

# IHI JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

Call ID: HORIZON-JTI-IHI-  
2022-02-two-stage – 2<sup>nd</sup> stage

Date of evaluation: 28/03/2023 – 29/03/2023

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Name of the observer: Charlotte ANDERSDOTTER

Present at the evaluation: 28/03/2023 – 29/03/2023

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# 1 Introduction and approach taken by the observer

This report provides the assessment by the Independent Observer of the second stage of the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call evaluation. The aim of this report is to give an independent view on the evaluation process and where it is possible and relevant, provide recommendations for improvements.

The call was published on 28 June 2022 with submission deadline on 20 September 2022 and included two topics, **IHI-2022-02-01 Cardiovascular diseases - Improved prediction, prevention, diagnosis, and monitoring** and **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.**

The maximum financial contribution from IHI JU for the two topics is EUR 21 929 000 and an indicative in-kind (and financial) contribution from industry partners and contributing partners of EUR 21 929 000. The first stage evaluation took place between 19-20 October 2022 and 24-26 October 2022 and included a total of 15 proposals for the two topics allocated as shown in the table below:

Topic	Proposals submitted in stage 1
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

Only the applicant consortium whose proposal was ranked first per topic at the first stage was invited for the second stage, hence only two proposals were evaluated during the second stage evaluation.

The overall aim of IHI-2022-02-01 topic is 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 is 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.

As the Independent Observer had participated at the first stage evaluation, a short remote briefing was provided prior to the consensus meetings. The Independent Observer had access to all relevant supporting documents, the proposals, and the individual reports in SEP, as was the case in the first stage evaluation process.,

The consensus meetings were held fully remotely via WebEx and over two consecutive days with one proposal per day. The Independent Observer participated in both days of the consensus meetings.

## 2 Overall impression

According to the Independent Observer's overall and general perception, the evaluation process was run impressively. The process was very professionally executed, fully in line with the rules regarding transparency and equal treatment of each of the two proposals. The supporting documentation was comprehensive and well received by all experts.

The planned time schedule was well respected. The IHI JU Staff has an extensive knowledge and experience both in terms of content as well as how to run consensus meetings which assures a highly professional evaluation process.

- Scale of complexity of the evaluation task:

The present two stage call HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02 pursues a standard procedure for IHI JU two-stage call. The evaluation was executed in an excellent manner 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 process was fully in line with the IHI established rules and can easily be found at the IHI website and the EC Funding and Tenders portal. In accordance with the transparency requirements, all experts involved are registered in the European Commission expert database.

The same 11 experts that participated in first stage had all taken part in the second stage evaluation in the respective call. All experts were selected based on the EC rules and each expert is chosen based on his/her expertise related to the topic but also due to his/ her significant capacity to evaluate a broad range of different health related areas as well as the potential impact of the proposals. The balance between experienced and less experienced experts as well as nationalities was good. The gender balance was acceptable with seven male and four female experts.

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

The time given to finalise the Individual Evaluation Reports (IER) and consequently for drafting the Consensus Reports was considered to be sufficient. The role as moderator should not be underestimated to ensure an efficient procedure. The moderators conducting the two consensus meetings were impressive with a high capacity to manage a well-balanced and dynamic discussion and getting all experts equally involved, something which is more challenging in a remote setting than when everyone is on-site.

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

The evaluation was fully in line with the Horizon Europe guidelines, as well as the guidelines specific to IHI.

The moderators were highly professional, with an extensive knowledge about the topics discussed and experienced in how to guide the discussion in a transparent and efficient way.

The WebEx platform worked generally well and there were no major connection problems that influenced the evaluation process.

- Impartiality, fairness and confidentiality:

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 repeated during 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 potential conflicts of interest (Col) 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 Consensus Reports.

The well-prepared moderators of the two consensus meetings were very careful that all criteria, including sub-criteria, were applied in a coherent and impartial manner. To ensure consistency between the text and the scores, the text per criterion was first agreed among the experts before the scoring,

- 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 quality of the IHI evaluation process is excellent. It is highly professional and the IHI JU Staff is most conscious about details, comparing 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 was excellent, from experts with an impressive knowledge, engagement, and professionalism to the extremely competent IHI JU Staff ensuring that each proposal was duly assessed, and the best proposals selected. The IHI JU 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:

- As the experts had already been a part of the first stage evaluation, they were all very well prepared and familiar with the topic, the specificities of this call and the evaluation procedures. All experts had a very high level of understanding of the criteria and scoring scheme which is essential for a well performed consensus discussion. As mentioned before, the professionalism of the IHI JU Staff is notable.
- Maintaining the concentration in an on-line meeting can be challenging, nevertheless the level of engagement from the experts was very high and all-in-all, the process ran smoothly.
- No conflict of interest was identified
- 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 overall quality of the second stage evaluation process of the HORIZON-JU-IHI-2022-02-two-stage call was excellent with a solid procedure and with an outstanding professionalism from the IHI JU Staff.

The only few recommendations that could be re-iterated would be to continue on the path taken as it has shown to be successful and to continue to develop the on-line format with possibly 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.