

# IHI JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

Call ID: HORIZON-JU-IHI-  
2022-02-two-stage

Date of evaluation: 19-22 October 2022 and 24-26 October 2022

Number of pages in this report (title page included): 6

Charlotte Andersdotter

Present at the evaluation: 19-20 October 2022 and 24-26 October 2022

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction and approach taken by the observer.....	3
2	Overall impression.....	4
3	Any other remarks .....	5
4	Summary of Recommendations.....	6

# 1 Introduction and approach taken by the observer

This report describes the Independent Observer’s assessment of the evaluation process of the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call, published on 28 June 2022 with submission deadline on 20 September 2022. The maximum financial contribution from IHI JU for the two topics is EUR 21 929 000 and the indicative in-kind (and financial) contribution from industry partners and contributing partners is EUR 21 929 000

The purpose of this report is to give an independent view on the evaluation process and provide recommendations for possible improvements.

The HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call included two topics with a total of 15 proposals split per topic as shown below:

Topic	Proposals
Topic 1: <b>IHI-2022-02-01 Cardiovascular diseases - Improved prediction, prevention, diagnosis and monitoring</b>	11
Topic 2: <b>IHI-2022-02-02 Setting up a harmonised methodology to promote uptake of early feasibility studies for clinical and innovation excellence in the European Union.</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	15

All 15 proposals were admissible and eligible.

The overall aim of IHI-2022-02-01 topic was to provide tools for the earlier diagnosis of atherosclerosis and heart failure as well as earlier identification of patients at risk.

In IHI-2022-02-02 topic, the aim was to set up a harmonised EU methodology to promote the uptake of early feasibility studies (EFS), to improve patients’ access to health technologies, including digital technologies, support technological innovation, and contribute to a smoother development process for these health technologies

Only the applicant consortium whose proposal is ranked first per topic at the first stage is invited for the second stage.

A background briefing was organised for the Independent Observer ahead of the consensus meetings. The meeting took place via a WebEx conference call and was chaired by the Executive Director ad interim and the Call Coordinator. The website where all relevant information and supporting documents are included was provided shortly after the briefing. The Independent Observer also had access to the proposals and individual reports in SEP.

The consensus meetings were held fully remotely via WebEx and divided into two parts. The consensus phase for IHI-2022-02-02 took place between 19-20 October 2022 and consensus phase for IHI-2022-02-

01 between 24-26 October 2022. The Independent Observer participated during the full five days of the consensus meetings.

## 2 Overall impression

The general impression of the evaluation process is excellent. The process was very well organised, fully respecting the rules on transparency and equality in treatment of each individual proposal. The planned time schedule had to be slightly adjusted to allow for discussions to be concluded. The supporting documentation relevant to this specific evaluation was comprehensive and well received by all experts. In addition, the IHI JU Staff was perceived as highly competent, available and ready to support when needed. To run the consensus meetings fully on-line included certain challenges, as for example being attentive so that all experts can comment in a balanced way and keeping the engagement. The IHI JU staff managed this in a most professional way, ensured all experts' opinions heard and the decisions were made on consensus.

- Scale of complexity of the evaluation task:

The HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02 is a two-stage call, following a standard procedure for IHI JU two-stage call. The evaluation was very well executed given the complexity of the process. The evaluation was run in full coherence with the guiding principles outlined in the documentation.

- Transparency of the procedures:

The evaluation procedure was carried out in full transparency, in line with the IHI established rules, which are easy to access via the IHI website and the EC Funding and Tenders portal.

All involved experts were registered in the European Commission expert database. The selection of experts was based on their expertise related to the topics while keeping a fair balance regarding gender, nationality and previous experience as an evaluator.

The 14 experts chosen for the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call, had all a significant capacity to evaluate a broad range of different health related areas as well as the potential impact of the proposals. All experts have high level of skills, scientific record, experience and knowledge appropriate to carry out the tasks assigned to them, The balance between experienced and new experts in Horizon Europe evaluation process as well as nationalities was good. Additionally, the gender balance was adequately achieved with eight male and six female.

- Throughput time of the process and the efficiency of the procedures

The time given to finalise the Individual Evaluation Reports (IER) was considered by several experts as too short as the documentation was quite extensive. The timing for drafting of Consensus Reports, however, was considered to be sufficient.

The moderators showed an impressive capacity to manage well balanced and dynamic consensus meetings for very intense days.

- Efficiency, reliability and usability of the implementation of the procedures, including the IT-tools:

The moderators had a high level of professionalism and knowledge about the different topics dealt with during this evaluation. The moderators were most helpful in guiding the discussions to be focussed and efficient, and to clarify any potential issue. The evaluation was fully in line with the Horizon Europe guidelines as well as the guidelines specific to IHI.

The WebEx platform worked generally well and there were no major connection problems that influenced the evaluation process. However, it happened sometimes that the connection was unstable and for this reason sound and videos had to be turned off to resume connectivity smoothness.

- Impartiality, fairness and confidentiality:

Ahead of the individual assessments, the experts were instructed to evaluate each proposal on its own merit and only take into account what was written in the proposal. This was then repeated in the introductory briefing before the consensus meeting to make sure that every proposal is treated in a fair and equal way.

The experts were also informed of the importance of assessing possible conflicts of interest (CoI) at any time of the evaluation, confidentially, and not revealing any information about the proposals or results externally.

The evaluation was very well prepared, well organised and timely with sufficient background information so that the experts would feel confident in performing their tasks in a good way.

The IHI Evaluation Guidance documentation provided before the assessment was most useful to draft high quality Individual Evaluation Reports and to draft the Consensus Reports.

The IHI JU moderators were very well prepared and cautious that all criteria, including sub-criteria, were applied in a coherent and impartial manner. The texts per criterion were first agreed between the experts before the scoring, to ensure consistency between the text and the scores.

- Conformity of the evaluation process witnessed with the evaluation procedures published in the HE Grants Manual:

The evaluation process was fully in-line with the evaluation procedures published in the Horizon Europe Grants Manual

- Quality of the EU evaluation process in comparison with the evaluation procedures of national and/or other international research funding schemes:

The IHI evaluation process is of very good quality, highly professionally run and conscious about details, compared to similar experiences with national procedures. The level of transparency, equal treatment and confidentiality is high with a professional and efficient procedure in place, making sure that the best proposals will be funded.

- Quality of the evaluation process overall:

The overall quality of the evaluation process is very high. The experts had a very high level of knowledge, greatly engaged and professional, ensuring that each proposal was duly assessed, and the best proposals selected. The IHI staff was considered by the experts as extremely competent, encouraging, and ready to support when needed. The staff welcomed any suggestion on how to improve the evaluation process.

### **3 Any other remarks**

The Independent Observer has the following addition remarks, not already covered:

- The documentation provided before of the evaluation was of high quality and comprehensive. The briefing before starting the consensus meeting, via WebEx, was very clear and concise and helpful to allow all experts to be on the same page for the following consensus meeting.

- As the preparation ahead of the evaluation was very well performed, the experts had a very good understanding of the specificities of this call and the two topics, the procedures of the evaluation including their role. There was also a high level of understanding of the criteria and scoring scheme among the evaluators. The IHI staff was supportive to guide the experts in the few cases of doubts.
- The consensus meetings were challenging in terms of timing as the schedule was ambitious and the days became long. However, the level of engagement from the experts was impressive, and all-in-all, the process ran smoothly. The final panel discussion was fully transparent and fair, and the quality of the final reports was very high.
- Fully on-line meetings for two to three days bring the challenge of maintaining the concentration of the experts. Several experts noted that the schedule was too ambitious. More breaks should have been planned between the different proposals as the days become most intense. However, most experts expressed a preference to on-line evaluations as they considered them to give more freedom and less time consuming as no travelling is involved.
- No conflict of interest was identified during the central phase.
- Despite the challenges with long days on-line, the work was performed in a very good atmosphere, very well managed by the IHI JU team and with high engagement and team spirit! The group of experts stated that they very much enjoyed the exercise.

## 4 Summary of Recommendations

The evaluation process of the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call kept a very high quality; it was robust and excellently performed with an outstanding professionalism from the staff.

A few suggestions that could be considered for the future:

- Taking into consideration that evaluations of IHI calls are very tight, when possible, the time allocated to the assessment of each proposal during the consensus meeting might be reconsidered to allow for more time per proposal
- When having full online meetings, time management is key with a clear time schedule communicated ahead of the meetings and making sure that the time is respected by all participants. Consider allocating more time to rapporteurs. Regular shorter breaks could be in the schedule to keep up the concentration and also allow for some physical movements.
- Online meetings have many positive aspects, for example allowing for more flexibility and experts don't have to travel, however they also require a different way of running the meeting to assure that all experts will be able to speak. One suggestion could be to develop some "guidelines" to share ahead of the meeting, i.e. using the raising hand symbol and reminding the participants to be clear and to the point in their interventions. It might be helpful for any future full online consensus meeting to provide the experts with guidelines how to run an efficient online meeting. Such guidelines could also include recommendations on how to structure the discussions.