented/based designs significantly
 - Programming of an easier-to-administer system of measures/types
4. **Alignment of the STP with objectives set in STP and result indicators to achieve the Green Deal objectives**

Recommendations for action to adapt/design the eco-schemes

- **Support system for STP designers** that enables the link between objectives, outcome indicators and eco-scheme design in farmers in a structurally transformative, transparent and scientific way
- Incorporate more in-depth and precise methodologies to identify specific needs for action by Member States → **Handbook on available methodologies and best practices facilitates policy design** (much more involvement of experienced practitioners and CAP experts to support EU COM in evaluation of STP, see focus groups)
- **Established performance monitoring and reporting system**



Thank you for your attention



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Eco-schemes budget proportionate to 1st pillar

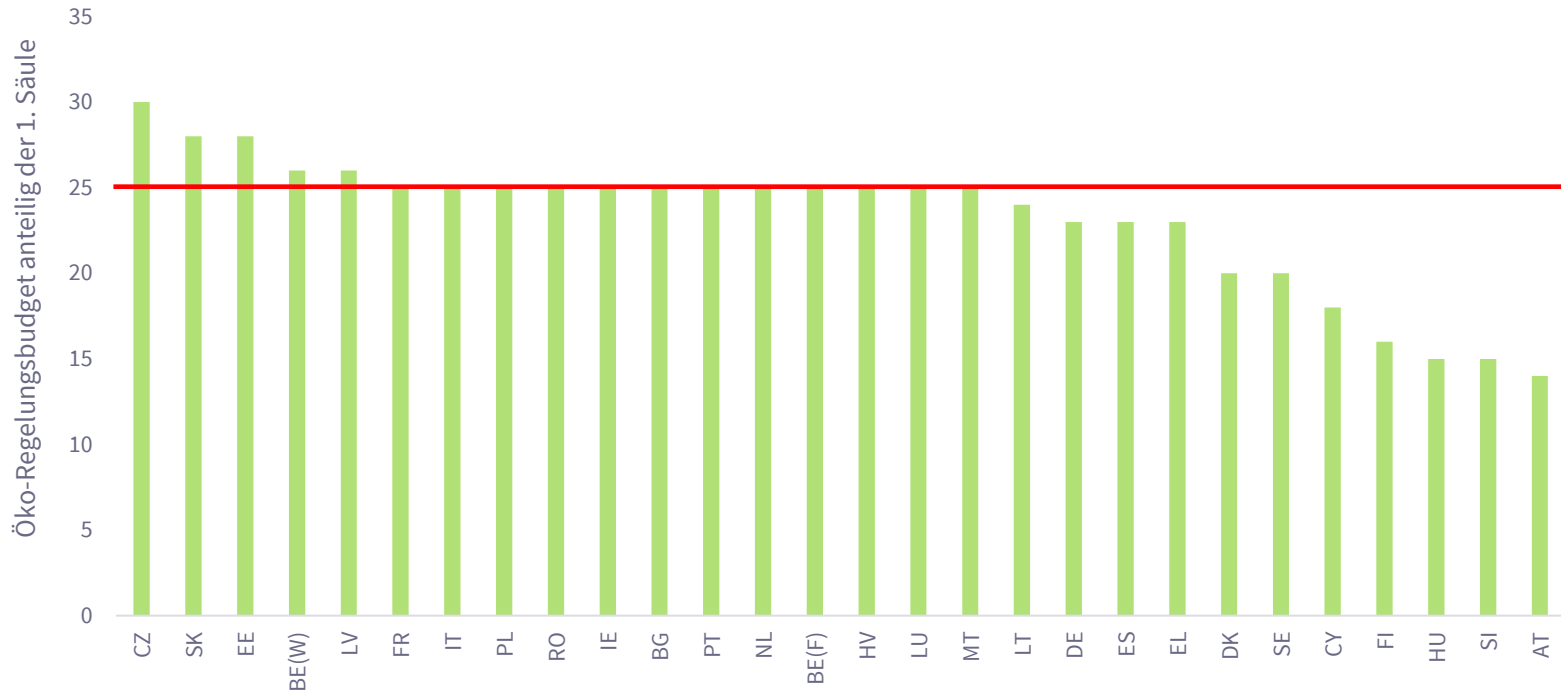


Fig. 1: Budget earmarked for eco-schemes as a percentage of the total budget for Pillar 1

Titel und Inhalt – zweiseitig mit Grafik

