



FFG

Guidelines for COMET-Projects

under the Programme

**COMET (Competence Centres for
Excellent Technologies)**

7th Call

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Submission deadline

8 November 2017

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PREAMBLE

These Call Guidelines¹ provide information about basic requirements, funding conditions and procedures for the submission of COMET-Projects and the specifics of the call, the call objectives, budget and submission deadlines.

The Competence Centre Programme COMET (Competence Centres for Excellent Technologies) comprises three programme lines (COMET-Project, COMET-Centre, COMET-Module), which are characterised by high research expertise and links to science as well as by high relevance of implementation in industry.

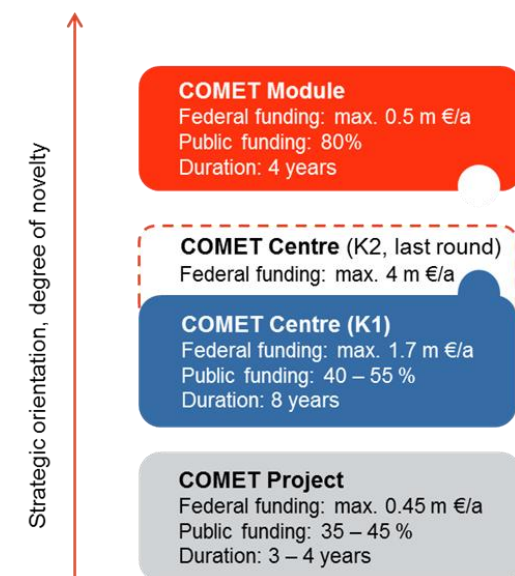
The degree of novelty of the research and thus also the strategic orientation, is increasing from COMET-Project to COMET-Centre to COMET-Module.

The 3-line model enables potential partners to

- get access to the COMET-Programme via a COMET-Project as part of a consortium (min. 1 scientific partner, min. 3 company partners)
- build up competences and human resources in a physical centre (min. 1 scientific partner, min. 5 company partners)
- open up new research areas for a COMET (K1) Centre via a COMET-Module (min. 1 scientific partner, min. 3 company partners)

All lines are open with regard to research fields and topics, but each individual project must focus on a clearly defined theme.

The current call refers exclusively to the programme line COMET-Project (former K-Project). The duration is 3 to 4 years. This call addresses new consortia as well as existing K-Projects. Existing projects and new initiatives are in competition to each other.



¹ This document is a translated version of the original German version. In cases of unclear formulation the German version is the decisive document.

1 CALL OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the COMET-Programme are:

- **Developing and focussing competences** through long-term research cooperation between science and industry at the highest level.
- **Strengthening Austria as a business location:** accelerating technology transfer to industry should serve to create new products, processes and services, open up new markets and increase the innovative capacity of companies.
- **Strengthening Austria as a research location:** excellent cooperative research should trigger new research impulses and establish promising/ emerging fields of research.

2 KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

Key facts	COMET-Projects
Instrument	Platform (C8 P)
Short description	Funding is provided for projects performing research of academic and economic relevance in research programmes jointly defined by science and industry being characterised by high research expertise and connection to science as well as by high relevance of implementation in industry.
Funding per COMET-Project (EUR)	Federal and provincial funding: total max. EUR 2.7 million (max. EUR 675.000/year) Federal funding: total max. EUR 1.8 million (max. EUR 450,000/year) Provincial funding: total max. EUR 900.000 (max. EUR 225,000/year)
Funding rate	35 - 45% (depending on type of research)
Contribution of company/scientific partners	Contribution of company partners: min. 45% Contribution of scientific partners: min. 5%
Duration (years)	3 – 3.5 – 4 years
Minimum consortium requirements	at least 1 scientific partner and at least 3 company partners
Budget for the 7th Call COMET-Projects	EUR 10 million (federal funds) plus additional provincial funds
Start of Call	12 June 2017
Submission deadline	8 November 2017, 12:00 (CET)
Jury decision	12 – 13 June 2018
Project start	as of 1 July 2018 (on the first of each month until December 2018)

Language	English
Contact	<p>Tel. (0)57755-extension (ext)</p> <p>Programme Management: Budiono Nguyen, Tel.ext. 2104; E budiono.nguyen@ffg.at Julia Bissenberger, Tel.ext. 2103; E julia.bissenberger@ffg.at Ingrid Fleischhacker, Tel.ext. 2102; E ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at Marlene Milan, Tel.ext. 2411; E marlene.milan@ffg.at Reingard Repp, Tel.ext. 2107; E reingard.repp@ffg.at Otto Starzer, Tel.ext. 2101; E otto.starzer@ffg.at</p> <p>Information about eCall: Julia Bissenberger, Tel.ext. 2103; E julia.bissenberger@ffg.at (on eCall) Marlene Milan, Tel.ext. 2411; E marlene.milan@ffg.at (on eCall) Barbara Kunz, Tel.ext. 2404; E barbara.kunz@ffg.at (on eCall)</p> <p>Information about costs and financing: Christa Meyer, Tel.ext. 6080; E christa.meyer@ffg.at Martina Amon, Tel.ext. 6081; E martina.amon@ffg.at</p> <p>An advisory interview can also be arranged!</p>
Information on the Web	<p>http://www.ffg.at/comet https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte</p>

3 CALL DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENTS	Web
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Guidelines for COMET-Projects, 7th Call (present document) • Cost Guidelines Version 2.0 	https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden
FORMS FOR FUNDING APPLICATION (Submission via eCall)	Web
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Description- COMET-Project (PDF) • ANNEX 0: Optional: Cover Letter re-application (PDF) • ANNEX 1: References (PDF) • ANNEX 2: List of Consortium Partners (Excel) • ANNEX 3: CVs and List of Publications (PDF) • ANNEX 4: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners (PDF) • ANNEX 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Company Partners (PDF) • ANNEX 6: Declaration of Federal Province(s) (PDF) 	https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte

4 LEGAL BASIS

The following documents are used as a legal basis for this Call:

DOCUMENTS	Web
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richtlinien zur Förderung der wirtschaftlich-technischen Forschung, Technologieentwicklung und Innovation” (guidelines for the promotion of the commercial and technological development of research, technology and innovation (FTI – guidelines 2015) Struktur- FTI-guidelines² • COMET Programme Document dated 1 January 2016 • COMET Evaluation Concept dated 1 January 2016³ 	https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtsgrundlagen http://www.ffg.at/content/comet-downloadcenter see “Allgemeines”: chapter 1.2

Superior provisions may be restricted, but not invalidated, by programme-specific provisions in the Programme Document or these call guidelines.

² GZ BMVIT-609.986/0011-III/12/2014 and GZ BMWFW-97.005/0003-C1/9/2014.

³ As part (annex) of the COMET Programme Document

5 THE BASIS OF FUNDING

5.1 What are COMET-Projects?

COMET-Projects aim for high quality research in cooperation between science and industry with a medium-term perspective and a clearly defined theme with potential for further development. COMET-Projects contribute to the launch of new product-, process- and service innovations.

COMET-Projects are projects in cooperation science-industry with multi-firm character and a minimum of 3 company partners. They are strategic insofar as they aim for sustainable profile development on a medium-term perspective. Resubmission is possible.

COMET-Projects enable new consortia and new ideas to enter the COMET-Programme. On the long term it is possible to evolve to a COMET-Centre.

COMET-Projects are characterised by great research expertise and connection to science as well as by high relevance of implementation for industry. The programme line COMET-Projects is, as all COMET-Programme lines, open with regard to research fields and topics.

Central to each application is a research programme defined jointly by science and industry which does not simply constitute a conglomeration of individual projects but creates substantial added value as a result of cooperation and joint strategic orientation.

The planned research programme consists of maximum **10 individual projects** and can be divided into **up to 3 Areas**.

An Area is a methodically and thematically distinct unit in the research programme of a COMET-Project and has to define a coherent research programme within the larger context of the COMET-Project (see glossary for definition of “Area”).

There are two types of individual projects: company projects, which are divided in “multi-firm” and “single firm” projects and strategic projects (see glossary for definition of “project”). The share of single-firm projects must be limited to a maximum of 20% of eligible costs. The share of strategic projects is an important indicator with regard to the degree of novelty of research and is also an essential target value.

The **duration** of a COMET-Project is at least **3 years**, **3.5 years** or a maximum of **4 years**.

COMET-Projects have to be submitted and continued by consortia.

The COMET Programme, and therefore the COMET-Project Programme Line, provides funding exclusively for the following project types (definitions are given in Annex I):

- a) Activities in the field of industrial research
- b) Activities in the field of experimental development
- c) Activities in the field of basic research related to activities listed in a) and b) above
- d) Training measures related to activities listed in a) and b) above
- e) Technological feasibility studies

5.2 What criteria must be met by the consortium?

Partners may participate in a COMET-Project **either** as a scientific partner **or** as a company partner.

Applicants can be consortia with

- at least 1 scientific partner (SP) and
- at least 3 company partners (CP) that are independent⁴ of each other

If one company partner controls another or a group of companies, this group of companies will be regarded as one enterprise. COMET addresses enterprises of all sectors and sizes.

Scientific partners are taken to include research and knowledge dissemination organisations or research organisations (for definition see glossary) if they provide their contributions as part of their non-economic activities.

Participation of CP and SP in the consortium is evidenced by a **“Letter of Commitment” (LOC)** including the relevant contribution (see LOC template).

The funding must have an **incentive effect** (for definition see glossary) for the partners. Therefore the eCall requires each partner to explain whether and to what extent the project could be carried out without funding.

The cooperative character of the programme is emphasised by the mandatory conclusion of an **Agreement** specifying the rights and obligations of the partners involved.

5.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader is responsible for the project management and communications with the funding agency and the partners of the project for the entire duration of the programme. This includes checking the reports and financial accounts of all partners based on the data and information provided. The consortium leader confirms to the FFG that

- the costs included in the accounts are relevant to the project, i.e. they can be clearly attributed to the project;
- the project is fully in line with the funding contract in terms of costs and content and that any alterations have been notified in good time;
- the reports and financial accounts are complete and have been prepared in accordance with the funding and programme guidelines.

⁴ Enterprises that are independent of each other hold less than 25% of the capital or voting rights in one another. This rule also applies to shareholdings via parent companies. For more information see [SME definition](#).

The consortium appoints one partner to act as consortium leader, who submits the application for funding.

5.4 Who is eligible to receive funding?

Legal entities, partnerships and sole traders that are not part of the federal administration are in principle eligible to participate as consortium partners.

The following are eligible for funding:

- Companies of any legal form
- Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination
 - Universities and universities of applied sciences
 - Non-university research institutions⁵
 - Technology transfer institutions, innovation agents and other research-oriented organisations such as associations with a relevant purpose

Eligible to participate but not to receive funding are:

- Subcontractors: they are not partners within a COMET-Project. They provide defined tasks for partners 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.

Legal entities that are part of the federal administration are eligible to participate as consortium partners provided that they do not claim eligible costs and do not provide cash or in-kind contributions to the project as company or scientific partners. Their participation needs to be justified in the application. The scope of the participation as well as the resulting rights and duties are to be stipulated by contract.

5.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have partners from outside Austria.

The costs of foreign partners – both from within and outside the EU – can be accepted under the following conditions:

- The foreign partner accepts the FFG’s obligation and entitlement to monitor the project progress as specified in the funding contract and submits documentation in German or English in accordance with the requirements to be met by Austrian partners.

⁵ Competence Centres under the COMET funding scheme are eligible to participate as partners unless they bear the predominant part of the eligible total costs. COMET Centres (K1 and K2) are not allowed to act as consortium leader in COMET-Projects

Organisations from outside Austria may also be involved as subcontractors if they do not provide regular services for the COMET-Project and are not partners within the consortium.

5.6 How much support is granted?

Support is paid in the form of non-repayable grants. The maximum level of public funding is **EUR 675.000 per year** (federal and provincial funding) or max. EUR 2,7 million over the 4-year duration of the project.

The maximum level of **federal funding** is **EUR 450,000 per year**. The provinces have committed themselves to provide additional funds at a fixed ratio of 2:1 for the COMET Programme. The maximum level of additional **provincial funding** is therefore **EUR 225,000 per year**.

The applied **overall funding rate** has to lie within the range specified for COMET-Projects (**35% - 45%** of eligible total costs). The funding applicants must propose an overall funding rate based on the planned research programme. COMET-Projects with a stronger focus on basic research will receive a higher funding rate and COMET-Projects with a stronger focus on applied research will receive a lower funding rate within the specified range.

The final funding rate for the entire COMET-Project will be determined in the course of the evaluation process.

In the application the total amount of funding must be allocated at partner level. The funding rate per partner is derived from the ratio of eligible costs per partner to the funding allocated. The funding rates at partner level are subsequently calculated based on the approved overall funding rate in the funding contract.

Companies must comply with the maximum aid intensities specified in the EU Framework and the Struktur-FTI Guidelines for the relevant research category and type of organisation.

Table 1 Maximum aid intensities⁶

Research Categories	Small Enterprise	Medium sized Enterprise	Large Enterprise
Industrial Research: Maximum aid intensity, taking into account the following points: - subject to effective collaboration between undertakings (for large enterprises, crossborder or with at least one SME) or between an undertaking and a research organisation; or - subject to wide dissemination of results	80 %	75 %	65 %
Experimental Development: - subject to effective collaboration between undertakings (for large enterprises, crossborder or with at least one SME) or between an undertaking and a research organisation; or - subject to wide dissemination of results	60 %	50 %	40 %

For details on both research categories experimental development and industrial research see Struktur-FTI Guidelines and Glossary of this document.

A single 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.

Research institutions participating in the project as part of their non-commercial activities are not subject to any restrictions. If they participate in the project as part of their commercial activities they are subject to the same conditions as companies.

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 transfer⁷

The company size is to be determined according to the SME definition as specified by EU competition law:

Information on SME definition:

https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtliches_service_KMU

⁶ Struktur – FTI – guidelines:

https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/downloads/page/richtlinie_fti_2015_struktur.pdf

⁷ [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#) (2014/C 198/8), 2.1.1, 19).

5.7 How are COMET-Projects financed?

The total financing of a COMET-Project is composed of federal funding, provincial funding, contributions of scientific partners and contribution of company partners.

Example of financing for a COMET-Project over 4 years in EUR assuming a 45% funding rate:

Federal funding	1,800,000.00	30%
Provincial funding	900,000.00	15%
Contribution of scientific partners	300,000.00	5%
Contribution of company partners	3,000,000.00	50%
Overall costs	6,000,000.00	100%

5.7.1 Federal funding

The **federal government** has specified a maximum amount of funding per year per COMET-Project. The maximum **amount of federal funding** is **EUR 450,000 per year** or EUR 1.8 million over the maximum 4-year duration of the COMET-Project.

5.7.2 Provincial funding

The provinces provide additional funding to the COMET Competence Centre Programme at a fixed **ratio of 2:1** (2 parts federal funding: 1 part provincial funding) in order to support their regional technology policy goals.

If **several provinces participate** in a COMET-Project the total amount of provincial funding will be divided between the participating provinces.

The level of provincial funding must not be exceeded. The provinces may, however, at any time provide funding for other projects.

Details on the procedure for submission in the federal provinces see chapter 6.2.

5.7.3 Contribution of scientific partners

The accumulated contributions of the scientific partners must be **at least 5%** of the eligible overall costs of the COMET-Project and cannot be replaced by contributions from company partners. **Up to 100%** can be in the form of **in-kind contributions**.

In-kind contributions are contributions in the form of materials and/or manpower. Cash contributions are payments in cash.

If existing COMET-Centres participate as scientific partners the projects must be carried out in the Centre's Non-COMET area (see glossary for definition of "Non-COMET area").

5.7.4 Contribution of company partners

The contributions of the company partners must be **at least 45%** of the eligible overall costs for COMET-Projects.

Company partners may provide both **cash contributions** and **in-kind contributions**.

In-kind contributions can only be provided for financing costs which are not covered by the funding.

Cash contributions by the company partners serve to finance the costs of the scientific partners only (but not their own costs).

As a matter of principle, company partners are not allowed to provide general co-financing in the form of a basic subsidy.

5.8 What costs are eligible?

All costs attributable to the COMET-Project incurred directly, actually and additionally (to the normal operational costs) during the duration of the funded research activity are eligible for funding. Evidence must be provided for actual project costs (e.g. original receipts allocated to the project, payroll accounts, and time records).

The period for which **costs may be recognised** corresponds to the **contractual duration of the COMET-Project**, which commences with the start date and ends with the date of conclusion of the project.

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs is given in the Cost Guidelines Version 2.0, which may be found at <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-2>. The following regulations apply in addition to the provisions of the Cost Guidelines as amended:

- Travel costs of third parties are eligible for funding if they can be shown to be directly related to the project (e.g. participation at Scientific Advisory Board).
- Public relations costs are eligible for funding if they are directly related to the COMET-Project and can be allocated to the funded research project (e.g. dissemination of research results, brochures, press releases, homepage etc.).
- Hospitality costs related to relevant networking activities concerning the overall COMET-Project (e.g. Boards, Project Committees) are eligible for funding.
- **Third-party costs are limited to 20%** of the total costs per partner. Any excess must be justified in the “Project Description COMET-Project”. **Bilateral research cooperation** (‘single-firm’ projects) is limited to a maximum of 20% of eligible costs.

Costs that are not eligible for funding include, inter alia:

- Costs for the establishment and maintenance of legal entities (e.g. company limited by shares, GmbH), e.g. notarial deed, company registration etc.;
- Costs for the acquisition of real estate and immovable property;
- Investments in construction, manufacturing equipment and production facilities;
- Costs that are not directly related to the funded project;
- Costs that are not deemed to be eligible for funding under EU law.

5.9 What points should be considered relating to IPR?

Prior to payment of the 1st instalment, the consortium leader must confirm that a consortium agreement has been duly signed by all partners. The consortium agreement must meet all requirements of the call.

For more information, see the **FFG sample consortium agreement and the COMET Side-Letter**: www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the consortium. The provisions of the [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#), 2014/C 198/11, 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; the contributions (cash/in-kind) provided may be offset. 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.

5.10 What are the evaluation criteria for funding applications?

5.10.1 Evaluation criteria for K Projects

The funding applications will be evaluated in accordance with the following four main criteria:

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

The table below shows the relevant sub-criteria. In the course of the assessment, points will be assigned to each criterion.

1. Quality of the Project		Points
		30
<p>1.1. Scientific quality of the Research Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the research programme meet / exceed the international state-of-the-art in science and technology? Have existing national and international research activities been sufficiently taken into account? • Have the objectives of the research programme been described clearly? How do you rate the approaches and methods to achieve these objectives? • What is the added value of the research programme as compared to a sum of individual projects? Do the individual projects complement each other? Do they provide significant synergy effects? • If the project relates to people⁸: Have gender aspects in the research topic, respectively in the methodological approach, been adequately taken into account? 	21	
<p>1.2. Quality of planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the work and time schedules in line with the planned research programme? • Are the costs and financing plans realistic at programme and project level? Is the size of the individual projects adequate for the research programme? • Are the Areas and individual projects coherent in terms of structure and content? Are the collaborative relationships (multi-firm) and the allocation of tasks between the partners at project level plausible? 	9	

⁸ Projects not relating to this point (without gender relevance in their research programme) will not lose points.

2. Suitability of the applicants / project partners	30
2.1. Quality of the consortium from a scientific perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you rate the scientific qualifications and resources of the consortium to ensure implementation of the research programme? • Can the key persons demonstrate relevant reference projects? Do the key persons have the potential to make new findings? • Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	12
2.2. Quality of the consortium in terms of the company partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you rate the technical and economic qualifications and resources of the company partners to ensure successful implementation of the research programme? • Can the key companies demonstrate relevant reference projects? Do the key companies have the potential to implement new findings on the market? • Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	12
2.3. Organisation and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the organisational structure and management of the COMET-Project adequate? • Are the planned target values adequate and reasonable? • How do you rate the performance of a possible predecessor COMET-Project? • How do you rate the planned measures for gender mainstreaming? Is gender balance given within the project team in order to better the situation typical for the sector? 	6
3. Benefit and exploitation	30
3.1. Economic relevance of the research results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What benefits will the project results bring to the companies or users? • To what extent are the expected research results suitable for initiating new products, processes and services? • What are the market opportunities and the potential for commercial exploitation? • Are relevant measures of technology and knowledge transfer to industry in place? To what extent will the research results be exploited by the partners (in the form of IPR, patents, licences, etc.)? 	30

4. Relevance to the call	10
<p>4.1. Incentive effect of funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the funding influence the project positively in one or more of the following dimensions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation: the funding enables the project to be implemented in the first place ○ Acceleration: the funding accelerates implementation ○ Scope: the funding increases the scope of the project ○ Range: the funding makes the project more ambitious through: a more radical innovation approach, higher risk, new or extended collaborations, long-term strategic orientation 	10

5.10.2 Key indicators and target values

The evaluation will also involve an assessment of key figures and indicators based on individual target values defined upon submission of the application.

The review will determine to what extent these target values are reasonable and realistic in the context of the given research field and environment. The target values (or subsequently adjusted, if required) will be included in the reporting process and verified in the mid-term and ex-post evaluations (comparison between target and actual values).

The COMET Monitoring and Evaluation Concept (Chapter 3) describes the key figures and indicators allocated to the individual COMET Programme goals.

Further information about the results of previous COMET-Projects can be found in the monitoring reports (see Downloadcentre 4.2), which are published on an annual basis: https://www.ffg.at/content/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_4_Berichtswesen.


5.11 What documents are required for submission?


Project applications may only be submitted electronically via eCall: <https://ecall.ffg.at>


 **Project Description COMET-Project** (upload as pdf file)
Project description – funding application


eCall Online-Cost Plan (to be entered online)

The calculations are entered online, directly in the eCall system.


 **ANNEX 0: Cover Letter of reapplication** (optional, upload as pdf file)
In case of a re-application within the COMET-Programme, changes and improvements with respect to the previously rejected COMET-application may be explained in a cover letter, which has to be uploaded in the eCall additionally.


 **ANNEX 1: References** (upload as pdf file)
Literature used for writing the application.

 **ANNEX 2: List of Consortium Partners** (upload as excel file)
The figures entered in the costs & financing section of eCall must correspond with the “List of Consortium Partners“.

 **ANNEX 3: CVs and List of Publications** (upload as pdf file)
Please upload all CVs and publications in a single file via eCall (no scan)

 **ANNEX 4: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners**

 **ANNEX 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Company Partners;**
Duly signed letters of commitment of all scientific and company partners including their relevant contributions (cash and in-kind).

 **ANNEX 6: Declaration of Federal Province(s);**
Written declaration(s) of the participating provinces (province of domicile must provide a declaration upon submission of the application).

Annex (0)-6: the uploads may not exceed 20MB per file

Templates are available on the FFG website and must be used:

<https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte>

Please upload the following additional attachments on to the eCall application:

- Annual statement of accounts (balance sheet, profit and loss account) from the past 2 financial years
- [Declaration of SME Status](#) for associations, sole traders and non-Austrian companies

The attachment of any further documents is not permitted.

5.12 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

To support the assessment of the content of the project, further projects relevant to the application have to be listed. Results and the build-up of knowledge have to be described. Relevant are:

- 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.

These projects have to be listed in the project description.

When submitting a COMET follow-up application, the differences to the previous project funded under the COMET scheme must be clearly set out.

Other funding applied for or approved for the relevant project proposal must be indicated directly in the eCall application (under costs and funding/further funding), with the exception of applications for provincial co-funding under the COMET Programme.

5.13 Is scientific integrity ensured?

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

The FFG is a member of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity – OeAWI (<http://www.oeawi.at/de/statuten.html>) and is thus committed to safeguarding good scientific practice.

If a lack of scientific quality or misconduct is suspected during the evaluation or in the course of the formal checks, 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 will be rejected for formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding will be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

6 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

6.1 What is the procedure for submission?

The electronic application must be submitted via **eCall** prior to the submission deadline: <https://ecall.ffg.at>.

Prior to the funding application all partners have to have completed and submitted their partner applications via eCall.

How does it work?

- Download and complete the project description form and the annexes available on the FFG website
- Open an application in the eCall; invite partners; fill in cost and finances in the eCall
- Upload the documents via eCall
- Complete the application by clicking 'Submit'
- On successful submission an automatic confirmation of receipt will be sent by e-mail.

Not necessary: Additional postal submission of a duly signed copy

Not possible:

- Resubmission or modification of individual parts of the "Project description COMET-Project"
- Revision after submission of the application.

The application documents are to be submitted by the consortium leader or by a duly authorised representative. FFG may request evidence that this person is authorised to represent the consortium leader. If the consortium leader is unable to provide such evidence FFG reserves the right to reject the application for formal reasons.

A detailed tutorial on eCall is available at <https://ecall.ffg.at/tutorial>

6.2 What is the procedure for submission in the federal provinces?

Every funding application **must** be accompanied by a **written declaration of the province of domicile** (i.e. the province in which the COMET-Project or the consortium leader will be based) **and all co-financing provinces**. In justified exceptional cases the declaration of co-financing provinces may be submitted subsequently, at the latest four weeks after submission of the application.

The written declaration is usually a letter of reference on behalf of the funding application in which the provincial government confirms its funding commitment in the event

that the COMET-Project is approved. The entire amount of provincial funding (2 federal : 1 provincial funding) must in any case be covered by (a) written declaration(s)⁹.

The funding applicants are responsible for consulting the relevant contacts in the provinces **in good time** prior to the submission of the funding application.

A so-called **Core Form** containing the key figures of the project must be submitted to the relevant provincial governments by **24 October 2017**. The form is available from the contact offices of the provincial governments or from the FFG website:

<https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte>

The funding applicants must send the complete application to the relevant authority of the province(s) involved till **8 November 2017 (call dead line)**.

A list of relevant contacts and important information about specific conditions in the individual provinces can be found at:

<https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-7-ausschreibung-comet-projekte>

6.3 What about the security of confidential project data?

The FFG is under a legal obligation to maintain secrecy concerning company and project information pursuant to Sec. 9 para 4 of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency Act (FFG-G, Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 73/2004). External experts who are involved in the assessment of projects are also subject to confidentiality obligations.

Project contents and results may only be published with the consent of the funding recipient.

FFG may use personal data in accordance with Secs. 7 to 11 of the Data Protection Act (DSG 2000 Federal Law Gazette, BGBl. I No. 165/1999):

- for the conclusion and performance of the funding contract
- for fulfilling our statutory mandate
- for control purposes

This use may mean that the data must be transferred or disclosed in particular to bodies and authorised representatives of the Federal Audit Office, EU bodies, other federal or provincial funding bodies and the Federal Ministries in their function as owners of FFG.

There is also the possibility to obtain information from the transparency portal according to Sec. 32 (5) of the Transparency Database Act (TDBG 2012).The FFG shall obtain a declaration of consent for any use of such data going beyond this provision.

Further information about privacy during the duration of the project is available in the eCall tutorial.

⁹ The province may also confirm in its written declaration that it will not participate in the COMET-Project if it deems the COMET-Project to be incompatible with the interests of the province. In this case the Federal Government reserves the right to provide funding for the COMET-Project without a contribution being made by the province.

7 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

7.1 What is the formal check?

During the formal check, the application is checked for formal correctness and completeness.

FFG will notify the consortium leader of the result of the formal check within four 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, the consortium leader 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 COMET-Project” template.

7.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

The procedure is defined in the COMET Programme Document (chapter 8) and the Evaluation Concept. COMET-Projects are evaluated in **a one-stage process**.

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the criteria (listed in chapter 5.10 of this document) by **national FFG experts** and **external international experts** (peers) based on the documents submitted.

For the external review FFG cooperates closely with the Christian Doppler Research Association (CDG) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

It is possible to **exclude up to 5 international reviewers** (individual persons or employees of specific organisations) for justified reasons, especially in the event of disputes on theoretical principles or scientific competition. eCall contains an entry field for this purpose.

FFG experts will check the financial potential (credit rating and liquidity) of the participating enterprises. It is not possible to provide funding to undertakings in difficulty¹⁰.

An **evaluation panel (jury)** will subsequently make a funding recommendation based on the defined evaluation criteria, taking into consideration the written reviews.

¹⁰ Undertakings in difficulty as defined in the General block exemption Regulation (EU) N°651/2014 of 17 June 2014

7.3 Who takes the funding decision?

The funding decision is the responsibility of the Federal Minister(s) concerned and will be made on the basis of the funding recommendation from the evaluation panel, including any requirements and/or conditions.

- Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT)
- Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy (BWF)

8 FUNDING PROCEDURE

8.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

If funding is granted, FFG sends the consortium an offer of funding in form of a draft contract which must be accepted by the consortium leader within a specified period of time.

If the consortium leader accepts the draft contract within the specified period of time, a funding contract will be drawn up.

The funding contract specifies:

- the funding recipient,
- the project title,
- the level of eligible costs,
- the amount of funding granted,
- the period of funding,
- the payment modalities,
- the reporting obligations and any additional conditions and requirements.

The consortium must return the duly signed original contract to the FFG.

Details on how to conclude a funding contract can be found under: <http://www.ffg.at/Vertrag-Konsortium>

Separate funding contracts must be concluded with the co-financing provinces in accordance with the applicable terms and conditions.

8.2 How should requirements and recommendations be taken into account?

During the evaluation of the application recommendations and/or mandatory requirements may be formulated. Requirements can either be obligations that have to be met prior to the conclusion of the funding contract conditions to be met during the course of the project.

The implementation of the recommendations and requirements must be documented in the interim reports.

Prior to payment of the 1st instalment, the consortium leader must confirm that a consortium agreement has been duly signed by all partners.

8.3 How are the instalments of funding paid?

The first instalment will be paid as soon as the funding contract has been signed and the recipient has met all relevant requirements.

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

The FFG reserves the right to reduce the funding amount in justified cases (e.g. actual costs lower than planned costs).

The payment of funding during the term of the COMET-Project does not imply approval of the costs.

Final instalment: 10% of the maximum funding approved will be retained and will only be transferred upon approval of the final report and the final accounts. The payment amount will be based on the approved eligible costs and the funding rate agreed in the funding contract.

At the end of the COMET-Project, the scientific partners and the company partners must have provided their financing rates stipulated in the funding contract. If the financing rates have not been made in full federal and provincial funding might be reduced accordingly.

The **costs will only be approved** once the COMET-Project is granted **discharge** by the FFG project controlling & audit division following the final audit.

The FFG will carry out **on-site audits** during the term of the funded COMET-Project and may also check the accounts submitted by the consortium leader and the partners for accuracy and the correct and legal use of the funds. The audits will be duly announced.

FFG instalment scheme		
Project duration in years	3 or 3.5	4
Number of reports (interim and final report)	3	4
1st instalment in % of funding amount	30%	30%
2nd instalment in % of funding amount	30%	20%
3rd instalment in % of funding amount	30%	20%
4th instalment in % of funding amount		20%
Final instalment in % of funding amount	10 %	10 %

8.4 What reports and accounts are required?

A scientific interim report, as well as a description of the costs (cost table) must be submitted within one month of the reporting deadlines specified in the Funding Contract using the reporting function of the eCall system.

A scientific **final report** and final accounts must be submitted within 2 months of the end of the project using the reporting function of the eCall system.

All reports and accounts must include the activities and associated costs of **all partners in the consortium** for which funding is paid by the FFG.

The reports must be prepared using the **templates provided** for this purpose (<https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter>).

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are set out in the **“Cost Guidelines Version 2.0”** available at <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-2>.

In addition, the funding recipient is obliged to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministry departments to support PR work as and when required. This includes in particular making available non-confidential project information (e.g. fact sheet, success stories) and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes.

The FFG is responsible for reporting, controlling and auditing the COMET-Projects with regard to both federal and provincial funding. The consortium leader has to deliver the reports to the relevant provinces, as needed. The provinces may accept the results of this audit, but may also perform audits of their own.

8.5 How should changes to the project be communicated?

Substantial changes to the project or **changes concerning the consortium partners** involved (e.g. new ownership structure, insolvency proceedings) must be immediately reported to the FFG.

Any changes to contractually agreed parameters (project contents, consortium partners, costs, deadlines, etc.) shall require a substantiated request to and written **approval by the FFG**:

- via eCall message
- in the interim or final report

All relevant documents should be sent in an 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 partners
- Details: <https://www.ffg.at/Kostenumschichtungen>

Substantial cost reallocations must be justified and requested by completing the cost reallocation table.

8.6 Can the funding period be extended?

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

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

8.7 When will the Review take place?

As specified in the COMET Evaluation Concept for COMET-Projects a review (site visit) is foreseen for the **mid of the COMET-Project**. This review allows for a first feedback for the COMET-Projects and is primarily of advisory character. It assesses the degree to which the project goals have been achieved, the development and management of the project and the implementation of planned measures.

The Review results in the formulation of a set of requirements and recommendations for the remaining duration of the COMET-Project. The consortium leader has to prepare a Core Document in English for the assessment of the COMET-Project. Relevant templates are available at:

https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_3_Reviews

8.8 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

The consortium submits a scientific **final report** (= Final Evaluation Core Document) and **final accounts** after the end of the project. The FFG will examine whether the funding has been used appropriately.

The **ex-post evaluation** assesses the implementation of the measures originally planned for the COMET-Project, examines compliance with the requirements and recommendations specified in the ex-ante evaluation and the review, and assesses the degree to which the project goals have been achieved. The consortium leader must prepare the “Final Evaluation Core Document” in English for the final assessment of the COMET-Project.

https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_4_Berichtswesen

The Final Evaluation Core Document replaces the content part of the annual report and has to be delivered via eCall within 2 months after the end of the COMET-Project.

The **audit** will establish the final level of eligible costs.

The consortium leader 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 scientific reasons, as well as on formal and legal grounds.

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

<https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-2>

9 Annex I: Glossary of the Guidelines

Incentive Effect

Funding can only be found compatible if it has an incentive effect. An incentive effect occurs where the aid changes the behaviour of an undertaking in such a way that it engages in additional activities, which it would not carry out or it would carry out in a restricted or different manner or at another location without the aid.

The following criteria may be used in addition to other factors as evidence of the incentive effect:

- Implementation: the funding enables the project to be implemented in the first place
- Acceleration: the funding accelerates implementation
- Scope: the funding increases the scope of the project
- Range: the funding makes the project more ambitious through:
 - a more radical innovation approach
 - higher risk
 - new or extended collaborations
 - long-term strategic orientation

Area

An **Area** (research area) is defined as a methodically and thematically distinct unit in the research programme of a COMET-Project. A research area must define a coherent research programme within the larger context of a COMET-Project

Cash contributions

Cash contributions are payments in cash.

Research and knowledge dissemination organisation or research organisation¹¹

means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities, the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, for example in the quality of shareholders or members, may not enjoy a preferential access to the results generated by it.

¹¹ In accordance with AGVO, Struktur-FTI-Guidelines and Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of RTI

Research Categories¹²:

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

¹² for detailed definitions see Struktur-FTI-Guidelines 12.1

Research programme

A research programme is defined jointly by science and industry and outlines the area of activity for the entire COMET-Project. A research programme must relate to a clearly defined subject matter and is divided into working areas (see glossary for definition of “Area”) and projects (see glossary for definition of “projects”).

In-kind contributions

In-kind contributions are provided in the form of non-cash contributions and/or manpower.

Key Researcher

Key Researchers are renowned scientists who owing to their expertise and standing will exercise a significant influence on the further development of the relevant research topic or programme. As a rule, such Key Researchers will be recruited from among the scientific partners (e.g. university professors).

Multi-firm criterion

The multi-firm criterion stipulates that at least 3 independent company partners must be involved in a COMET-Project.

Non-COMET area (only relevant for COMET-Centres)

COMET Centres should develop a “Non-COMET area” complementing the research programme funded under the COMET Programme in line with the present Programme Document (“COMET area”). It serves to carry out contract research for companies (company partners or other clients) in market-oriented fields at full cost and to fulfil complementary objectives of public interest, e.g. of the provinces. Other funded national and international projects (e.g. EU projects, etc.) are also carried out within the Non-COMET area.

Public funding

Public funding comprises federal and provincial funding.

Projects

Projects are defined as research units to be carried out within the framework of a research area (Area), or as cross-cutting projects and must be described in Project Sheets (see template) in the application; projects are divided into work packages. The size of the project must be appropriate to the planned activities. There are two types of projects:

- Strategic research projects

Strategic research projects are characterised by a high degree of novelty and excellence and are based on the COMET-Project’s long-term objectives beyond the short-term requirements of company partners. They are established in line with the core expertise of the COMET-Project and are suitable for expanding this expertise by creating unique selling propositions in an international context. Such research is generally far from development and implementation.

The share of strategic projects is an important indicator with regard to the degree of novelty of research and is also an essential target value.

- Company Projects (“Multi-firm” projects, “Single-firm” projects)

In contrast to strategic projects, company projects are more strongly oriented towards the needs of the company partners.

Multi-firm projects are company projects within the scope of a COMET-Project’s research programme involving more than one company partner.

Single-firm projects are company projects within the scope of a COMET-Project’s research programme involving only one company partner. The share of such projects must be limited to a maximum of 20% of eligible costs

Province of domicile

The province of domicile is the province in which the consortium leader of the COMET-Project is based.

10 Annex II: Abbreviations

Abbreviations

AGVO	Allgemeine Gruppen Freistellungsverordnung (General Block Exemption Regulation)
LOC	Letter of Commitment
FFG	Austrian Research Promotion Agency
Struktur-FTI Guidelines	Richtlinien zur Förderung der wirtschaftlich-technischen Forschung, Technologieentwicklung und Innovation (guidelines for the promotion of the commercial and technological development of research, technology and innovation (FTI – guidelines 2015) Struktur- FTI-guidelines
Union Framework	Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of research, technology and innovation
Programme Document	Programme document of the COMET Programme for Competence Centres of 1 July 2013
CP	Company partners
SP	Scientific partners

10.1 Call Milestones (up to the first instalment)

