

Report of the Independent Observer (IO)

**2021 EIT Call for Proposals in the area of Cultural
and Creative Sectors and Industry (CCSI)**

Final Report

**On the conduct of the evaluation process and
application of the evaluation criteria by the
evaluators**

18 July 2022

Executive Summary

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), is an independent EU body that contributes to the competitiveness of Europe, its sustainable economic growth and job creation by promoting and strengthening synergies and cooperation among businesses, education institutions and research organisations. It operates mainly through its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

To further enhance its impact and to incentivise the innovations needed to meet new societal challenges, the EIT keeps on expanding its portfolio of KICs as established in the EIT Regulation and Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 with a new KIC tackling challenges in the cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI).

The selection process was formally launched on 26 October 2021.

The Call for Proposals including the evaluation criteria and the evaluation process was approved by the EIT Governing Board (GB) in preparation of the publication of the EIT Call.

The deadline for submission of proposals was on 24 March 2022. By the deadline, five proposals were submitted but only four of them complied with the criteria and were considered eligible for further evaluation.

The report describes the observations, findings, suggestions, recommendations and conclusions drafted by Agnes Boucheron. She was contracted as an independent observer (IO) for the evaluation of proposals submitted in response to the EIT 2021 Call for Proposals for the designation of a new EIT KIC tackling CCSI challenges, in line with the EIT Strategic SIA.

The IO attended all the various phases of the evaluation phases:

- Remote follow-up of the individual evaluation by five independent expert-evaluators: a remote expert briefing took place on 5 April 2022, the remote observation of the individual remote evaluation (IER) phase was on 8-25 April 2022, the consensus phase (remote attendance and observation) held on 16-19 May 2022;
- Remote attendance of the Extraordinary Meeting of the EIT Governing Board to approve the results of the experts' evaluation of the proposals on 8 June 2022;
- Observation of the hearings with the EIT GB and of the designation decision taken by the EIT GB on 22 June 2022, following a preparatory on-site meeting on 21 June.

The IO considers that, in general, throughout the evaluation process, all evaluation activities were conducted with transparency, fairness and diligence. The EIT has respected all the guiding principles (independence, impartiality, objectivity,

accuracy and consistency) and the relevant rules, procedures and criteria as described in the text of the call for proposals, at all stages of the process (individual assessment, consensus and hearings).

The evaluation procedures were perfectly mastered and respected. The methodology used was fully adapted to the evaluation of large Innovation Communities with an additional step added in comparison with the Horizon Europe or H2020 evaluations, since the KIC call evaluation is followed by a hearing phase in the presence and active participation of the EIT GB and with the attendance of a representative from the Commission. This phase, specific to the EIT structure, is crucial to endorse the decision taken on the designation of dynamic and long-term pan-European partnerships. It should be noted that this is the first time that the IO has been confronted with following such a procedure and she has been convinced of its usefulness in validating assessment and decision-making processes of such a magnitude.

Some remarks or suggestions for improvement of the evaluation procedures are made in this report, but as they are generally of a minor nature, they do not negatively affect the evaluation process or its final outcome.

The IO could state the extremely professional approach, vigilance and well-tailored skills and competences of each participant in the evaluation process (EIT staff, EIT GB members, experts and rapporteur) which undeniably benefited the quality level of the evaluation. This in turn brings a tremendous support to the IO in fully carrying out the tasks assigned to her.

1 - Introduction

As described in the Annex 2 (Provisional Planning and Deliverables „Terms of Reference“) of the expert contract, the IO is an expert who gives an impartial opinion on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation process.

The role of the IO is to observe and monitor the evaluation process, to examine how the evaluators apply the evaluation criteria in a consistent, fair and impartial manner, to verify whether the applicable procedures are followed and possibly to provide recommendations for improving future evaluation processes.

The present IO was first approached by the EIT staff on 22 February 2022 in order to ascertain her availability and willingness to participate in the evaluation process as an Independent Observer. She was then selected after an online interview with the EIT on 3 March 2022. The contract was digitally sealed by the EIT on 1 April 2022 and signed by the IO on 5 April 2022, after a second check of the absence of conflict of interest once the call had been closed on 24 March 2022.

According to what was asked over the interview and in the contract, the Observer's tasks comprise the following:

- To participate virtually in the expert briefing meeting on 5 April 2022;
- To attend the online consensus meetings in 16-19 May 2022 and calibration meetings;
- To participate virtually in the Extraordinary GB meeting on the confirmation of the evaluation results and ranking by external experts and decision of the consortia admitted to the hearings on 8 June 2022;
- To participate in the hearings with the EIT GB on 22 June 2022, including the preparatory meeting on 21 June before the hearings;
- To draft and submit an independent assessment of the evaluation process.

The IO adopted the following approach:

- During the remote phase of the individual evaluation reports drafted by the five experts: follow the progress and process of the evaluation via the SEP interface, as well as through the exchange of e-mails and regular reminders sent by the call coordinator and the rapporteur. The IO was also asked via SEP to confirm that she had read the proposals and was invited to provide a comment.

- During the consensus meeting phase: attending all the online consensus meetings held over 4 days, as well as the calibration meetings.

- Attend the extraordinary meeting of the EIT GB on 8 June 2022 organised online: at this meeting, the IO had briefly to report on her observation work during the individual assessment and consensus phases.

- Take part in the preparatory meeting to the hearings on 21 June 2022 in Budapest and in the course of it, provide the EIT GB with a brief summary report of the observations made so far. Attend the two hearings and related agenda points of the EIT GB in Budapest and the voting on 22 June 2022.

- After the decision taken by the EIT Board on 22 June 2022 and published on 23 June 2022, prepare this current report for the EIT Director and the Chair of the EIT GB.

Agnes Boucheron has a significant experience of European Commission research proposal evaluations especially in the fields of education, innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability. In particular, she has been a policy officer at the European Commission (DG Research and Innovation) and a research analyst specialised in innovation, industry and research at the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). She has been an independent expert (evaluator, rapporteur, vice-chair, quality controller) on various occasions and on several themes for FP7, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe programmes. She has drafted

several reports as a reviewer of mid-term and final reports on specific EU research projects. As well Agnes Boucheron is regularly appointed as an independent EU expert on ethics and has provided evaluations and reports to the European Commission, EU agencies and various clients on ethical issues. She is specialised in European economics, programme life cycle management and project analysis.

This is her first experience as an observer for the EIT involved in a KIC call evaluation.

2 - Observations by the Independent Observer

The IO would like to draw out a few main remarks:

- The briefing of 5 April 2022 for experts, the rapporteur and the IO was of very high quality, very informative and comprehensive (presentation of the EIT community, presentation of the call for proposals, evaluation process, administrative issues, conflict of interest, confidentiality). The same applies to the briefing that opened the remote consensus phase from 16 to 19 May 2022.

- The verification - or even double-checking - of the absence of any conflict of interest of all participants in the evaluation (EIT GB members, experts, rapporteurs and observer) in relation to all applicants to the call (all partners in the proposal, including associated partners) was carried out in a very scrupulous manner.

- The selection of the five experts of the evaluation panel was efficient and well thought out. It has brought together an excellent level of expertise and complementary skills to cover the many aspects of the proposals. The gender balance was satisfying.

- All expert evaluators followed the prescribed order to draw up the individual evaluation reports of the proposals assigned to them.

- The discussions that took place at the consensus meetings have always been very well conducted. They were both respectful, attentive and thorough in the contribution of each of the group's experts. It was also noted that there was a very good connection between experts who had no difficulty in working together. This made consensus meetings effective.

- As a result of the pandemic, it has been noted that remote meetings have been facilitated.

- Time management at consensus meetings was good in general and rather fair: one meeting exceeded the time limit by $\frac{1}{4}$ hour and a second proposal had a 3.5 hour meeting (instead of 4 hours). The calibration meeting initially planned a fair

time given to each proposal to justify the scores given at consensus meetings (the plan was to spend 1 hour for the 4 proposals (with 15 minutes each), check scores against the other 4 proposals and 1 hour for ranking, justification and conclusion). In fact, the first calibration meeting was longer than expected to ensure an equal and common approach to the 5 experts. On the other hand, the time allocated to each proposal was not perfectly equal (but this might mainly be due to the fact that the experts wanted the scores of the best proposal to be really justified compared to the second proposal in the scores. They also wanted to make sure that the lower ranked proposals had fair scores and that the whole panel of experts agreed on this.

- The call coordinator was excellent in monitoring the work, providing support, making the timeline respected and sharing views.

- There was a very good understanding and complementarity between the call coordinator and the rapporteur throughout the process. This proved to be particularly effective in keeping with the timetable, the management of the work of the experts as well the management of consensus and calibration meetings as initially set.

- The hearings on 22 June in Budapest went very well in a fair manner and the time allotted was fully respected.

- During the preparatory meeting of the 21 June, the time allocated by the EIT GB members to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each hearing's proposal was not entirely equal. However, it should be noted that this was mainly due to the fact that during the first proposal discussed, the Board set up a common structure applicable to both hearings regarding the sequencing of the criteria to be addressed and the questions to be asked. This structure was therefore taken up again during the discussion of the second proposal (which de facto shortened the discussion time of this proposal, without however diminishing the quality of what was said).

- The IO considers that the various submitted reports are balanced and fully coherent with the proposals. The scores assigned to them are consistent and the IO believes that they justify the quality of the evaluation process as conducted.

2A - Experts Briefing Meeting on 5 April 2022

After all the experts, the rapporteur and the IO had signed their contractual arrangements with the EIT and following a second check by the EIT of the absence of any actual and potential conflict of interest for all external participants in the evaluation (experts, rapporteurs, observer), the briefing for the experts was held remotely on 5 April 2022 (webinar).

The content of the briefing was well prepared by the EIT staff and a lot of

interesting materials was sent out in advance to the experts to brief them. It was sufficiently detailed and comprehensive. The slide presentation was well laid out and the interventions by various EIT staff were dynamic and of reasonable length; which was essential to maintain the attention of the audience (especially during online sessions).

The IO states the importance of organising this briefing especially for an organisation such as the EIT, which somehow departs from the standard evaluation process generally practised in Horizon Europe. It was a very useful and timely exercise to remind the experts of the principles of EIT Calls for Proposals, the specificities of the 2021 call and all aspects of the evaluation process (methodology, rules and procedures, actors involved, phasing, timetable, criteria and scoring, legal/administrative and logistical issues) before starting drawing out their individual evaluation report.

2B - Remote Evaluation Phase 8-25 April 2022

The communication from the call coordinator was smooth, regular and transparent towards the experts, the rapporteur and the IO.

The remote individual evaluation phase was scheduled from 8 April to 25 April. The call coordinator informed the experts on 8 April 2022 that 3 proposals were first to be assessed by the experts. Few days later, after further technical clarifications by EIT, a fourth proposal received the approval to be evaluated as well.

The experts had exactly the same workload (4 proposals) and the IO has considered it as a very reasonable level of work to be achieved. The time left to the experts to evaluate each proposal was a maximum of 3 working days, which seems a bearable time to the IO so as to carry out a complete and high-quality evaluation report of each proposal.

Very early in the process, the coordinator reminded the experts about the order to be followed in finalizing their individual evaluation reports in order to facilitate the rapporteur's tasks. In general, the experts followed it. However, for two proposals, the order had to be swapped when the call coordinator and the rapporteur realised that some experts' progress had become uneven.

One expert submitted all his evaluation reports very quickly. Another expert maintained a steady pace in his work allowing him to deliver individual evaluation reports defined as of high quality by the rapporteur.

Other experts were a little slower, in particular because of other very busy professional commitments which may have delayed them somewhat, may have

increase the difficulty of delivering the work in time or may have had some impact on the quality of the work delivered.

It was observed that one expert also spent some time responding to SEP comments on the early IERs submitted by other experts before finalising and submitting all hers. The IO considers that it might be wise to remind experts to commit themselves to deliver their reports in a timely manner before starting interacting on SEP; this could help to ensure that the work progresses according to the original schedule.

The rapporteur had to send some reminders to two experts to keep them on track to the timetable, but the process never got out of hand and the deadlines to submit the evaluation reports were ultimately met as there seemed to have enough contingency in the schedule to accommodate delays.

The individual evaluation reports were submitted one after the other by the experts rather than as a “combined set”, which highly facilitated the work of the rapporteur and shows that the experts did their best to respect the prescribed order of proposals.

2C - Consensus meetings 16-19 May 2022 and Calibration Meetings 19 May 2022 and 27 May 2022

Consensus meetings

All consensus meetings took place remotely between 16 and 19 May 2022 and the IO took part in all of them.

The moderator gave a short briefing at the first consensus meeting to recall the planning of the consensus meetings, some specific rules and modalities and some logistical aspects. She had previously informed the experts about the planning of each consensus meeting by e-mail.

The format of each consensus meeting was as follows: a general statement on the content of the proposal, followed by a short round table discussion allowing the experts to give an overview of their assessment of the proposal without going into detail. The IO could notice that this round of discussions allowed for a possible pre-assessment of how difficult it would be to reach a consensus among the experts. It should be noted that the moderator always wisely ensured that the floor was first given to a different expert each time. This was followed by detailed discussions on each evaluation criterion and sub-criterion.

The discussions at each consensus meeting were of very good quality, very thorough, respectful of the various points of view expressed by the experts according to their different expertise who could approach the proposal from a different angle. The IO would like to point out that this mix of expertise is both a

richness and a necessity in order to achieve a valid, convincing and credible evaluation quality.

The rapporteur shared his computer screen along each meeting in order to present the draft consensus report he had prepared where each sub-criterion was expressed by at least one strength or weakness, had formulated generally agreeable strengths and weaknesses allowing focus on points that required resolution, and had addressed points in iterative fashion prior to the consensus meetings. The IO could see that this was well elaborated each time, with defining the points to be discussed or developed in order to facilitate the discussion between experts and then agree on scores. The rapporteur made corrections during the meetings and made final changes usually in the wake of the meeting.

The time management was rather efficient and the good moderation of meetings can be stated. The IO noticed a good complementarity and understanding between the moderator and the rapporteur in order to keep up to the timetable and the scheduled times, to move the discussions forward efficiently and to maintain the attention of the experts. Each expert had ample opportunities to express their opinions and converge to common statements following structured debates, captured points that could lead to questions by EIT GB for the hearings.

The IO could check that the “connections” between the experts were very good and they had no difficulty in working together which had resulted in rather effective consensus meetings. The five experts generally agreed quite easily on the score attributed to each criterion and on the final score of each proposal, except for one of the proposals for which one of the experts was particularly enthusiastic unlike the others. However, in this case too, they were all able to reach a common opinion on the proposal fairly easily. (Perhaps in this case one could have expected a slightly more challenging approach to the debate, but this would not have affected the final ranking anyway). It is the opinion of the IO that if this meeting had not been held online, but face-to-face, the “dissenting” expert would have been able to defend his point of view more strongly and would not have so easily adopted the comments of the other experts.

The rapporteur did an excellent job both in the content of his reports and in his ability to listen, mediate and facilitate finding solution when needed during the consensus meetings.

The IO notes that the consensus exercise was certainly made easier after the experts had realised that not all proposals were equal in terms of quality and outcome which resulted into scores that were not so close to each other.

Calibration and quality control

In the last day of the consensus phase a first calibration session was held with the objective to check consistency of scores with comments and smoothen, if necessary, relative differences in leniency/harshness between proposals.

This first calibration meeting was scheduled in two hours of time: 1 hour for the 4 proposals (with 15 minutes allocated for each one) to check the scores of each one against the other 4 proposals; 1 hour for the ranking, justification and conclusion.

This first calibration meeting was however longer than expected to ensure a fair and equal approach towards each proposal. In fact, different time allocations were provided to each proposal with the dual purpose of ensuring that the best proposal was indeed the best to be selected and that the worst proposal came last in the ranking and as well to ensure that the five experts agreed on these points. Over this meeting, the score modifications agreed by the experts concerned only one proposal (the one coming third in the ranking) with the lowering of 2 sub-criteria by 1/2 point.

Following a set of remarks made by the Quality Controller, a second calibration meeting took place on 27 May: indeed he considered necessary a new calibration meeting concerning the two proposals passing the threshold of 70 of the hearing before the EIT GB of 22 June so as to ensure that the scoring matches the wording and that justifications were fairly provided for each criteria (and especially for the impact one). The 2nd calibration meeting lasted approximately 2h30. All experts participated and carefully considered and discussed all points raised by the Quality Controller. Responses to all comments were provided including the confirmation of the initial consensus or slight adaptation of wording/ scoring. The experts first considered the two below threshold proposals, then the two above threshold proposals. Consensus was reached again by the experts for all four proposals as per the consensus reports provided.

The IO could check that the two online calibration meetings were both useful to share the experts' views and to validate and reconfirm their assessments, as well as needed to re-confirm agreement on the ranking.

2D - Extraordinary online EIT Governing Board Meeting 8 June 2022

An extraordinary meeting of the EIT GB was organised remotely on 8 June in order to assess and endorse the evaluation results obtained after the consensus phase and also to prepare the hearing phase of the evaluation to be held in Budapest on 22 June.

The IO received the agenda of the extraordinary GB meeting and fully participated to the meeting. Along this meeting, the IO was asked to take the floor to deliver her preliminary remarks on the evaluation process to the EIT GB members. These remarks are reflected in various sections of this current report.

2E - Feedback from the Experts on the Evaluation Process

Here are some remarks made by the experts on separate elements:

- The experts generally felt grateful to be part of the evaluation committee for the designation of a new KIC in which proposals were quite diverse.
- One expert recalled that the contract provided a fair and realistic time allocation for each evaluation. The rapporteur emphasized that there was sufficient time to prepare the consensus reports even when one or two experts experienced delays in their IERs.
- The amount of information and instructions provided both before and during the briefing meeting was very helpful. The thorough briefing on 5 April was appreciated as was the clarity of the supporting documents provided.
- The experts appreciated the collaboration and the structured work organisation of the EIT team since the selection interview in early March 2022. The call coordinator was very professional, providing timely responses, developing workable consensus meeting agendas, liaising with the SEP helpdesk to deal with minor technical or publication rights issues. She was recognised as being extremely useful in managing the whole process across all phases.
- The experts in general recognised the quality of the other experts involved, offering knowledge and experience relevant to the submitted proposals. One expert mentioned that given the good team spirit and skills of the expert team, she felt even comfortable at expressing minority views. One other expert expressed that the experts behaved in a very tolerant and understandable manner which helped to reach agreements on all criteria and all evaluated proposals.
- The work of the rapporteur was highly recognised by the experts, particularly in his ability to consolidate the IERs and to produce excellent consensus reports. His writing and rapporteur facilitation skills were appreciated.
- A good complementarity between the moderator and the rapporteur was noted by experts, which contributed to move discussions along efficiently and maintain, as far as possible, the schedule as planned.
- One expert appreciated that the meetings were efficient and finished on time, and the spacing of the consolidation meetings was recognised as optimal by some experts.
- According to one expert, the online meetings can be considered as qualitatively comparable to physical meetings, although there may be some misinterpretation and misunderstanding online, and if it is sometimes difficult to grasp what people actually mean. Another expert felt that the online meetings worked well because they allowed to prepare better between sessions.

Areas for improvement proposed by the experts:

- One expert spoke of the usefulness of providing evaluators with more guidance or suggestions on how to standardise methods of analysis in order to facilitate the use of a common method.
- The rapporteur observed some uneven commitment across experts, especially in resolving some open points on SEP or in drafting the IERs which could be improved.
- One expert mentioned the quality of the proposals which could be improved. For example, instructions for filling in the form were not always followed, information was incomplete such as unsigned motivation letters, a summary might be missing, financial details were lacking details or included numerical errors.
- The practicality of the SEP was shared by the experts. Most of them were already very familiar with it, which allowed them to use the online commenting tool easily and to communicate effectively with each other. However, for others, the chat box of SEP could be run more effectively, including providing some examples and instructions on how/what to comment. The exchanges could be felt to be too long with discussion points not always relevant.
- In order to ease the process, it was felt that quality control contributions could have been provided more quickly (i.e. after the conclusion of each draft consensus report and possibly before the first calibration meeting).

Different quality proposals from different applicants made it easier to agree on scores (It should be mentioned, however, that although the scores in the IERs may have been quite different from one expert to another, the individual experts had scored the four proposals consistently, which meant that the relative difference in scores was maintained by all experts for all proposals.) In general, expert agreement on most criteria was fairly easy to achieve.

2F - Hearings of the applicants with the EIT GB 22 June 2022, following a preparatory meeting on 21 June in Budapest

The applicants of the 2 proposals above the threshold of 70% points at the panel of experts evaluation stage (out of a maximum score of 100) were invited to attend the EIT GB hearings on 22 June at the EIT offices in Budapest. (The maximum score to be obtained at hearing is 30, which gives an overall total of 130).

The GB made its assessment of the proposals auditioned on the basis of the documents received as:

- The text of the call and its annexes,
- eligible proposals submitted (2),
- The ESRs (2) and scores given by the experts following the consensus and calibration phase of the evaluation,
- A GB briefing note,
- Draft hearing questions,
- The draft GB Decision on the new KIC and reserve list following hearings,
- A draft GB Decision on the allocation of EIT financial contribution for the start-up grant,
- A summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the 2 proposals prepared by the experts during the consensus phase and the draft hearing questions for proposals above threshold.

The assessment of the GB was completed with the hearings session where each hearing consisting in a 10 minute presentation of the proposal by the applicant followed by a 75 minute question and answer session.

General observations to be noted are that:

- the preparation of the hearings was excellent from the EIT GB members and the EIT staff showed great professionalism and dedication, with a constant intention to improve the process.
- One key point was the requirement to adopt a perfectly fair, equitable and transparent approach regarding the two proposals over the hearing sessions.
- The evaluation by the GB at the hearing, and their decision thereafter, were made in full compliance with the EIT rules and procedures described in the call text.

Preparatory meeting on 21 June in Budapest

The meeting on 21 June, the day before the hearings, provided an opportunity to fine-tune the preparation of the hearings, particularly with regard to the following points:

- The strengths and weaknesses of each proposal were reminded to the EIT GB members. It should be recalled that the questions in the Q&A session are a set of questions prepared for each evaluation criterion, with adding specific questions suggested by the experts after the consensus phase, EIT staff and EIT Executive Committee.
- The same format was adopted to present the set of questions asked at each

hearing in order to ensure an equal treatment and to have a non-discriminatory approach. Three members of the EIT GB were designated to ask the questions for the three criteria; this rule was applied identically at the two hearings/for both proposals.

- The concern to limit the set of questions for each criterion so as not to exceed the 25 minutes fixed for each of them.

- The members of the EIT GB agreed to reverse the sequence of the three criteria during the Q&A session in order to make the hearing exercise more efficient in better understanding what each consortium planned to achieve. The applied order of the blocks was therefore: impact, excellence and quality & efficiency of implementation.

Over the preparatory meeting on 21 June, the IO noted that the first proposal addressed was longer discussed than the second one, but this was mainly due to the fact that general and technical points applicable to both hearings were addressed during the analysis of the first proposal.

The revised and consolidated document (compared to the initial version at the end of the evaluation process) listing the strengths and weaknesses for each criterion and the list of questions to be addressed per criterion was prepared in the course of the meeting and completed before the hearing session.

Hearings of the Applicants with the EIT GB 22 June 2022 in Budapest

The EIT Director ensured that the quorum was reached in order the meeting to take place. It was noted indeed that, in accordance with the relevant EIT regulations, some EIT GB members were excluded from participating in the evaluation because a conflict of interest was detected. This was the case for four members who had a proven conflict of interest. Nevertheless two GB members with a potential conflict of interest were able to participate and vote 'under close monitoring'.

The IO could check that the EIT Director underlined the rules regarding the timing and the need for a neutral approach towards the two consortia during the hearings (i.e. avoiding reaction or applause from the GB members which could be misinterpreted by the consortia). In addition, there was a reminder not to talk about the hearings or the proposals' content in case of meeting consortia members in the EIT premises that day; this was strictly respected. It was also reminded that the proposal receiving the highest number of points out of the maximum of 130 points could be designated by the EIT GB and that the GB can designate one applicant and may establish a reserve list with one applicant.

The timing of the hearings and the planned sequencing were perfectly respected. They were each followed by a short round table discussion (10 minutes) among

the GB members once the hearing completed.

A short discussion on the presentation of the strengths and weaknesses and a calibration session took place at the end of the proposals' hearing, so that both reports would be fair and balanced in their content (and drafted in a way to avoid claim for redress) as applicants can ask to receive them.

After the hearings session, the Observer was asked to comment briefly on the respect and conduct of the procedure during the hearing phase of the 2 proposals, with the relevant content having been added to this present report.

The GB members were asked to give scores separately and confidentially. It is noted that GB members had been clearly reminded of the process beforehand and the criteria for scoring were also distributed. According to the applying rules, the GB score was calculated as the average of the individual scores provided by the GB members. The sum of the points from the Governing Board hearing was added to the points obtained in the evaluation phase.

Although the evaluation criteria for the GB hearings follow the structure of the evaluation criteria used by the experts, the two parts of the evaluation procedure are based on different criteria. The overall strategic rationale and coherence of the EIT KIC model presented in the proposal is assessed at the hearing stage. For this purpose, proposals are evaluated from an overall perspective against the three main criteria (excellence, quality and efficiency of implementation and impact) and the GB evaluation is supplemented by a series of prepared questions based on the three evaluation criteria to be put directly to the consortia members after their hearing's presentation. The OI notes that by participating in the hearing phase, GB members have an additional and non-negligible element of comparison between the auditioned proposals, which allows them to obtain a more insightful perspective for the selection of the KIC. The hearing phase might influence opinions on the proposal and even ultimately might alter the final score and ranking from those given by the experts during the evaluation phase.

3 Sum up of findings and recommendations for improvements

- The KIC evaluation of proposals was conducted with fairness, diligence and transparency in accordance with all guiding principles (independence, impartiality, objectivity, accuracy and consistency) and all relevant rules, procedures and criteria at all stages of the procedure (individual evaluation, consensus and hearings).
- The expert panel gathered experts having either a specific competence or a horizontal one and thus reflected an excellent mix of expertise to cover the various aspects of the proposals.
- The moderator/rapporteur pairing proved to be particularly very competent, fully

committed and complementary, which made the tasks and different steps of the evaluation process much easier for each actor involved in the process.

- All briefings for experts and for the GB were excellent and comprehensive. The meetings were on time, well managed and the spacing of the consensus meetings was considered optimal.
- The evaluation process fully took place remotely. Some experts wished the next consensus meetings to be held physically again. Following the pandemic period, it could be noted that conducting remote meetings became easier and that they were as effective in terms of both content and listening as physical meetings. Since the quality of the meetings seems not being affected by a remote organisation, the IO would therefore be of the opinion to maintain it in the future for the following reasons: in order to make the process greener and more sustainable, because it saves on staff costs (the EIT would have to mobilise fewer staff to organise remote meetings) and it saves on the costs of using the EIT premises.
- Two experts questioned the uneven quality of the proposals (e.g. instructions given to fill in the form not followed, incomplete information such as unsigned motivation letters, lack of summary, insufficient financial details, numerical errors, etc.). The IO would propose that in the future stricter or more binding instructions to be provided for the submission of a proposal.
- Access and use of SEP worked well for the experts. They generally made an extensive use of it and thus were able to communicate effectively. The SEP tool has the advantage of keeping a record of all the debates conducted accessible to all actors involved in the process as well as strengths and weaknesses and discussion points. The IO notes, however, that she encountered some access rights to SEP issues over a period of time of the process. She quickly informed the call coordinator who 1) provided her with additional support and missing information and 2) did her best to have the access rights restored as soon as possible. Thanks to this, it should be stated that this had no effect on the IO's duties.
- All discussions in the consensus panels were very thorough, covering all criteria and sub-criteria.
- At the beginning of each hearing, the GB Chairwoman introduced the consortium very briefly to the people around the table (this was completed by the consortium members who were asked to present themselves in detail). It would have been useful as well to introduce them all the people around the table , i.e. the GB members, the EIT Director, the call coordinator, the EIT staff, the Commission representative and the Independent observer, etc.. in order to give to the consortium a clearer idea of the audience listening to their presentation.
- The 10-minute debriefing among GB members that took place immediately after the hearings: the IO is aware that it is part of the normal course of the hearing meeting that this tour de table is conducted in a very open manner between the GB members after each hearing. The IO might first have questioned its potential

impact on the rating decision given by each GB member individually. However, in the light of additional information, the validity and qualities of this debriefing should not be questioned by her anymore, since the objectives of this round table are clearly defined: to share first impressions between the members of the GB and to be a useful means for drafting the hearing summary reports. This provides an overview of strengths a weaknesses and how the final score can be accompanied by the report.

Appendix 1 : Timeline of the EIT 2021 Call Evaluation

The timeline of the EIT 2018 call evaluation was as follows:

- 5 April 2022: Evaluation experts Briefing (online webinar)
- 8- 25 May 2022 : SEP remote evaluation stage – preparation of the individual evaluation reports by the experts
- 16-19 May 2022: Online Consensus meetings and preparation of the Evaluation Summary Reports.
- 19 May 2022: Online 1st Calibration meeting
- 27 May 2022: Online 2nd calibration meeting
- 8 June 2022: Online Extraordinary EIT GB meeting on the confirmation of the expert evaluation results and ranking by external experts and decision of the consortia admitted to the hearings. The rapporteur and the IO presented a brief report
- 21 June 2022: Preparatory meeting to the hearings in Budapest
- 22 June 2022: Hearings with the EIT GB in Budapest
- 22 June 2022: EIT GB designation of the selected proposal
- 23 June 2022 EIT officially announced the winning team set to build EIT Culture & Creativity
- 6 July 2022: Draft report of the Independent Observer
- 18 July 2022: Final report of the Independent Observer

Appendix 2 : Role of the various actors in the EIT evaluation process

The Independent Expert:

- Evaluates proposals submitted in a response to a Call for Proposals
- Prepares and submits Individual Evaluation Reports (IERs) per proposal in SEP.

The Rapporteur:

- Prepares one Consensus Report per proposal combining the IERs of the experts into one document.
- Finalises the Evaluation Summary Report (ESRs) for each proposal.

The Call Coordinator:

- Monitors the progress of the evaluation in SEP in close cooperation with the Rapporteur
- Checks and ensures that the process of hearings by the GB members is fully respected

The Moderator:

- Seeks a consensus on each proposal, impartially and ensures that the Consensus Report reflects the consensus reached
- Ensures that each proposal is evaluated fairly, according to the evaluation criteria.

The Quality Controller:

- Reviews the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR) based on the Consensus Reports which are initiated by SEP system
- Checks the proposal ranking, in parallel.

The Independent Observer:

- Check the functioning and running of the overall evaluation process
- Provides an impartial opinion to the EIT on the conduct of a high quality evaluation
- Advise, in theory, on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation session and, if necessary, suggest possible improvements.

Appendix 3 : Key documents reviewed by the IO during the Evaluation process

- EIT Call for Proposals 2021 for a new EIT Knowledge and Innovation -- Community (KIC) in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI)
- Factsheet on the KIC on Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) published on 28 May 2021
- EIT Call page
- 2021 Call for proposal – FAQs
- The “EIT Innovation Model” document
- Four webinars links covering all aspects from the EIT Community: from the key activities to the EIT Funding Model.
- General expert information from the European Commission: (Expert briefing PPT; Expert FAQ; Expert support videos)
- Part B2 and B3 template proposal documents
- „Declaration of Honneur“ (annex to part A) template document
- The Part B1 template proposal document
- „Annex 2: provisional planning and deliverables. Terms of reference. Evaluation of proposals received as result of the 2022 EIT call for proposals“ document
- The „Horizon Europe – Evaluation form“ document
- Template Application form for proposals
- PowerPoint presentation of the Expert Briefing of 5 April
- PowerPoint presentation of the Extraordinary GB meeting of 8 June
- PowerPoint presentation of the preparatory GB Hearing of 21 June
- The confidential GB briefing note prepared for the hearing session
- A summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the 2 proposals prepared by the experts during the consensus phase and the draft hearing questions for proposals above threshold, addressed to the GB members prepared for the hearing session
- EIT Strategy 2021-2027
- Horizon Europe - Strategic plan 2021-2024
- Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing Decision No 1312/2013/EU

