

IMI2 JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

Call ID: H2020-JTI-IMI2-2019-17-two-stage

Date of evaluation: 27 to 28 November, 2019

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

Sophie Georgette DUPORT

Present at the evaluation: 27 to 28 November, 2019

Signature and date

7 February 2020

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 his/her observations the observer gives independent advice for improvement of the evaluation process.

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

Over the two days during which the in-house evaluations were held, the observer split her time between topic 1 that was held on the first day, and then topics 2 and 3, which were held simultaneously on the second day. The observer also interacted with the experts as a group and individually to receive their comments and ask for their feedback. One expert wrote to the observer after the in-house evaluation with more in-depth comments.

2. Overall impression

a. Scale of complexity of the evaluation task:

Three topics were part of the Call 17:

Topic 1-Optimising future obesity treatment

Topic 2-Open access chemogenomics library and chemical probes for the druggable genome

Topic 3- Intelligent prediction and identification of environment risks posed by human medicinal products

For stage 2 only one proposal was submitted per topic. Compared to stage 1 where each proposal (30 pages) was presented by the applicant consortium, at this stage the full proposal (70 pages) was presented by the final consortium composed of both academic and industry partners.

b. Transparency of the procedures:

The panel of experts for each topic attended a briefing at the beginning of the in-house evaluation. This briefing provided an overview of the IMI2 programme and a reminder of the procedures. During this briefing the experts had the opportunity to ask questions.

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

The three panels completed the evaluation in the time allocated. However the experts reported that it felt a little rushed towards the end of the session. One expert proposed that the panel should be encouraged to prioritise discussing weaknesses when there is usually more discussions required to reach a consensus and then comment on strengths where consensus is easier to reach. In stage 2 there is no competition as there is only one proposal to evaluate so the expert propose that spending more time on comments about the weaknesses of the proposal can help the consortium to improve their project.

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

The experts reported that the IT tool enabled a smooth remote evaluation. In all three panels the hearings held by the consortia were very useful in clarifying points and reassuring the panels that some important aspects were covered. The hearings improved the efficiency and accuracy of the evaluation, as the experts were able to ask for clarifications

e. Impartiality, fairness and confidentiality:

The evaluators were reminded of the rules regarding conflict of interest and confidentiality during the briefing.

The evaluators were asked to confirm they had no conflict of interest before the start of the in-house evaluation.

The hearings were conducted in a way that respected confidentiality: the evaluators were asked to introduce themselves only by their name without indication of job, employer or country.

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

The evaluation process witnessed was in line with the evaluation procedures published in the IMI2 JU Manual for submission, evaluation and grant award.

g. Quality of the evaluation process overall:

Overall, the evaluation was of very good quality with transparent and rigorous procedures.

3. Any other remarks

- Quality of the on-site briefing sessions

The briefing sessions on site were informative and enabled the evaluators to ask questions and clarification. It also placed the IMI2 evaluation process in a wider context.

- The understanding by experts of the call (context, topics), of the evaluation process and their role and of the award criteria and scoring scheme.

During the on-site evaluation, the call text was referred to frequently to ensure that the proposal was answering the call and that the experts were evaluating the proposal against the call text.

- The allocation of experts to proposals: balance (gender, geographic, sector), relevance and balance of expertise, ...

Over the three panels of experts there was a good balance of expertise, gender and geographical origin.

- The process of the hearings (if any) and the actors involved

The hearings were very helpful in allowing the panels to clarify some points and may have assisted in the reaching of consensus. The questions to the consortium for the hearings were agreed by the respective panel before being submitted to the consortium ahead of the hearing. The hearings observed followed the same procedure with the exception of one panel wherein an expert asked a number of new questions that were not follow up to the hearing questions. This was dealt with appropriately by the consortium. It may be helpful to emphasize to the panel what type of follow up questions are acceptable and that new questions are not allowed. In one panel, the opportunity to ask for follow up questions enabled the evaluator to rephrase and clarify a question which allowed the consortium to give a more in-depth explanation. Allowing evaluators to ask follow-up questions during the hearing was very useful but evaluators need to be reminded of what follow up questions should be.

- The occurrence and handling of specific issues (if any) such as conflicts of interest

There were no occurrence of specific issues witnessed.

- The quality of evaluation summary reports

Some rapporteurs commented that it would be easier to be able to merge the individual evaluation reports into the draft consensus report if the individual evaluation reports were sectioned by sub-criteria as this is the case for other schemes in H2020.

- Overall conduct of staff: responsiveness, hospitality, competence, ...

The staff were very responsive and very helpful. The moderators handled the hearings very successfully.

- Infrastructure and working conditions for evaluators

The evaluators reported that they were satisfied with the infrastructure and the working conditions.

- Workload and time given to evaluators for their work, (remotely and/or on-site, as applicable)

The experts reported that the workload and time for the stage 2 remote phase were appropriate. There was some issues with the time given for the on-site consensus writing as reported above, although all panels completed the report in the time allocated.

4. Summary of Recommendations

- The overall evaluation process enabled the panels to evaluate their respective proposal smoothly in the time allocated.
- The conduct of the hearings could be made smoother if the panels were provided with clarifications as to the types of follow-up questions they can ask.
- To support the merging of the individual evaluation report into a draft consensus report, it would be helpful to add the sub-criteria as sections in the online tool.
- To speed up the process of writing the consensus report, it would be helpful to invite the panels to concentrate on the weaknesses first and then wordsmith the strengths.