VERSION 3.2
VALID AS OF 1 JANUARY 2026

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECTS OF ORIENTED BASIC RESEARCH

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- Section 1: Addition of a note on call-specific specifications or restrictions
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1 PREFACE

The FFG is your partner for research and development. These Guidelines are designed to support you in submitting projects of **oriented basic research**. It describes:

- how to obtain funding
- what conditions must be met
- how the application process works

The goals and priorities, the budget and the submission deadlines that are relevant to your project are described in the corresponding call announcement. Please note that there might be call-specific specifications or restrictions of these guidelines' regulations (e.g. maximum project duration, maximum funding).

2 THE BASIS OF FUNDING

2.1 What is a project of oriented basic research?

While “basic research” is taken to mean experimental or theoretical work primarily aimed at acquiring new fundamental knowledge without any foreseeable direct commercial applications, “oriented basic research” is carried out with the expectation that it will produce a broad base of knowledge likely to form the background to the solution of recognised or expected current or future problems or open up new possibilities.

The following criteria must be met:

- Maximum duration is 36 months.
- The amount of funding is between a minimum of 60,000 euros and a maximum of 2 million euros.
- Projects of oriented basic research can be submitted by **individual applicants or as cooperative projects** involving several consortium members.
- Individual applicant/consortium leader must have a branch office in Austria.
- If a project of oriented basic research is submitted by a consortium, the rights and obligations of the consortium partners must be stipulated in a cooperation agreement.

2.2 Who is eligible to receive funding?

Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination (research organisations) are eligible for funding.

- Universities (universities and universities of applied sciences)[1]
- Non-university research institutions

The following may participate but may not receive funding:

- Subcontractors: They are not participants in terms of cooperation. They provide defined tasks for project participants which are listed under the cost category “third-party costs“ and are not entitled to exploit the project results.
- Other participants: These are persons or institutions that do not receive funding, but are mentioned in the Funding Contract, including the scope of their participation. Their rights and duties are also stipulated by contract. Their participation needs to be justified in the application. Potential “other participants” may also include persons or institutions of the Austrian federal administration.

[1] The smallest organisational unit that can participate on behalf of the university is the university institute or a comparable organisational unit pursuant to Sec. 20 of the Universities Act (UG 2002). The participating organisational unit (institute or comparable unit) must be duly authorised according to Sec. 27 of UG 2002. Subordinate organisational units (e.g. working groups) are not eligible to participate as project partners.

Not eligible:

Organisations which have been commissioned by the FFG, the funding authority, or as part of an EU project (including third-party providers) and could consequently secure an advantage related to the specific call – whether through involvement in a study, evaluation, the design, or in another manner – are not eligible to participate for reasons of conflict of interest unless their participation has been coordinated with the FFG Call Management and any related concerns have been clarified. In this case, the measures taken to eliminate the conflict of interest must be demonstrated.

The FFG reserves the right to exclude organisations from the call due to a conflict of interest.

2.3 What demands are placed on the consortium?

The following requirements must be fulfilled:

- The consortium leader must have a branch office in Austria.
- The consortium leader submits the application for funding.

The Consortium Agreement regulates the collaboration within the consortium and the intellectual property rights (IPR) relating to the project results. The FFG provides a sample Consortium Agreement for orientation.

The consortium must meet these requirements throughout the project. If the consortium structure changes in the course of the project and thus no longer meets the requirements, the funding may be reclaimed.

2.4 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader has the following responsibilities throughout the project duration:

- project management
- communications with the funding agency and the project participants
- examining the reports and accounts provided by the consortium partners

In your capacity as consortium leader you confirm to us that:

- you manage and distribute the funding yourself
- you communicate any changes in due time
- you provide accounts and reports in accordance with the Funding Contract

The consortium leader must ensure that a legally valid cooperation agreement has been concluded prior to the start of the project, in which all the regulations required by marginal no. 28 of the Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation 2022, OJ 2022/C 414 from 28th October 2022 (hereinafter referred to as Community framework) have been agreed. Moreover, the consortium leader confirms that:

- the costs charged can be clearly attributed to the project
- the project costs and content are in accordance with the approval

2.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have participants from outside Austria.

Partners from outside the EU may also receive funding **unless this is specifically excluded in the relevant call**.

The following conditions apply:

- The non-Austrian partners create benefit for the Austrian consortium partners and/or Austria as a business and research location;
- This benefit is explicitly indicated in the application for funding;
- Grants paid to partners from outside Austria do not exceed 20% of the total funding amount;
- The evaluation committee recommends providing funding to the non-Austrian partner;
- The partners from outside Austria prove their credit-worthiness and liquidity in accordance with the criteria applied to Austrian partners prior to contract formation;
- The non-Austrian partners accept the FFG's obligation and entitlement to review the project as specified in the Funding Contract and submit relevant documentary evidence in German or English.

Alternatively, non-Austrian organisations may cover their costs from own funds and/or from funds provided by their home country. Collaborative agreements for joint funding are in place with several European and non-European countries.

Organisations from outside Austria may also be involved as subcontractors.

2.6 How much support is granted?

Support is paid in the form of non-repayable grants of a **minimum of EUR 60,000** and a maximum of **EUR 2 million** per project.

Funding rates

Table 1: Funding rates

Type of organisation	Research category Oriented basic research
Research organisations within the scope of their non-economic activities	max. 100%

If the project receives additional funding from other funding institutions this must be stated in the application. In the event of multiple funding (i.e. funding from different funding authorities) the cumulative funding must not exceed the state aid limit under European law (see General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER): Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014, OJ L 187/48, in its current version).

Non-commercial activities of research organisations include:

- primary activities such as education
- research and development, independent or as part of an effective collaboration
- knowledge dissemination and transfer (see Community framework)

2.7 What costs are eligible?

Eligible costs must be allocable directly to the project. This means that:

- they are incurred additionally to the normal operating costs during the funding period
- they are in accordance with the Funding Contract
- they can be evidenced by receipts

The earliest possible date for the start of the project is after submission of the application for funding.

For details on the eligibility of costs see the Cost Guidelines.

Special provisions for projects of oriented basic research:

Third-party costs are limited to 20% of the total costs of the project, or for cooperative projects of oriented basic research, the total costs per participating organisation. Any excess must be justified in the Project Description. This limit does not apply to services provided by affiliated organisations which are shown as third-party costs.

2.8 What about intellectual property rights?

The results of oriented basic research are usually published in the form of scientific publications. The publication of results of oriented basic research may be restricted under specific circumstances for security reasons.

2.9 What criteria are used to assess applications for funding?

Applications for funding are evaluated according to 4 criteria:

1. Quality of the project
2. Suitability of project participants
3. Benefit and exploitation
4. Relevance to the call

The tables below show the relevant sub-criteria. The projects are evaluated by awarding points in each criterion. Projects not reaching the stated threshold value for a certain criterion will be rejected. Projects which receive zero points in any of the sub-criteria of criterion 4 "Relevance to the call" will also be rejected.

Funding criteria

Table 2: Criterion "Quality of the project"

1. Quality of the project (threshold = 30 points)	**max. points 50**
1.1 To what extent does the **innovation content** of the project exceed the state of the art or existing knowledge?	**20**
1.2 Have the project goals been clearly defined and can they be realistically achieved? Are the **approaches** suitable for achieving the goals of the individual work packages? Have the risks in the work packages been adequately addressed and corresponding measures provided?	**10**
1.3 **Quality of planning:** Is the structure of the work packages and the associated division of work adequate for the goals of the project? – Is the overall planning adequate for achieving the project goals?	**10**
1.4 If the content of the project and the research results affect people: To what extent have gender-specific topics been taken into account in the planning process? – Quality of the analysis of the gender-specific topics – Consideration in the methodological approach of the project (more information can be found here) Projects in which content and focus have no gender relevance according to this analysis will score full points in this sub-category.	**5**
1.5 To what extent does the project take into account **sustainability goals** (ecological, social, economic), in particular in terms of climate neutrality? - How is sustainability, in particular climate neutrality, taken into account in the planning and implementation of the project and is the methodological approach chosen adequate? (more information can be found here)	**5**

Table 3: Criterion "Suitability of project participants"

2. Suitability of project participants (threshold = 12 points)	**max. points 20**
2.1 Does the consortium have the necessary subject-specific and management **skills and qualifications** and the skills required to achieve the sustainability goals?	**8**
2.2 Does the project plan provide sufficient and appropriate **resources** for the planned implementation?	**8**
2.3 Does the composition of the project team reflect the aim to improve the gender **balance** in the sector?	**4**

Table 4: Criterion "Benefit and exploitation"

3. Benefit and exploitation (threshold = 12 points)	**max. points 20**
3.1 What is the benefit of the project for the **target group(s)** (e.g. users, customers, contracting authorities …) and what are the **impacts and effects** (positive and negative) of the project in terms of sustainability (social, ecological, economic), in particular in terms of climate neutrality?	**8**
3.2 What is the **benefit of the project for the project participants** (e.g. in terms of developing or expanding key expertise, strengthening/diversifying the research portfolio etc.)? How concrete, transparent and complete are the **exploitation strategy and the exploitation potential** in terms of developing scientific human resources, networks/international collaborations and publications?	**12**

Table 5: Criterion "Relevance to the call"

4. Relevance to the call (threshold = 6 points)	**max. points 10**
4.1 How relevant/important is the project in terms of achieving the **call objectives**? Does the project sufficiently and adequately address the **call topic**?	**7.5**
4.2 What is the **incentive effect** of the funding? To what extent will the funding help to implement the project at all and/or within a shorter timeframe, and/or with higher ambition, and/or in a larger scope?	**2.5**

2.10 What documents are required for submission?

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via eCall.

The submission of R&D projects includes the following elements:

- **Content Description** presents the project content.
- **Consortium** describes the expertise of the individual project partners.
- **Work Plan** describes the work packages, the associated costs and elements of project management such as the time management plan (GANTT diagram), duties, milestones, results.
- **Cost and Financing** describes all cost categories for each organisation involved. The sums for each individual work package are automatically displayed in the work plan.

Attachments to the electronic application:

- Annual accounts (balance sheet, profit and loss account) of the past 2 financial years

For further information regarding the project submission or further requirements regarding necessary additional documents or attachments, please refer to the call guidelines.

If the project involves participants outside Austria, collaborative agreements with European or non-European countries may require the submission of documents that cannot be uploaded via eCall. The relevant information will be given in the call announcement. In individual cases, additional supporting documents may be requested.

The call announcement also specifies the language in which applications are to be submitted, which is usually German and/or English.

2.11 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

Applicants are required to list additional projects related to the proposed project in order to facilitate the evaluation. The results and expertise obtained must be presented. Relevant projects include:

- previous projects whose results provide the basis for the proposed project,
- ongoing or completed projects (of the previous 3 years) that are thematically related to the proposed project.

Multiple recognition of costs that have already been funded is not permitted. The proposed project must be clearly distinguished from projects that have already received funding.

2.12 Is scientific integrity ensured?

Funding may only be granted to applicants who demonstrate high scientific integrity during application and project execution.

The FFG is a member of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity – OeAWI and is thus committed to safeguarding good scientific practice.

If we suspect a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct in the course of the evaluation process, the relevant documents may be forwarded to the OeAWI's Commission for Scientific Integrity. The OeAWI will then decide whether to initiate an independent investigation procedure and, if necessary, will undertake the necessary investigations.

If the investigation reveals a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct (e.g. plagiarism), the application has to be rejected due to formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding must be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

3 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

3.1 What is the procedure for submission?

Applications must be electronically submitted via **eCall** before the deadline.

The funding application may not be submitted until all participants have submitted their partner applications via eCall.

How does it work?

- Enter the full project description consisting of content description, consortium, work plan, cost and financing via eCall.
- The system will verify whether the costs entered meet the funding conditions (e.g. funding amount, maximum project size)
- Upload the required documents (if necessary)
- Finalise the application in eCall and click "Submit application".
- Upon successful submission, an acknowledgement will be sent automatically by email.

Not necessary:

- Additional postal submission of duly executed copy

Not possible:

- Revision of the application after submission

The application documents are to be submitted by the applicant/consortium leader or by a duly authorised representative. The FFG may request appropriate documentary evidence of this authority. If you are unable to provide such evidence the FFG reserves the right to reject the application for formal reasons.

More information can be found in the eCall Tutorial.

3.2 How will confidential project data be used?

The FFG processes the personal data of funding applicants and funding recipients provided by the data subjects as part of the application for funding, data collected by the FFG for the purpose of concluding the funding contract, and data generated by searches in the transparency portal according to Sec. 32 (5) of the Transparency Database Act (TDBG 2012) for the following purposes:

- Processing of the funding application and assessment of whether the general and specific funding requirements have been met,
- Conclusion of the funding contract and (if a funding contract has been concluded) compliance with the relevant contractual obligations, including but not limited to administration of the funding payments and monitoring of compliance with funding requirements,
- Compliance with statutory obligations, including but not limited to reporting obligations and control purposes in order to avoid double funding (i.e. Sec. 38 in conjunction with 18, 27 ARR, as well as Sec. 12 FTFG and Sec. 9 FFG-G).

The legal basis of processing is therefore Art. 6 (1) (b) GDPR, i.e. performance of a contract, and Art 6 (1) (c) GDPR, i.e. compliance with legal obligations.

The personal data will be disclosed to the following institutions in compliance with legal obligations.

- the federal ministries as owners of the FFG, other contracting authorities for the management of funding measures (e.g. other federal ministries, regional governments, KLIEN)
- third parties, which may include the Court of Audit, EU bodies, and other federal or regional funding agencies

National and international experts will get access to the submitted documents for the evaluation of the proposals – see Section 4.2. Such experts act as processors on behalf of the FFG and are required to take technical and organisational measures to ensure data security and data confidentiality.
Project content and results may only be published (e.g. on the website or in social media forums) with the consent of the funding recipient (Art 6 (1) (a) GDPR) unless the FFG has a legal obligation to do so.

The FFG must also obtain the consent of the data subject for any other data use exceeding these provisions.

The FFG is under a legal obligation to maintain secrecy concerning company and project information pursuant to Sec. 9 (4) of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency Act (FFG-G, Federal Law Gazette I No. 73/2004).

The FFG will ensure a level of security appropriate to the risk in terms of confidentiality, integrity, availability and resilience of the systems by implementing technical and organisational measures within the meaning of Art. 32 GDPR that are sufficient and appropriate for protecting the data against accidental or unlawful destruction, loss and unauthorised access.

Further information about ensuring the confidentiality and security of personal data during the course of the project is available in the eCall Tutorial.

3.3 How are disclosure requirements and freedom of information regulated?

The FFG is subject to Austria's Freedom of Information Act (IFG). The FFG publishes information of general interest which is not subject to confidentiality restrictions, for example in the project database. Furthermore, the FFG must respond to requests for information and, where appropriate, publish information in accordance with the statutory requirements. In answering requests for information, the FFG naturally takes every care to protect sensitive information. In accordance with Sec. 6 IFG, information which includes trade secrets, copyrighted content, or personal data is subject to special protective measures which is taken into account in every case. If necessary, the FFG will consult with those affected by the publication of such information.

4 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

4.1 What is the formal check?

In the formal check the application is examined for formal correctness and completeness.

You will be notified of the result of the formal check within 4 weeks via an eCall message:

- If the formal criteria are not met and the deficiencies cannot be corrected, the application for funding will not enter the subsequent steps of the procedure.
- If the deficiencies can be corrected, you may rectify these problems within a reasonable period of time

Should it transpire after the formal check that incorrect information has been given, the funding application may also be removed from consideration at a subsequent point in the procedure.

The relevant **checklist** can be found in the Project Description template.

4.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

The documents submitted will be reviewed by national and international experts based on the criteria given in Section 2.9.

An evaluation committee will make a recommendation on funding taking into account the written reviews.

It is possible to exclude reviewers (individuals or staff of particular organisations) in justified cases, stating the reasons. eCall contains an entry field for this purpose.

FFG experts will check the financial potential (credit rating and liquidity) of the participating enterprises. They may request additional documents that are required for completing the financial check.

4.3 Who takes the funding decision?

Information as to who takes the funding decision can be found in the respective call guideline.

5 FUNDING PROCEDURE

5.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

In the event of a positive funding decision, the FFG will provide the applicant/consortium with a view in the eCall system showing the key parameters of the funding contract (e.g. amount of funding granted, amount of eligible costs, start and ending date of the funding period, reporting obligations and possible binding requirements).

If the view is accepted within the given deadline, the FFG will prepare the funding contract and send it to the applicant/consortium. The applicant/consortium must return the duly signed contract to make it legally valid. There shall be no entitlement to funding until the signed contract has been returned.

5.2 How are requirements taken into account?

Binding requirements may be formulated in the course of the assessment.

Two types of additional requirements are possible:

- Requirements that must be met prior to the conclusion of the funding contract.
- Requirements that must be met by the funding recipient/consortium during the course of the project.

These requirements shall form an integral part of the contract.

5.3 How are the instalments of funding paid?

The first instalment will be paid once the requirements have been met and the Funding Contract has been signed, however, not earlier than one week before the start of the funding period. If the project involves several partners, payments are made to the bank account of the consortium leader. More detailed information can be found in the **sample Consortium Agreement**.

Subsequent instalments will be paid in accordance with the progress of the project:

- once the interim reports and interim accounts have been approved
- (where necessary) once additional requirements have been met
- according to the FFG instalment scheme

If the interim reports indicate a delay in project progress or if the costs are below budget the instalment may initially be reduced.

The payment of funding during the course of the project does not imply approval of the costs.

FFG instalment scheme

Table 6: FFG instalment scheme

Number of reports and instalments	0 to 18 months project duration	19 to 30 months project duration	31 to 36 months project duration
Number of reports (interim reports and final report)	1	2	3
1st instalment in % of funding amount at contract conclusion	50 %	50 %	30 %
2nd instalment up to % of funding amount	n.a.	40 %	30 %
3rd instalment up to % of funding amount	n.a.	n.a.	30 %
Final instalment up to % of funding amount	50 %	10 %	10 %

5.4 What reports and accounts are required?

- An interim report and interim accounts must be submitted via the eCall reporting function within 1 month after the reporting deadlines specified in the funding contract.
- The submission of interim accounts is not necessary for projects with a duration of less than 19 months.
- A final report, a (publishable) summary and final accounts must be presented within 3 months of project conclusion, again via the eCall reporting function. The summary may be omitted in case of incompatibility with commercial exploitation, confidentiality obligations because of security reasons or because of data protection regulations.
- If the project is aborted during the project term the funding recipient/consortium must submit a final report and final accounts. The FFG is entitled to reclaim money if the funding already paid exceeds the eligible costs.

The reports and accounts must meet the following requirements:

- They include a description of activities and in addition the cost statements of all consortium partners.
- Reports must be prepared using the eCall templates

Support of public relations: The funding recipients agree to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministries to support PR work, if required. This includes in particular the provision of non-confidential project information and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes.

5.5 How should changes to the project be communicated?

Any changes to contractual points such as project content, consortium partners, costs, deadlines or funding period must be substantiated and submitted for approval:

- via eCall message
- in the interim/final report

All relevant documents should be uploaded as an attachment to the eCall message. Any modifications to the contract parameters require the approval of the FFG.

Immediate notification is required for:

- substantial changes to the project
- changes to consortium partners such as new ownership structure or insolvency proceedings

The following changes should be communicated in the interim or final report:

- cost reallocations between cost categories, e. g. material costs to personnel costs
- cost reallocations between participants

5.6 Can the funding period be extended?

If the project goals have not been achieved and the approved level of costs has not been exceeded, the funding period may be extended for up to one year on a cost-neutral basis.

The following requirements must be met:

- the funding recipients are not responsible for the delay
- the project is still eligible for funding
- an eCall application for extension has been submitted within the approved funding period

5.7 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

After the end of the project, the FFG Project Controlling & Audit Division will examine whether the funding has been used appropriately. The audit will establish the final level of eligible costs.

You will receive the result of the audit in writing:

- In the event of a positive result, the appropriate use of the funding will be confirmed.
- In the event of a negative result, procedures may be initiated to secure repayment of funding.

Funding details: The final instalment will be transferred once the specified cost has been reached. If the project is underspent the level of funding will be reduced accordingly. The funding amount may also be reduced for content-related reasons, as well as on formal and legal grounds.

For more information about eligible costs, see the Cost Guidelines.

6 ANNEX

6.1 Research category "Oriented Basic Research"

While “basic research” is taken to mean experimental or theoretical work primarily aimed at acquiring new fundamental knowledge without any foreseeable direct commercial applications, “oriented basic research” is carried out with the expectation that it will produce a broad base of knowledge likely to form the background to the solution of recognised or expected current or future problems or open up new possibilities.

The goals of oriented basic research:

- Obtain new findings and create a knowledge base for potential future applications
- Develop fundamentally new solutions

The following questions may help you allocate your project to the appropriate category. If the answers to most of these questions are yes the project is to be allocated to oriented basic research:

- Does the project involve experimental or theoretical work which is primarily designed to acquire new fundamental knowledge for potential future applications?
- Does the project involve fundamentally new solutions which are not based on existing solutions or the state of the art?
- Are customer needs (if applicable) still speculative and not already specified?
- Is an opportunity-risk analysis not yet reasonable or relevant from a commercial viewpoint?
- Will the results be published in peer-reviewed journals?
- Does the project exclude the direct commercial application of the results?

6.2 Technology Readiness Levels

Where a call refers to the TRL scheme (Technology Readiness Levels), the following definition applies: a project qualifies as oriented basic research if more than half of the eligible project costs can be classified as TRL 1 and the remaining research activities do not exceed TRL 3.

Table 7: Technology Readiness Levels

Research category	Technology Readiness Level
Oriented basic research	**TRL 1** Basic principles observed
Industrial research	**TRL 2** (Technology) concept formulated **TRL 3** Experimental proof of (technology) concept at component level **TRL 4** Technology validated in lab (on lab scale) at system level
Experimental development	**TRL 5** Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies) **TRL 6** Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies) **TRL 7** System prototype demonstrated in operational environment **TRL 8** System complete and qualified
Market introduction	**TRL 9** System proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies)

Technology Readiness Levels are described in the publication “Communication from the Commission: A European strategy for Key Enabling Technologies – A bridge to growth and jobs”, page 18.

6.3 Call milestones

Figure 1: Milestones of a call