

IMI2 JU responses to the Independent Observers' Report

Call ID: H2020-JTI-IMI2-2016-10-two-stage

IMI2 10th Call for Proposals

Stage 2 evaluation

Date of evaluation: 13-16 November 2017

Name of the observers: Monica Dietl and Nicole Haeffner-Cavaillon

Summary of Recommendations

- *There were no apparent violations of the published Guidelines and the evaluations, and discussions were fair and transparent.*
- *All evaluation IMI2 JU procedures have been fully respected.*
- *The well-defined evaluation procedures, the high scientific level of Independent Experts and the skilled Scientific Officers supported by a very competent staff allowed the proposals to benefit of an outstanding quality assessment.*
- *All participants approached their tasks with commitment and professionalism. As for Stage 2 the final assessment represents a go/no go decision, the discussion between the experts was sometimes quite hard but each time a real consensus decision was taken.*
- *The Consensus Evaluation Reports were drafted with active participation of all Panel members and the rapporteur under the guidance of the IMI2 JU Scientific Officers. The scores and the comments faithfully represent the consensus opinion of the Panels. Evaluation of the proposals, panel discussions and questioning of the applicants, were open-minded and impartial.*

It should be emphasized that the IMI2 JU assessment procedures have reached a very high level of quality directly connected to the expertise, professionalism and competence of its employees.

The following sections collate comments we received from participants over all days of the meeting and give some recommendations and suggestions for modifications that could further improve the process for future Calls:

- *Although the rationale for their intervention was understood, some experts found that the content of the Consensus Evaluation Reports risked to be altered by the review of the lawyers. It is recommended that lawyers pay particular attention not to change the scientific meaning of the message the experts wish to convey to the proponents.*
- *As experts are not allowed to make recommendations in the consensus report but only describe shortcomings, some experts found that their scientific role was weakened and recommended the permit of recommendations be made to improve the monitoring of the granted proposal.*

- *Some experts suggest that their individual report should be sent to the applicants as they are scientifically more informative than the consensus report and can help in the implementation of the project.*
- *Some experts suggested that the rapporteur should receive the aggregated reviews earlier to be able to prepare in advance a first draft of the consensus report. This will speed up the final consensus report drafting.*
- *Some experts expressed frustration at having only one full proposal at Stage 2 (in particular when the second ranked proposal had also been considered excellent at the first stage), as lack of competition does not ensure that the quality of full proposal is as high as it could be. (even when the level of partners was indisputable); they recommended a second proposal to be accepted at Stage 2 in exceptional, well justified cases.*

IMI2 JU responses to the recommendations

IMI2 JU is pleased to have the confirmation of the independent experts that the submitted proposals were subject to an outstanding quality assessment, thanks to the well defined evaluation procedures, the high scientific level of the independent experts and the professionalism and commitment of the IMI2 JU staff members. IMI2 JU will make sure that the same conditions will be applied for future calls.

IMI2 JU notes the recommendations and suggestions made by the Independent observers and would like to add the following:

- The review of the Consensus Reports by the legal team is performed to ensure that the reports comply with IMI's evaluation rules and procedures and do not leave the evaluation of a proposal open to questions from a process point of view. Another important element is to ensure this consistency of approach across all panels from a legal perspective. The intention of this check is not to interfere with the scientific meaning of the message prepared by the experts.
- According to the H2020 rules, it is not possible to provide recommendations in the Evaluation Summary Report. It is highlighted at the briefings and in the call-related documents that the proposals should be evaluated as they are presented and if shortcomings are identified then this should be reflected in lower scores. When the experts identify shortcomings, they are requested to highlight these and may make comments regarding these shortcomings. In IMI2 JU evaluations the experts also have the ability to include extraneous remarks beyond the scoring parameters.
- Regarding the sending of individual comments to applicants, the evaluations that IMI2 JU perform are based upon the expert panel reaching a consensus. Therefore while the comments prepared remotely by individual experts may form the starting point of their discussions, the final report and comments should reflect the consensus reached by the panel. The experts should ensure that the consensus reports are scientifically informative to the applicants. The sharing of IERs could lead to confusion especially where a specific expert's comments in the IER may not perfectly match those expressed by the Consensus Report. In its final form, the Consensus Report reflects the consensus of a range of opinions and positions from the experts, each of whom possesses different backgrounds and professional expertise.
- Different options will be explored by the IMI2 JU in order to speed up the drafting of the consensus reports; IMI2 JU will take into consideration the opinions expressed by the independent experts.
- IMI2 JU appreciates the comments received from the independent experts regarding only having one proposal to evaluate at stage 2. However, in a 2 stage evaluation process after the evaluation at stage 1 the successful top-ranked applicant consortium is merged with the industry consortium to form the true public-private partnership at the consortium level. As there is only one industry consortium per topic and

it is not possible for the company representatives to participate in more than one consortium the simple design of IMI2 as a PPP restricts the second stage evaluation to a single proposal.

- Also, if the same industry consortium was represented in more than one consortium competing with each other at stage two there would be an obvious conflict of interest as the same industrial partners would have access to information from competing full proposals.