



FFG

Promoting Innovation.

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GUIDELINES FOR COOPERATIVE R&D PROJECTS – TRANSNATIONAL CALLS

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Changes from version 3.5

- Sections 2.2 and 4.2: Specification of references to European law

1 PREFACE

The FFG is your partner for research and development. These guidelines are designed to support you in submitting your Cooperative Research and Development Project (R&D Project) within a transnational call for proposals (ERA-NET, European Partnerships, Article 185 and similar). 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. In transnational calls, there may also be complementary national guidelines containing further information in addition to the transnational guidelines.

2 THE BASIS FOR GETTING FUNDED

2.1 What are Cooperative R&D Projects?

Transnational cooperative Research and Development Projects are collaborations of several consortium partners working together on a common project with defined R&D goals. Research and development has the target to develop new products, procedures or services or to improve existing products, procedures or services significantly. Unless otherwise specified in the transnational call guidelines, rights and obligations are stipulated in a transnational consortium agreement.

The following requirements must be fulfilled:

- Maximum project duration of 3 years¹
- Funding amounts between approx. 100,000 euros and max. 2 million euros (the maximum funding amount can be lowered within the specific call)
- One or more Austrian consortium member(s) must participate in the transnational consortium.
- If there are several Austrian consortium members, one of them will be responsible for leading the consortium at national level (National Lead Partner/National Coordinator) and will act as the contact point for the FFG.

2.2 What demands are placed on the transnational consortium?

The transnational consortium must consist of two or more participants that are independent of each other. Participants are independent, if they own less than 25% of capital or voting right of each other (for more information regarding affiliated entities see [SME definition](#)). In any case the consortium must include:

- 1 small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) (details see [SME definition](#)) or
- 1 research and knowledge dissemination organisation (research organisation – see [General Block Exemption Regulation \(GBER\): Regulation \(EU\) No. 651/2014, OJ L 187/48](#), extended by the Regulation (EU) 2023/1315 from 23rd June 2023) or
- 1 participating organisation from another EU member state or contracting party to the EEA Agreement

Both **company-only collaborations** and **collaborations between companies and research institutions** are possible.

The minimum requirement is that **at least one funded company is participating in the transnational consortium.**

¹ In exceptional cases, another maximum project duration may be specified in the call guidelines.

Additional requirements to the consortium:

- Individual enterprises account for a maximum of 70% of the eligible project costs with shares of affiliated companies counting as one enterprise.
- In case of a collaboration between one enterprise and one or more research institution(s), the research institution(s) bear(s) at least 10% of the eligible costs.
- Research institutions must have the right to publish the results they have obtained in the project.
- Contract research and the provision of research services are not considered as collaborations within the definition of a Cooperative R&D Project.

In addition to that, a collaboration with other non-commercial institutions is possible. In this case, the requirements to the consortium still have to be fulfilled.

The conditions to the consortium have still to be fulfilled at the end of the project. If there are changes during the project not according to the demanded consortium structure, a reclaim of the funding is possible.

In the case of transnational projects, the Austrian funding recipient or the Austrian consortium leader (see below) must ensure that a legally valid transnational cooperation agreement exists prior to the start of the project, in which the necessary provisions according to 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. The cooperation agreement must fulfil all the requirements of the call for proposals.

2.3 What are the responsibilities of the Austrian consortium leader?

In the case of more than one Austrian project participant, the Austrian consortium leader has the following responsibilities throughout the project duration:

- communication 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 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.

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 funding contract.

2.4 Who is eligible to receive funding?

Legal entities, partnerships and sole traders that are not part of the Austrian federal administration are eligible to receive funding.

The following are eligible for funding:

- Companies of any legal form
- Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination
 - Universities²
 - Universities of applied sciences
 - Non-university research institutions
 - Technology transfer institutions, innovation agents and other research-oriented organisations such as associations with a relevant purpose
- Other non-commercial institutions
 - Local authorities and autonomous bodies (Note: Activities of local authorities falling within their statutory mandate are not eligible for funding)
 - Non-profit making organisations such as NPOs³

The following may participate but may not receive funding:

- Subcontractors: they are not participants within the definition of a Cooperative R&D Project. 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.

Not eligible:

Due to incompatibility, organisations which have, in the name of the FFG or the funding authority, contributed essentially to the evaluation or the design of a funding measure in connection with this specific call within the last three years, are not allowed to participate in this call in any way.

If this refers to different units of an organisation, a participation in this specific call has to be coordinated with the call management of the FFG. In any case, it has to be explained that no conflict of interest can occur.

The FFG reserves the right to exclude applicants due to incompatibilities.

² The smallest possible unit of a university is an institute of the university or a organisation comparable to a UG 2002/§20 organisation unit. It is a precondition that the participating organisation unit (institute or comparable unit) is authorised with corresponding mandate according to UG 2002/§ 27. Units below (for example working groups) can not act as project participants.

³ “Non-profit making organisations” do not distribute profits to their owners, members or other natural persons or legal entities in accordance with their legal status or articles of association.

2.5 How much support is granted?

Financial support is paid in the form of non-repayable grants and is limited to a **maximum of EUR 2 million** per project. The maximum funding amount can be lowered depending on the call.

The funding rate varies depending on the type of partner and the research category:

- The funding rate for enterprises is based on the research category and company size.
- The funding rate for research institutions and other institutions is based on the research category only, provided that the contribution involves a non-commercial activity.
- If the contribution to the project of a research institution or other institution involves a commercial activity the funding rates are the same as those for enterprises.
- It has to be stated in the application if additional funding is granted by any other funding institution. If multiple funding (funding from different funding authorities) is gained the cumulative funding must not exceed the maximum cumulative funding height of the European legal funding aid limits (see [GBER](#)).

Funding rates

Table 1: Funding rates

Type of organisation	Research category Industrial research	Research category Experimental development
Small enterprise	80 %	60 %
Medium-sized enterprise	70 %	50 %
Large enterprise	55 %	35 %
Research institutions (non-commercial activities)	85 %	60 %
Non-commercial institutions (non-commercial activities)	80 %	60 %

Non-commercial activities of research institutions include:

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

Non-commercial activities of non-commercial institutions include contributions to R&D projects related to the development of products, services and systems, where they act, e.g., as public or private end user organisations.

The company size is to be determined according to the SME definition as specified by EU competition law: see information on [SME definition](#).

The research category must be clearly specified to be able to determine the permissible funding rate. A distinction is made between experimental development and industrial research.

Experimental development

Experimental development involves developing something new from something that already exists and/or improving something that already exists. This includes:

- acquiring existing knowledge and abilities,
- combining existing knowledge and abilities,
- shaping existing knowledge and abilities,
- using existing knowledge and abilities.

Irrespective of whether the project involves scientific, technical, economic or other knowledge and abilities – the aim is to develop new or improved products, procedures or services, including digital products, processes or services.

Experimental development does not include routine or regular adaptations, even if these modifications would represent improvements (see in German language: [FFG-Richtlinien](#), 10.1 Begriffsbestimmungen und Spezifika für Beihilfen für Forschung und Entwicklung und Innovation sowie für Ausbildung).

Industrial research

Industrial research has the following characteristics:

- The focus is on planned research or critical investigation to acquire new knowledge and abilities.
- Industrial research takes place mainly in the laboratory or at laboratory scale.
- The development risk is higher than for experimental development.
- The technology readiness level is lower.
- The time horizon for market introduction is longer.

For further details on both research categories see the [Annex](#).

The evaluation committee assesses the project also considering the research category applied for. A project may also be predominantly assigned to industrial research if more than half of the eligible project costs are incurred for activities of this category.

2.6 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 Cooperative R&D Projects:

Third-party costs are limited to 20% of 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 companies which are shown as third-party costs.

2.7 What about intellectual property rights?

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the transnational consortium. The provisions of section 2.2.2. “Collaborations with undertakings” of the [Community framework](#) apply to collaborations between commercial companies and research institutions.

This document stipulates that the intellectual property rights are to be allocated to the research institutions in a manner which adequately reflects their work, contributions and interests. If the rights are assigned to the companies involved, the research institutions shall receive compensation equivalent to the market price.

Please note in this context that expenditure for the protection of intellectual property (IPR) is eligible for funding. This includes costs for patent applications and patent searches. Patent maintenance costs are not eligible for funding.

2.8 What criteria are used to assess applications for funding?

Funding applications are evaluated according to the criteria specified in the transnational call guidelines for project submission. If necessary, additional information for the evaluation may also be defined in supplementary national call guidelines.

2.9 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

To support the assessment of the content of the project, the application for funding must list further projects related to the current application. In doing so, the results of those projects and the generated know-how have to be described. These projects are relevant:

- Pre-projects which deliver results for this project
- Ongoing or finished projects (of the last 3 years) related to the applied project

The multiple acceptance of already funded costs or part of costs is not possible. The proposed project must be clearly distinguished from projects that have already received funding.

2.10 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 formal checks or of the proposal check, 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?

The submission process is detailed in the transnational and/or national call guidelines.

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 Chapter 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 BGBl. 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.

4 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

4.1 What is the formal check at national level?

In the formal check, which is complementary to the eligibility check at transnational level, 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 become evident 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 process.

4.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

The proposal assessment and selection process is detailed in the transnational and/or national call guideline.

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. Undertakings in difficulty cannot receive funding. Evaluation if an enterprise has to be classified as undertaking „in difficulty“ takes place in accordance with the European legal basis of this funding, the [General Block Exemption Regulation](#) (OJ L 187/19 in its current version, Art. 2 subpar. 18).

Additional recommendations and requirements may be formulated in the course of the assessment. Recommendations are non-binding remarks of the evaluation committee, which should support the consortium in the implementation of the project.

Requirements are binding, see Chapter 5.2.

4.3 Who takes the funding decision?

Information as to who takes the funding decision can be found in the respective transnational and/or national call guidelines.

5 FUNDING PROCEDURE

5.1 How is the Funding Contract concluded?

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

After acceptance of the view within the given deadline, the FFG prepares the funding contract and delivers it to the applicant/consortium. The applicant/consortium returns the duly signed funding contract. Thereby the funding contract is valid in law. Until then, there is no title for being funded.

5.2 How are requirements taken into account?

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

Two types of additional requirements are possible:

- Requirements that must be met prior to the conclusion of a funding contract.
- Requirements that must be met by the funding applicant or the consortium during the runtime 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. In the case of multiple Austrian participants, payments are made to the bank account specified by the consortium leader.

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 can be reduced.

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

FFG instalment scheme

Table 2: 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 %

If the call guidelines specify a project duration exceeding 36 months, an accordingly modified instalment scheme will be applied. This will be apparent from the Funding Contract.

5.4 What reports and accounts are required?

- Within 1 month after the reporting deadlines specified in the Funding Contract, an interim report and interim accounts must be submitted via the eCall reporting function.
- For projects with a duration of less than 19 months, no interim report is intended.
- Within 3 months of the conclusion of the project a final report, a (publishable) summary and the final accounts must be presented, again via the eCall reporting function. The publication of a 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 consortium must submit a final report and final accounts. The FFG is entitled to reclaim money if the funding already paid exceeds the funding with regard to the eligible costs.

The reports and accounts must meet the following requirement:

- They contain the description of activities and in addition the cost statements of all consortium partners who are mentioned in the funding contract.
- 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 or 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
- the successful coordination within the transnational consortium and with the funding agencies of the other countries concerned
- an eCall application for extension has been submitted within the approved funding period

5.7 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

The consortium submits a final report and final accounts 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 “Industrial Research”

Industrial research includes planned research or critical investigation to acquire new knowledge and abilities with the aim to develop new products, procedures or services, including digital products, processes or services, or significantly improve existing ones.

This may also include:

- developing parts of complex systems
- **if** required for the validation of technological fundamentals:
 - building prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems
 - building pilot lines

Industrial research does not extend beyond the proof of concept.

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 industrial research:

- Does the project exclude the direct commercial exploitation of the results?
- Does the project involve planned research or critical investigation with the aim to acquire new knowledge and abilities?
- Do the research activities mainly take place in the laboratory or at laboratory scale?
- Does the project involve a high research risk?
- Is the project characterised by a low level of technological maturity or integration?
- Does the project have a long time horizon in terms of market readiness with respect to the relevant sector?
- Are the prototypes used exclusively for the validation of technical fundamentals and does the project exclude the building of prototypes beyond the laboratory environment?
- Does the project exclude the development of a prototype whose form, shape, scale, function, operation and manufacture are largely similar to the final product?

6.2 Research Category “Experimental Development

Experimental development involves acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technical, economic or other relevant knowledge and abilities with the aim to develop new or improved products, procedures or services, including digital products, processes or services.

This may also include:

- Activities for the design, planning and documentation of new products, procedures and services.
- If the main aim is to improve future products, procedures or services: development of prototypes, demonstration measures and pilot projects as well as testing and validation of new or improved products, procedures and services in a relevant environment under real-world operating conditions.
- Development of commercially usable prototypes and pilot projects if the developed product would be too expensive for demonstration and validation purposes alone

Experimental development does not extend beyond the demonstration of the prototype (system) in a relevant environment. Exception: commercially usable prototypes and pilot projects if the developed product would be too expensive for demonstration and validation purposes alone.

Experimental development does not include routine or regular adaptations, even if the modifications would represent improvements.

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 experimental development:

- Does the project build on existing scientific, technical, economic or other relevant knowledge and abilities so that it generates new expanded knowledge and abilities or recombines existing knowledge?
- Does the project exclude routine or regular modifications to products, production lines, production processes, existing services or other ongoing operational processes?
- Does the project exclude the direct commercial exploitation of the results or the final product? Exception: commercially usable prototypes and pilot projects if they inevitably represent the commercial end product and its production would be too expensive for demonstration and validation purposes alone.
- Does the project explicitly exclude activities aimed at series production?
- Does the project explicitly exclude activities aimed at market introduction?

6.3 Technology Readiness Levels

Where a call refers to the TRL scheme (Technology Readiness Levels), the following definitions apply:

Technology Readiness Levels

Table 3: 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.

6.4 Call milestones

Figure 1: Milestones of a call

