

IMI2 JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

**Call ID:
H2020-JTI-IMI2-2019-17
IMI 2 17th Call for Proposals
Stage 1 Evaluation**

Date of evaluation: 20 to 23 May 2019

Number of pages in this report (title page included): 4

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Present at the evaluation: 20 to 23 May 2019

Signature and date

14 June 2019

1. Introduction and approach taken by the observer

The evaluation was followed to observe and report on the practical workings of the evaluation process, on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions, on the application of the award criteria and on the procedures and their implementation, including IT tools. Based on her observations the observer gives independent advice for improvement of the evaluation process.

In execution of her task the observer took the following approach:

The observer received information ahead of the central meeting, had a pre-meeting conference call with the Call Coordinator and Head of Scientific Operations, access to the webinars for experts and applicants, as well as, all the documentation related to the call.

During the central meeting, the observer attended the full two days of the topic 1 meeting as this was the sole topic being discussed. The observer then split her time between topics 2 and 3 as those were discussed at the same time in the last two days of the evaluation. The observer also interacted with the experts as a group and individually to receive their comments and ask for their feedback.

2. Overall impression

a. Scale of complexity of the evaluation task:

During the 4 days of central meeting the proposals submitted to 3 topics were discussed. The number of proposals per topic is listed below.

Topic number	Topic title	Submitted proposals
1	Optimising future obesity treatment	4
2	Open access chemogenomics library and chemical probes for the druggable genome	3
3	Intelligent prediction and identification of environmental risks posed by human medicinal products	3
Total submitted proposals		10

Proposals were scored using the usual evaluation criteria (excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of the implementation) within the scope of the call text.

Because the call text was quite specific and prescriptive in some elements (e.g. impact), the applicants tended to use very similar formulations which made differentiating between proposals more challenging.

b. Transparency of the procedures:

The procedures were clearly stated on the documentation, reiterated during the briefing sessions and when needed, moderators would remind the experts. The scoring system was available as a poster in every meeting room and a copy of the grant manual was available as a reference.

c. Throughput time of the process and the efficiency of the procedures

Experts who have been evaluating proposals under other H2020 schemes have commented that compared to other H2020 initiatives some of the procedures for IMI were different and that the IMI approach afforded them more time to discuss, draft and agree on the consensus report.

All the meetings for the three topics concluded in the timeframe allocated, although one overran on the first day.

The throughput time varied depending upon a number of variables but all evaluations were completed on time.

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

During the central meeting, there were no observed issues with the implementation of the procedures. The experts reported that there had been some issues with the IT tool during the remote phase with aggregation of individual reports into draft consensus report in word format. The issue had been reported and sorted in a timely fashion.

e. Impartiality, fairness and confidentiality:

Each group of experts was briefed by the IMI team on the first morning of their evaluation. The procedures were highlighted including confidentiality and the experts were reminded of checking for conflict of interest.

The experts were informed that the name of experts that have taken part in evaluation will be published on the website of the European commission but that there will be no indication of scheme, topic or subject.

f. Conformity of the evaluation process witnessed with the evaluation procedures published in the H2020 Grants Manual:

The evaluation observed was in line with the evaluation procedures published in the IMI Manual for Proposal Submission, Evaluation, and Grant Award.

g. Quality of the evaluation process overall:

The overall quality of the evaluation was high. The experts reported no issues with the remote phase apart from the IT issues mentioned above and were satisfied with the results of the central meeting. There were no issues observed during the panel meeting in Brussels.

3. Any other remarks

- The experts commented that the Webinar was helpful.
- The experts reported that the briefing session was useful to remind them of the procedures.
- Over the three panels of experts there was a good balance of expertise, gender and geographical origin.
- The experts reported that the remote phase had gone smoothly and that the workload and timeline were acceptable
- The moderators were mindful of involving all the experts in the discussions and made sure that all experts engaged even the more quiet ones. Each rapporteur was asked to verbally summarise the evaluation of the proposal and then each expert was asked to comment before the whole group discussed the proposal in more detail. This enabled each expert to voice his/her opinion.

- It was observed that some subcriteria presented a degree of overlap and experts may not always know where a shortcoming should be referenced. Therefore, some time was spent shifting comments from one paragraph to another due to overlaps between criteria and interlinks between them.
- Of the 3 topics only one required a hearing when clarification was needed for two proposals. The hearing took 30 minutes per proposal. The moderator facilitated the call and was the only one speaking on behalf of the experts.

The applicants had received the questions in advance and were prepared for the call. The technology worked smoothly. The hearing was very helpful in clarifying an important point and enabled the experts to finalise the consensus reports.

- There was no occurrence of conflicts of interest whilst in the central meeting. However, for topic 1, during the remote phase, the detected conflicts of interest had reduced the number of experts available by almost half. This is an issue when dealing with a narrow field where relevant expertise for evaluation purposes is limited. It was one expert's opinion that the rules for conflict of interest were restrictive when dealing with major companies in a narrow field.
- Staff were very responsive to the experts' needs, helpful and acknowledgeable. The experts particularly commended the skills of the moderators.
- One evaluator from industry did remark that the expert's remuneration was low.

4. Summary of Recommendations

The observed evaluation process ran smoothly and in accordance with the standards published. The experts were satisfied with the workload and timeframe. It is worth noting that the modest number of topics and proposals per topic meant that the procedures and the systems were not tested to their limits. Nevertheless the overall quality and efficiency of the procedures were high.