

PRESSE RELEASE

AIHTA –Independent, Evidence-Based Decision Support in Healthcare

HTA Austria, Austrian Institute for HTA GmbH (AIHTA) is an independent organisation that provides scientific decision support for healthcare policy and practice. It operates as a non-profit limited liability company with eleven shareholders: the umbrella organisation of Austrian social insurance institutions, the respective health funds of the nine federal provinces, and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK).

Vienna, February 2020 – HTA Austria GmbH commenced operations on 1 March 2020, following the conclusion of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Health Technology Assessment (LBI-HTA) on 29 February 2020. Under the funding agreement, AIHTA receives annual funding of €1.36 million (not index-linked and excluding third-party funding), initially committed for the period 2020–2026.

- The change in ownership not only alters the governance structure but also reflects the shareholders' commitment to using Health Technology Assessment (HTA) as an instrument of evidence-informed health policy decision-making.

The Institute's core mission remains the development of a robust scientific basis for policy decisions aimed at ensuring the efficient and appropriate use of healthcare resources. The methods employed, including systematic literature reviews, transparent reporting and an interdisciplinary perspective, enable reliable, reproducible and scientifically robust results. AIHTA actively pursues extensive international collaboration in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and remain at the forefront of current knowledge.

- Established programmes, such as the assessment of new interventions for inclusion in the Austrian hospital services catalogue, will continue. New programme areas are currently under discussion, including the nationwide evaluation and subsequent funding decisions regarding highly expensive therapies, such as gene therapies and orphan drugs, with the aim of ensuring equal access irrespective of place of residence.
- Enhanced European collaboration is particularly beneficial for smaller countries. Austria, through AIHTA, holds a prominent position within **EUnetHTA**, coordinating collaborative activities in the field of medical devices and medical procedures.

In addition to producing independent, evidence-based assessments through systematic and transparent methodologies, the Institute seeks to stimulate public debate on the appropriateness and effectiveness of medical interventions. Consequently, AIHTA's work benefits not only healthcare payers and the administration of the Austrian healthcare system, including its eleven shareholders, but also the wider public. Published reports are freely accessible, supporting public discourse on solidarity-based and sustainable healthcare provision.

This objective is pursued not only through European cooperation but also through close partnerships with universities and universities of applied sciences. These collaborations take the form of framework agreements covering areas such as teaching, supervision of student theses and joint research projects. Together, these diverse approaches can help establish HTA as an integral and widely accepted component of Austria's decision-making culture.

- A significant component of the work programme is dedicated to science communication, which seeks to foster an informed and critical public discourse by providing data and evidence regarding the actual benefits of many new health technologies.
- Nineteen per cent of AIHTA's budget may be allocated to self-defined research activities. These resources are intended particularly for timely responses to emerging policy questions, including public contributions to discussions on pharmaceutical development, as well as for research projects focusing on patient groups that often lack strong advocacy or straightforward technological solutions, such as people experiencing homelessness and individuals with mental illness.

The Institute's products and services have been utilised across a broad range of policy and healthcare issues, including investment planning, reimbursement decisions, assessments of appropriateness and overuse of healthcare services, screening and prevention programmes, and the evaluation of newer governance instruments.

Potential future programme areas include implementation research, health services research and the further development of health economic standards. Beyond its demonstrable impact on the rational allocation of resources within publicly funded healthcare, HTA also plays an important role in promoting more balanced media coverage of new medical interventions.

- As HTA activities are publicly funded, regular impact assessments are conducted. These assessments indicate that HTA has the greatest influence when it is closely linked to healthcare policy instruments such as service catalogues, tariff systems and healthcare facility planning.

AIHTA's leading position within the Austrian HTA landscape is supported by its substantial operational capacity, reflected in the number of full-time equivalent staff and its high level of HTA productivity; its scientific credibility, demonstrated through peer-reviewed publications and the use of HTA reports in legal proceedings; its public visibility through media citations and participation in advisory and decision-making bodies; and its extensive international engagement, including involvement in European initiatives such as **EUnetHTA** and **AdHopHTA**.

The Institute's work programme and scientific quality assurance processes are overseen by the General Assembly of Shareholders and a Scientific Advisory Board, both of which serve as formal governing bodies of HTA Austria GmbH.