

IHI JU responses to the Independent Observer's reports

Call ID: HORIZON-JU-IHI-2023-04-two-stage

IHI JU 4th Call for Proposals – stage 2

Dates of evaluation: 27 to 29 May 2024

Name of the Independent Observer: Charlotte Andersdotter

Summary of Recommendations

The evaluation process of the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2023-04-two-stage call kept a very high quality, robust and excellently performed with an outstanding professionalism from the staff.

With such a solid process in place, there are only a few recommendations to bring forward:

- 1) It is essential to continue to work on the running of remote evaluations. The days are intense, and it is easy to lose concentration so to plan for a few additional shorter breaks could be one way of maintaining the full attention. A Q&A for experts on how to run an efficient remote meeting could also be considered based on the experiences already gathered from previous evaluations.
- 2) The SEP tool could be further developed to become a real support in the evaluations.
- 3) It could be considered to review the time allocated to the experts to do their individual readings and assessment as the topic can be quite complex with several aspects to consider. Often the experts spend considerably more time per proposal than what is stipulated in their contracts. To ensure to get the best experts also in the future, it's essential to align their compensation with current living standards.
- 4) Based on the feedback from some of the experts, it could be considered to re-introduce the stage 2 hearing of the consortium. To have the opportunity to ask questions directly to the consortium was perceived as a way to bring a further understanding of the potential of the proposal.

IHI JU responses to the recommendations

IHI JU welcomes the Independent Observer conclusions, which confirm the high quality of the evaluation.

To the best extent possible, IHI office will take into consideration the recommendations made:

- 1) IHI office will investigate the available options to increase the time dedicated per proposal so to plan for a few additional shorter breaks during the consensus meetings. IHI office acknowledges the suggestion to create a Q&A document outlining best practices for experts to conduct effective remote meetings.
- 2) All Horizon Europe programs use the SEP evaluation tool overseen by the central European Commission services. IHI office recognises the recommendation for further development of the SEP platform and consistently provides feedback to the central services to facilitate ongoing improvements.

- 3) In alignment with response (1), the IHI office aims to dedicate additional time to drafting the IER whenever circumstances permit. Regarding the compensation of experts, IHI JU operates within the framework of Horizon Europe and adheres to its model contract for experts which stipulates fixed fees for their services. The IHI office acknowledges the suggestion for further harmonisation of experts' compensation with current living standards and will continue to emphasize this point to the appropriate European Commission services.
- 4) The IHI JU Work Programme foresees that hearings with the applicants may be organised to:
 1. clarify the proposals and help the panel establish their final assessment and scores, and/or;
 2. improve the experts' understanding of the information presented.

So far, under the IHI Calls no hearings have been organised since there was no need for applicants to provide further information to clarify the proposals and help the expert' panels establish the final ranking lists. Nevertheless, the IHI office acknowledges the suggestion, and will further explore its feasibility.