



**FFG**

## **Guidelines for K-Projects**

**under the Programme**

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

**6<sup>th</sup> Call**

**Submission deadline**

**26 April 2016**

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## PREAMBLE

These Call Guidelines<sup>1</sup> provide information about basic requirements, funding conditions and procedures for the submission of K-Projects and the specifics of the call, the call objectives, budget and submission deadlines.

The Competence Centre Programme COMET (Competence Centers for Excellent Technologies) comprises three programme lines which differ in terms of level of excellence, amount of public funding and duration:

COMET – Competence Centers for Excellent Technologies	
K2-Centres	Public funding: 40 - 55% Federal funding: max. EUR 5 million/year Provincial funding: max. EUR 2.5 million/year Duration: 10 years (5 + 5)
K1-Centres	Public funding: 40 - 55% Federal funding: max. EUR 1.7 million/year Provincial funding: max. EUR 0.85 million/year Duration: 8 years (4 + 4)
K-Projects	Public funding: 35 - 45% Federal funding: max. EUR 450,000 /year Provincial funding: max. EUR 225,000 /year Duration: 3 - 4 years

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nt call refers exclusively to K-Projects.

The maximum total duration is 4 years.

The programme line K-Projects shall provide new ideas in the area of cooperative research within the COMET-Programme.

The call addresses new consortia as well as existing K-Projects or competence centres.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 strategic objectives of COMET are: developing new expertise by initiating and supporting long-term research co-operations between science and industry in top-level research, as well as establishing and securing the technological leadership of companies.

By advancing and bundling existing strengths and by integrating international research expertise Austria is to be strengthened as a research location for the long term.

The objectives in detail are:

- The objective of the “K-Project” line is – according to the COMET Programme Document – to initiate high-quality research in science-industry cooperation with a medium-term perspective and a clearly defined subject having the potential for further improvement.
- The research programme shall be aligned to strategic interests of industry and scientific partners, thus enabling joint research expertise, initiating new scientific - technological developments and innovation and preparing exploitation.
- Gender issues are to be considered in regards to both the research topic and gender balanced participation in research work.

## 2 KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

Key facts	COMET K-Projects
<b>Instrument</b>	Platform (C8 P)
<b>Short description</b>	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.
<b>Funding per K-Project (EUR)</b>	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) These limits must not be exceeded!
<b>Funding rate</b>	35 - 45% (depending on type of research)
<b>Contribution of company/scientific partners</b>	Contribution of company partners: min. 50% Contribution of scientific partners: min. 5%
<b>Duration (years)</b>	3 – 3.5 – 4 years
<b>Minimum consortium requirements</b>	at least 1 scientific partner and at least 3 company partners

<b>Budget for the 6th Call K-Projects</b>	EUR 9.95 million (federal funds) plus additional provincial funds
<b>Start of call</b>	2 November 2015, 09:00 (CET)
<b>Submission deadline</b>	26 April 2016, 12:00 (CET)
<b>Jury decision</b>	15 - 16 November 2016
<b>Project start</b>	1 January 2017 (on the first of each month until July 2017)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Contact</b>	<p><b>Tel. (0)57755-extension (ext)</b></p> <p><b>Programme Management:</b>  Budiono Nguyen, Tel.ext. 2104; E <a href="mailto:budiono.nguyen@ffg.at">budiono.nguyen@ffg.at</a>  Nicole Firnberg, Tel.ext. 2409; E <a href="mailto:nicole.firnberg@ffg.at">nicole.firnberg@ffg.at</a>  Otto Starzer, Tel.ext. 2101; E <a href="mailto:otto.starzer@ffg.at">otto.starzer@ffg.at</a>  Ingrid Fleischhacker, Tel.ext. 2102; E <a href="mailto:ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at">ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at</a>  Reingard Repp, Tel.ext. 2107; E <a href="mailto:reingard.repp@ffg.at">reingard.repp@ffg.at</a></p> <p>Julia Bissenberger, Tel.ext. 2103; E <a href="mailto:julia.bissenberger@ffg.at">julia.bissenberger@ffg.at</a> (on eCall)  Anna-Maria Rinke, Tel.ext. 2108, E <a href="mailto:anna-maria.rinke@ffg.at">anna-maria.rinke@ffg.at</a> (on eCall)</p> <p><b>Information about costs and financing:</b>  Christa Meyer, Tel.ext. 6080; E <a href="mailto:christa.meyer@ffg.at">christa.meyer@ffg.at</a>  Martina Amon, Tel.ext. 6081; E <a href="mailto:martina.amon@ffg.at">martina.amon@ffg.at</a></p> <p>An advisory interview can also be arranged!</p>
<b>Information on the Web</b>	<a href="http://www.ffg.at/comet">http://www.ffg.at/comet</a> <a href="https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-6-ausschreibung-k-projekte">https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-6-ausschreibung-k-projekte</a>

### 3 CALL DOCUMENTS

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

### 4 LEGAL BASIS

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

DOCUMENTS	Web
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• COMET Programme Document dated December 2014</li> <li>• COMET Evaluation Concept dated 1 April 2015</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtsgrundlagen">https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtsgrundlagen</a>  <a href="http://www.ffg.at/content/comet-downloadcenter">http://www.ffg.at/content/comet-downloadcenter</a> 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.

<sup>2</sup> GZ BMVIT-609.986/0011-III/12/2014 and GZ BMVFW-97.005/0003-C1/9/2014.

## 5 THE BASIS OF FUNDING

### 5.1 What are K-Projects?

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

The difference between a “K-Project” and other funded research projects (FFG basic programmes, other structural programmes) is given by its significantly bigger size and duration, by its significantly higher risks in development and implementation and by its outstanding joint research programme with potential for development.

Central to each K-Project is a **research programme defined jointly by science and industry** and in which **strategic and “multi firm” projects** (see Glossary for a definition) play a crucial role.

Thus, a K-Project does not simply constitute a conglomeration of individual projects but creates substantial added value as a result of cooperation and joint strategic orientation. Bilateral research collaborations (“**single firm projects**”) are possible but limited to a maximum of 20% of eligible costs.

The COMET Programme provides funding exclusively for the following project types (For details on both research categories experimental development and industrial research see Struktur-FTI Guidelines and Glossary of this document):

- 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

The planned research programme consists of maximum 10 individual projects (see Glossary for definitions Annex 1) and can be divided into up to three Areas.

The **duration** of a K-Project is minimum 3 years, 3.5 years or max 4 years.

K-Projects can be submitted and continued by consortia.

The collaborative character of the project is underlined by the mandatory conclusion of a **Consortium Agreement** specifying the partners’ rights and obligations.

The consortium appoints one partner to act as consortium leader. This partner submits the application for funding and serves as contact point for the FFG.

### 5.2 What criteria must be met by the consortium?

Partners may participate in a K-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 independent<sup>3</sup> 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 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.

### 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.

### 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

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<sup>3</sup> 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](#)

- Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination
  - Universities and universities of applied sciences
  - Non-university research institutions<sup>4</sup>
  - Technology transfer institutions, innovation agents and other research-oriented organisations such as associations with a relevant purpose
- Other non-commercial institutions
  - Local authorities<sup>5</sup> and autonomous bodies
  - Non-profit making organisations such as NPOs<sup>6</sup>

If there is no information available in the Business Compass (“Firmen-Compass”) based on the Austrian commercial register (e.g. for associations, sole traders, non-Austrian companies, start-ups), a Declaration of SME Status must be provided upon submission of the proposal. In the template provided by the FFG applicants must (as far as possible) categorise their business for the last three years according to the SME definition. The template for the Declaration of SME Status and the SME definition are provided on the web page of the 6<sup>th</sup> Call.

If a company is not registered in the Business Compass but intends to submit a project as an SME, the Declaration of SME Status must be attached to the electronic application via eCall.

see: [https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/downloads/page/e\\_eidesstatt\\_erklaerung\\_kmu-status\\_0.pdf](https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/downloads/page/e_eidesstatt_erklaerung_kmu-status_0.pdf)

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<sup>4</sup> Competence centres under the COMET funding scheme are eligible to participate. K2 Centres are not allowed to act as consortium leader in K-Projects. K2 Centres are allowed to participate as partners unless the K2 Centre bears the predominant part of the eligible total costs.

<sup>5</sup> Activities of local authorities falling within their statutory mandate are not eligible for funding.

<sup>6</sup> “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.

Eligible to participate but not to receive funding are:

- Subcontractors: they are not partners within a K-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.

Their participation needs to be justified in the application. Potential “other participants” may also include persons or institutions of the Austrian federal administration.

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 international integration of the K-Project is a major aim of the Programme in order to strengthen Austria’s position as a research location. The participation of international (research) partners is therefore desired and should be set out accordingly in the application.

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.

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

## 5.6 How much support is granted?

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 K-Project Programme. The maximum level of additional **provincial funding** is therefore **EUR 225,000 per year**.

The applied **overall funding rate** within the range specified for K-Projects (**35% - 45%** of eligible total costs) results from the research mix in the individual projects and applies for the entire duration of the project. K-Projects with a stronger focus on basic research will receive a higher funding rate and K-Projects with a stronger focus on applied research will receive a lower funding rate within the specified range. The funding

applicants must **propose an overall funding rate** based on the planned research programme.

The final funding rate for the entire K-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 intensities**

<b>Research Categories</b>	<b>Small Enterprise</b>	<b>Medium sized Enterprise</b>	<b>Large Enterprise</b>
<b>Basic Research</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Industrial Research</b>	<b>70 %</b>	<b>60 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>
<b>Industrial Research:</b> - 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	<b>80 %</b>	<b>75 %</b>	<b>65 %</b>
<b>Experimental Development</b>	<b>45 %</b>	<b>35 %</b>	<b>25 %</b>
<b>Experimental Development:</b> - 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	<b>60 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>40 %</b>

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 transfer<sup>7</sup>

Non-commercial activities of other institutions include contributions to R&D projects related to the development of products, services and systems, where they act, e.g., as public agencies.

The company size is to be determined according to the SME definition as specified by EU competition law: [information on SME definition](#)<sup>8</sup>.

## 5.7 How are K-Projects financed?

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

**Example of financing** for a K-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 K-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 K-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 K-Project the total amount of provincial funding will be divided between the participating provinces.

The **level of provincial funding must not be exceeded** in the funded part of the K-Project. 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> Information SME Definition: [https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtliches\\_service\\_KMU](https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtliches_service_KMU)

### 5.7.3 Contribution of scientific partners

The accumulated contributions of the scientific partners must be **at least 5%** of the eligible overall costs 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 competence centres participate as scientific partners the projects must be carried out in the Centre's Non-COMET area (for definition of 'Non-K area' see glossary).

### 5.7.4 Contribution of company partners

The contributions of the company partners must be **at least 50%** of the eligible overall costs for K-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 K-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 K-Project**, which commences with the start date and ends with the 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 K-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 K-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 K-Project”.
- **Bilateral research cooperation** (‘single-firm’ projects) is limited to a maximum of 20% of eligible costs.

## 5.9 What points should be considered relating to IPR?

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.

Prior to payment of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 [sample consortium agreement<sup>9</sup>](#) and the COMET Side-Letter: [www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag](http://www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag)

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<sup>9</sup> Sample consortium agreement: <https://www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag>

## 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 criteria:

Evaluation criteria for K-Projects		Points
1. Research programme defined jointly by science and industry with a mid- to long term perspective		
1.1 State of the art and novelty of the research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the goals clearly presented?</li> <li>• Is the work scientifically and technologically relevant and current?</li> <li>• Does the research programme correspond to the international state of the art in the field?</li> <li>• Is enough attention paid to related work performed by other groups in related subject areas?</li> <li>• Is the work directed towards providing new knowledge of central scientific or technological interest?</li> <li>• Are the approaches and methods chosen to address the goals likely to find widespread acceptance in the future?</li> <li>• Are gender aspects<sup>10</sup> adequately considered in the research field?</li> </ul>	0-100
1.2 Relevance of the scientific technological developments and innovation and their market potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the proposed programme initiate relevant scientific and technological developments with a clearly recognisable market potential?</li> <li>• Is the knowledge gained being processed and implemented in a manner that is targeted towards commercial applications?</li> <li>• Do the markets being targeted have a lasting potential for development?</li> <li>• Do the expected results have sufficient chance of being applied or marketed?</li> </ul>	0-100
2. Research competence and connection to science		
2.1 Assessment of the consortium's scientific quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the consortium's scientific standing and its previous research activities sufficient to meet the programme's requirements?</li> <li>• Are the key persons able to point to suitable reference projects (publications, reference projects etc.)?</li> </ul>	0-100

<sup>10</sup> If (groups of) persons are the research object or persons will be affected by the research results, this must be reflected in the research design.



3. Relevance of implementation in industry		
3.1 Assessment of the consortium's quality with regard to the company partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the proposed research programme useful in terms of commercial utilisation? Are the relevant company partners involved?</li> <li>• Are appropriate measures for technology transfer in place?</li> <li>• Does the consortium's quality with regard to the company partners meet the programme's requirements and can the key industry partners point to suitable reference projects?</li> <li>• Is the consortium complete or should the number of partner firms be increased?</li> </ul>	0-100
4. Quality of the cooperation between science and industry, coherence and quality of the consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is all the required expertise present in the consortium? Is the consortium's ability appropriate to the proposed research programme, both in scientific and in industrial terms?</li> <li>• Do the various subprojects complement one another in a sensible manner?</li> <li>• Does the overall research programme show an "added value" and significant synergy effects compared with the sum of the individual projects?</li> </ul>	0-100
5. Management and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the organisational structure and the management meet the actual needs?</li> <li>• Do the milestones as well as the time schedules and the financial and financing planning correspond to the research plans?</li> </ul>	0-100

The table specifies the relevant criteria and underlying questions in accordance with the Evaluation Form (see Evaluation Concept) and the points awarded for each criterion.

The contribution of the project to gender aspects and the gender balance in the project team will be assessed qualitatively.

### 5.10.2 Key indicators and target values

The evaluation will also involve an assessment of key indicators based on individual target values (see “Project Description K-Project”). The evaluation 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 defined upon submission of the application (or subsequently adjusted, if required) will be included in the reporting process and verified in the Review and ex-post evaluation (comparison between target and actual values).

More information on previous K-Projects is available under:








[https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/allgemeine\\_downloads/strukturprogramme/monitoringbericht\\_k-projekte\\_2013\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/allgemeine_downloads/strukturprogramme/monitoringbericht_k-projekte_2013_2014.pdf)

## 5.11 What documents are required for submission?

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

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

**eCall Online-Cost Plan:** Fill in the online calculation

-  **ANNEX 0: Cover Letter - Reapplication (optional)** – Upload as pdf-file; In case of a re-application in COMET, changes of the present application with respect to the previous 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
-  **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** and
-  **ANNEX 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Company Partners;** Duly executed 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: Uploads max. 20MB per file

The templates are available on the FFG website at <https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-6-ausschreibung-k-projekte> and must be used.

Additional attachments 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
- For explanations see relevant form templates.

## 5.12 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

The application for funding must list those projects that have been or are being publicly funded by Austrian authorities and/or EU grants, provided these are:

- ongoing projects
- projects completed in the past three years
- submitted applications related to the call topics
- submitted applications related to the proposed project

The proposed project must be clearly distinguished from projects that have already received funding in order to prevent the same project being funded twice. The complete presentation of previous funding granted or requested does not reduce the chance of receiving funding in this call, but rather demonstrates the consortium's expertise in the area.

When submitting a COMET follow-up application, the differences to the previous project funded under the COMET scheme (K-Centre or K-Project) must be clearly set out. These projects should be listed in the "Project Description K-Project".

## 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 we suspect a lack of scientific quality or misconduct in the course of the formal checks, we may forward the relevant documents 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 quality or misconduct (e.g. plagiarism) we must request a revision of the application or reject it for formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding must be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

## 6 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

### 6.1 What is the procedure for submission?

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

The funding application may only be submitted once **all invited partners have completed and submitted** their partner applications via eCall.

How does it work?

- The Project description form and the annexes are available for download at <http://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-6-ausschreibung-k-projekte>
- Fill in the online calculation
- Upload the required documents via eCall
- An **application** is considered to have been submitted if it has been **completed in eCall** by clicking the **'Submit'** button.
- On successful submission an automatic **confirmation of receipt** will be sent **by e-mail**.
- Not necessary: additional postal submission of duly executed copy

Not possible:

- Resubmission or modification of individual parts of the “Project description K-Project” application form
- Revision after submission

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

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

## 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 K-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 K-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).

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

A so-called **Core Form** containing the key figures of the project must be submitted to the relevant provincial governments prior to the application deadline by **11. April 2016**. The form is available from the contact offices of the provincial governments or from the FFG website.

The funding applicants must send the complete application to the relevant authority of the province(s) involved till **26 April 2016** (call dead line).

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 list of the relevant contacts in the individual provinces can be found at <https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-6-ausschreibung-k-projekte>. The list also contains important information about specific conditions etc.

## 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.

We 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, the Federal Minister of Finance and the EU.

## 7 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

### 7.1 What is the formal check?

During the formal check, the application is checked for formal correctness and completeness, but not for thematic content.

You will be notified 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, 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 K-Project” template.

### 7.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

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

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the criteria listed in Chapter 5.10.1 a by **national FFG experts** and **external international experts** (peers) based on the documents submitted. The external review is carried out by the Christian Doppler Research Association (CDG) together with the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

An **evaluation panel (jury)** will subsequently make a funding recommendation based on the reviews by the national FFG experts and external international experts.

It is possible to **exclude up to 5 international reviewers** 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 difficulty<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> 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 obligations 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 including any requirements contained therein 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 sign and stamp the Funding Contract and return the duly executed original 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?

Recommendations and/or mandatory requirements may be formulated during the evaluation of the application. Requirements must be met prior to the conclusion of the funding contract. This may also include conditions to be met by the consortium 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 K-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 K-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 funding might be reduced accordingly.

The **costs will only be approved** once the K-Project is granted **discharge** by the FFG Project Controlling & Audit Division following the final audit performed after expiry of the K-Project.

The FFG will carry out **on-site audits** during the term of the funded K-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 by the FFG.



<b>FFG Instalment scheme</b>		
<b>Project duration in years</b>	<b>3 or 3.5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Number of Reports</b> (interim and final report)	3	4
<b>1st Instalment</b> in % of funding amount	30%	30%
<b>2nd Instalment</b> in % of funding amount	30%	20%
<b>3rd Instalment</b> in % of funding amount	30%	20%
<b>4th Instalment</b> in % of funding amount		20%
<b>Final Instalment</b> in % of funding amount	10 %	10 %

## 8.4 What reports and accounts are required?

A **technical 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 three 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 undertakes to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministry departments to support PR work as and when required. This shall include 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 will be responsible for reporting, controlling and auditing the K-Projects with regard to both federal and provincial funding. 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 uploaded as an attachment to the eCall message or sent by post. 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
- for details: <https://www.ffg.at/content/kostenumschichtungen>

Substantial cost reallocations must be justified and requested by completing the cost reallocation table<sup>12</sup>.

## 8.6 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

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<sup>12</sup> Details for cost reallocation: <https://www.ffg.at/Kostenumschichtungen>

## 8.7 When will the Review take place?

A Review evaluation is carried out at the **mid of the K-Project** as specified in the COMET Evaluation Concept for K-Projects. This evaluation includes an assessment of the achievements so far (comparison between target and actual values).

The consortium leader must prepare a Core Document in English for the assessment of the K-Project. The Review will provide requirements and recommendations for the remaining project period. Relevant templates are available at:

[https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker\\_3\\_Reviews](https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_3_Reviews)

## 8.8 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

The consortium submits a 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 K-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 K-Project.

[https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker\\_4\\_Berichtswesen](https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_4_Berichtswesen)

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 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

### **Incentive Effect<sup>13</sup>**

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

The effect of the funding and the strategic significance of the project results for the partners involved may include the following factors:

- increasing R&D capacities on a long-term basis
- securing or extending their R&D position
- expanding existing R&D activities to include new fields of application
- development of R&D platforms
- opening up new business fields etc.

### **Area**

The planned research programme can be divided into several areas.

A working area (Area) is defined as a methodically and thematically distinct unit in the research programme of a K-Project.

In line with the general purpose of the K-Project, an Area must be structured so as to achieve scientific results and commercial exploitation in the medium term.

Thus, an Area must define a coherent research and development programme for the medium term within the larger context of a K-Project and may not just constitute the total of a number of individual, short-term projects. Each Area is supervised by a Key Researcher.

### **Cash contributions**

Cash contributions are payments in cash.

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<sup>13</sup> For detailed definition see Struktur-FTI Guidelines, 12.1 Definition of Terms

### **Research and knowledge dissemination organisation or research organisation<sup>14</sup>**

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.

### **Research Categories<sup>15</sup>:**

#### **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.

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

**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

The aims of industrial research:

- Develop new products, procedures or services
- Significantly improve existing products, procedures or services

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<sup>14</sup> In accordance with AGVO, Struktur-FTI-Guidelines and Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of RTI

<sup>15</sup> 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 K-Project. A research programme must relate to a clearly defined subject matter and is divided into working areas (see definition 'Areas') and projects (see definition '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 K-Project.

### **Non-K area**

The Non-K area is outside the Centre's research programme funded under the COMET initiative. It includes externally funded projects for companies, national science funds and international R&D programmes (especially EU programmes).

### **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 working area (Area), or as cross-cutting projects and must be described in Project Sheets (see form template) in the application; projects are divided into work packages. The size of the project must be appropriate to the planned activities. There are 3 types of projects:

- **Strategic research projects**

Strategic research projects are characterised by a high degree of novelty and excellence and are based on a K-Project's long-term objectives beyond the short-term requirements of company partners. They are established in line with the core expertise of the K-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.

- **Multi-firm projects**

Multilateral research collaborations (multi-firm projects) are projects within the scope of a K-Project's research programme involving more than one company partner.

- **Single-firm project**

Bilateral research collaborations (single-firm projects) are projects within the scope of a K-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 K-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
FP	Funding period
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