

SRG Annual Report on Innovative Health Initiative Joint Undertaking 2024

1 Introduction

The States' Representatives Group (SRG) has an advisory role in relation to the activities of the IHI. Among others, per Article 20(10) of Council Regulation¹ 2021/2085, the SRG is requested to “*submit, at the end of each calendar year, a report describing the national or regional policies in the scope of the joint undertaking and identifying specific ways of cooperation with the actions funded by the joint undertaking*”.

2 Feedback from the SRG

2.1 National and regional policies

Since the launch of the first calls in June 2022, a considerable effort has been made by the SRG members to promote IHI and the call content in their respective countries. Many promotional activities and approaches were used ranging from dedicated information days, direct promotion to industry groups and the research committees, as well as one-to-one meetings with potential applicants and support activities, website promotion, newsletters and outreach by social media.

The SRG has also provided applicants and potential applicants with guidance and support on the rules of participation in IHI. The SRG will continue to engage with the industry representative groups to identify further promotional opportunities and events in the various member states. Industry representative groups will be invited to attend the SRG meetings to ensure dialogue and exchange on future IHI calls and brokerage events. The consensus of the State Representative Group is that the topics and research areas tackled by the first IHI calls were sufficiently broad and aligned with the interest of the research community across member states.

There was wide support from the SRG for the Brokerage event that was organised in preparation for call 9. This was viewed as an excellent opportunity to bring national and regional partners in closer contact with the IHI office and program in general. Interactions such as these can be an important catalyst to enhance the interplay between the IHI goals and national and regional policies. The SRG would welcome additional such brokerage events in the future.

Specific examples on activities organised by the different member states to further advertise the IHI program and create synergy between IHI objectives and national and regional policies is provided in the appendix.

2.2 Call 9 - An Applicant Driven Approach

The SRG welcomes the new applicant driven approach in Call 9 which will open in 2025. This will allow a more open and competitive call for all researchers and entities across member states. It is also expected that this type of call will be attractive for new innovative research and disruptive technologies.

¹ Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe and repealing Regulations (EC) No 219/2007, (EU) No 557/2014, (EU) No 558/2014, (EU) No 559/2014, (EU) No 560/2014, (EU) No 561/2014 and (EU) No 642/2014

Is it expected that this will bring forward new players and increase the overall participation rate in IHI which has been missing to date due to the perceived lack of competition. In addition to this, the openness of the calls will also allow the IHI office to spend the carry over budget and address the program underspend to date.

2.3 Acknowledgment of the IHI Progress to date

The SRG acknowledges the success of the IHI program to date as many new grant agreements are signed and successful projects have commenced. A portfolio of projects has now been approved in research areas where there exist significant challenges in health research. These include in the use of big data, imaging and diagnostics, to advance cancer diagnosis and treatment, and the creation of digital platforms to improve the care of people with neurodegenerative and cardiometabolic diseases. This is a positive development, however, overall, there has been a low participation rate in IHI and some topics were left unfunded. It is anticipated that the development of an applicant driven approach will create a more competitive landscape and enhance the scientific excellence in proposals and projects.

2.4 Priorities moving forward

Overall, the topics and research areas were sufficiently broad and aligned with the interest of the research community. However, there are still considerable challenges in identifying industry partners with sufficient capacity to contribute 45% in-kind support to the projects particularly in the single stage calls. The SRG would favor smaller projects in order to give SMEs and potential academic applicants the chance to participate in IHI and contribute with their innovative ideas in health research and innovation.

More information about all submitted ideas to the Science and Innovation Panel (including those not passing the eligibility check, submitted from which countries) and implementation into real topics would be welcomed. It is strongly recommended to increase the number of topics, which are implemented in IHI topics, to encourage the broad scientific community and keep this process attractive.

3 Conclusions

Considering the cross-sectorial partnership, IHI has the potential to be a game changer in delivering tangible benefits in research for patients and society. IHI is well placed to ensure that Europe remains at the cutting edge of interdisciplinary, sustainable, patient-centric health research however, to optimise success and participation across Member States and associated countries.

The SRG representative welcomes the new call structure and evolution of the program to now include an applicant driven approach in Call 9. This approach is new and we acknowledge that it is difficult to anticipate the overall level of interest and subsequent workload during the valuation process, however, to date this has been greeted with an increase in interest from the research community. This is also reflected in the high level of attendance at the call 9 brokerage event in Brussels in November 2024. We eagerly look forward to the results and evaluating of this approach in 2025.



Martha Cahill, Chairperson



Jasper Claessen, Vice Chairperson

On behalf of the IHI JU States' Representatives Group

Appendix to SRG Annual Report 2024

National and regional policies

To further the impact of IHI, it is important to ensure that IHI projects align with national initiatives and policies. This is best achieved by ensuring that there is broad understanding of the IHI research priorities, that new calls are well-advertised and that there is divers participation in research projects, both geographically as well as by public and private parties.

The SRG is an important liaison to ensure that national and regional policies and IHI programming align to achieve better health outcomes. In this appendix, a number of examples are given through with the different member states aim to achieve this.

Organisation	Webinars	Newsletters	Meetings	IT tools	International collaboration
DLR Project Management Agency (GE)	National and regional webinars on opportunities in IHI	Updates on IHI opportunities in periodic newsletter		Dedicated IHI website from National Contact Point	
Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (AT)	Online training for applicants with detailed proposal check for coordinators and training for successful applicants for project implementation	Updates on IHI opportunities in periodic newsletter	Dedicated IHI event at the Austrian Life Science Day and in a series of workshops and seminars for the Austrian research community.	Highlighted IHI partnering platform to stakeholders	Collaboration with other SRG members to jointly support applicants
Dutch Enterprise Agency (NL)	4 webinars for public parties on	Updates on IHI opportunities in		IHI news on Horizon Europe website	Meetings in Canada with local partners to

	opportunities in IHI as well as procedural tips and tricks	periodic newsletters			explain Horizon Europe and IHI procedures
CDTI (ES)	Webinar on IHI opportunities and conditions and rules for participation	Updates on IHI opportunities in periodic newsletters	<p>National infodays on new IHI calls for public and private parties</p> <p>Special event with participation from the IHI office and industry partners on IHI</p> <p>Promotion of IHI in bilateral meetings with public and private parties and during several post-graduate courses</p>	IHI news on Horizon Europe website	
Ireland	Webinar on IHI opportunities and conditions and rules for participation	Updates on IHI opportunities in newsletters. For example, Updates on the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) Calls for 2025 (activehosted.com)	One-to-one meetings and support for interested applicants	SRG support and IHI updates and Communications are promoted as part with the wide range of EU funding opportunities at events and through webinars.	