

We are looking for an Independent Observer for the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs

Eureka Network AISBL, as coordinator of the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs, is looking for an independent observer in the evaluation of two funding programmes within the partnership (Eurostars-3 and Innowwide).

The European Partnership on Innovative SMEs is a consortium including the Eureka Network AISBL and 37 countries in Europe and beyond. The partnership comprises two main programmes (Eurostars-3 and Innowwide), which have regular calls for proposals from 2021 to 2027.

- Eurostars-3 is an international R&D and innovation programme for SMEs and other innovation actors with close-to-market products, services and processes. It normally has two international calls for projects per year.
- Innowwide is a mono-beneficiary programme aimed at supporting SMEs as they internationalise and access new markets in Europe and across the globe. It normally has one call per year.

The evaluation of both programmes follows Horizon Europe procedures and evaluation criteria.

Role of the independent observer

The role of the independent observer is to observe and report on the Eurostars-3 and Innowwide evaluation processes to ensure rules established for Horizon Europe co-funded partnerships are being adhered to.

This covers, among other things, the way the expert evaluators apply evaluation criteria and how the single ranked list of proposals is arrived at. In carrying out this function, the Independent Observer must not express any opinions on the proposals or the experts' opinions but may (in their report) offer observations and suggestions on how to improve the evaluation.

List of tasks:

The chosen candidate will carry out these main tasks:

- Review the publications associated with the call for projects (e.g. guidelines for applicants and experts).
- Review the selection process for evaluators and briefing materials for experts.
- Participate in the centralised evaluation as an observer.
- Prepare an independent observer report (a skeleton of the report will be provided).

Expected deliverables

The selected candidate will be expected to deliver a report after each Eurostars-3 and Innowwide evaluation. These reports will be included in the overall call reports sent to the European Commission.

Education and experience

The ideal candidate will meet these requirements:

- Advanced university degree (master's degree or equivalent), preferably in related fields such as political science, economics, law, international relations, etc.
- At least 10 years of professional experience within an EU or innovation-related field.
- Extensive knowledge of European funding programmes and evaluation procedures, specifically the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation.
- Knowledge of European innovation policy, with particular emphasis on Pillar III of Horizon Europe.
- Previous experience as an independent evaluator for projects at Eureka or the European Commission, or previous experience as an independent observer for other partnerships (such as ERA-Net co-funds) would be strong assets.
- Professional proficiency in English, both written and oral.

Duration of the contract and estimated workload

The chosen candidate will be selected for a period covering the calls for projects being launched in 2027 and potentially 2028 (calls in 2028 are still to be confirmed). During this period, the European Partnership on Innovative SMEs is expected to launch two (or potentially three) Eurostars-3 calls (in 2027 and 2028) and one Innowwide call (in 2027).

For each call for projects, the estimated workload is 3-5 days, split over the different steps of the evaluation. The daily remuneration would be 650 EURO (VAT excluded).

Since part of the work will likely take place at the Eureka Network's premises in Brussels, travel costs incurred by the selected candidate will be reimbursed according to Eureka's travel reimbursement rules.

Application and selection process

Interested candidates should send their **CV** and a **short cover letter** to observer@eurekanetwork.org by **21 September 2026**. The cover letter should explain the candidate's relevant experience, motivation for the role and availability during the expected evaluation periods.

Please use the following email **subject line: your name + surname - 'Independent Observer'**.



Applications will be reviewed against the requirements set out above. We expect to interview shortlisted candidates between 5 and 9 October 2026. **Only candidates shortlisted for interview will be contacted.**

Disclaimer

The selected candidate for the role of Independent Observer may not participate as a remote expert or a member of the Independent Evaluation Panel or apply for funding under the Eurostars-3 or Innowwide programmes, for the duration of the contract.

The execution of the contract does not create any relationship of subordination between Eureka and the contractor. The contractor cannot be considered as a Eureka employee.

All potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed during the applications process (and afterwards, as stipulated in the contract).

Applicants should inform as part of their application if:

- They are or have previously been employed by one of the Eureka funding bodies;
- They feel they are in any other relationship or situation that could cast doubt on their ability to perform their Services impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.