



FFG

**Guidelines for
COMET Modules
under the programme
COMET (Competence Centers for
Excellent Technologies)**

1st Call COMET Modules

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PREAMBEL

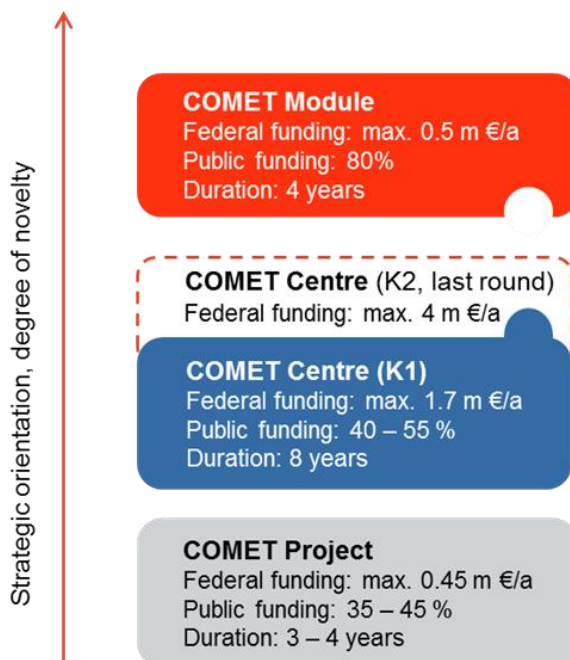
These Call Guidelines¹ provide you with information about basic requirements, funding conditions and procedures for the submission of **COMET Modules** and the specifics of the call, the call objectives, budget and submission deadlines.

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.



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

The current call is competitive and refers exclusively to COMET Modules and is, with a view to a broad approach to innovation², thematically open. Only existing COMET Centres (K1) are eligible for application.

The maximum duration is 4 years. Each COMET Centre (K1) can apply for no more than 2 Modules per Call. Per Centre a maximum of two parallel running Modules can be funded.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

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.
- **Strengthening the competitiveness of science and industry by driving internationalisation as a sign of high quality cooperative research:** involving internationally-renowned scientists, organisations and companies, positioning COMET Centres as internationally attractive partners, and ongoing benchmarking with top research institutions are designed to generate an edge in international competition.
- **Establishing and developing human resources:** increasingly attracting scientists of international renown, creating structured career models for scientists, and actively supporting intersectoral mobility for research personnel in order to intensify the transfer of know-how.

² According to the “FTI Strategie des Bundes (2011)” a broad approach to innovation has to be considered. This includes technological, research driven and non-technological innovations in manufacturing and the service sector as well as ecological and social innovations or innovations in the public sector.

2. KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

Key facts	COMET Module 1st Call
Instrument	Competence Centre (C8 Z)
Short description	<p>Funding is provided for Comet Modules. Within the framework of a research programme jointly defined by science and industry, they establish promising/emerging fields of research and develop new fields of expertise in order to strengthen Austria's position as a research location and to prepare it for the challenges of the future. COMET Modules are defined by particularly high-risk research.</p> <p>Only existing COMET Centres (K1) are eligible for application.</p>
Funding per COMET Module in EUR	<p>Federal government: max. EUR 0.5 million/year Provincial government: max. EUR 0.25 million/year These limits must not be exceeded!</p>
Funding rate	80 %
Contribution of UP/WP	<p>Contribution of company partners: min. 15% Contribution of scientific partners: min. 5%</p>
Duration (years)	Maximum duration: 4 years
Minimum consortium requirements	<p>at least 1 scientific partner and at least 3 company partners</p>
Budget for first COMET Module Call	EUR 12 million (federal funds) plus additional provincial funds
Start of call	24. April 2018
Submission deadline	24. October 2018, 12:00 CET (eCall submission)
Limitations	<p>A maximum of 2 Modules per COMET Centre (K1) can be applied for in each call.</p> <p>A maximum of 2 Modules per COMET Centre (K1) can be funded at the same time.</p>
Jury decision	29. /31. Mai 2019
Project start	1.7.2019, 1.1.2020, 1.4.2020, 1.7.2020 (aligned with the reporting period of the COMET Centre (K1))
Language	English
Application	<p>Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) https://ecall.ffg.at</p>

Contact	<p>Tel. (0)57755-extention (DW)</p> <p>Programme-Management: Reingard Repp, ext 2107; E reingard.repp@ffg.at Barbara Kunz, ext 2404; E barbara.kunz@ffg.at Otto Starzer, ext 2101; E otto.starzer@ffg.at Ingrid Fleischhacker, ext 2102; E ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at Adelheid Merkl, DW ext; E adelheid.merkl@ffg.at (eCall) Julia Bissenberger, ext 2103; E julia.bissenberger@ffg.at (eCall)</p> <p>Informationen zu Kosten und Finanzierung: Christa Meyer, ext 6080; E christa.meyer@ffg.at Alexander Glechner, ext 6082; E alexander.glechner@ffg.at Martina Amon, ext 6081; E martina.amon@ffg.at</p> <p>You are invited to arrange for an advisory interview with FFG.</p>
Information on the Web	<p>https://www.ffg.at/comet https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul</p>

3. CALL DOCUMENTS

Documents		
Call Guidelines for COMET Module 1 st Call	www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul	
Cost Guidelines Version 2.1		
Forms for funding application		
Project Description COMET-Modul	www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul	
Cost Plan		
Monitoring Tables		
Annexe		
Annex 1: References (no forms available)		
Annex 2: Project Sheets		
Annex 3: Partner Descriptions		
Annex 4: CVs and List of Publications		
Annex 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners		
Annex 6: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Company Partners		
Annex 7: Declaration of Federal Province(s) (no forms available)		

4. LEGAL BASIS

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

Dokuments	
Richtlinie 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-GL ³	www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtsgrundlagen unter Punkt 1.2. Allgemeines
COMET-Programme Document, dated 1. Jänner 2016	www.ffg.at/content/comet-downloadcenter
COMET-Monitoring- and Evaluationconcept ⁴ dated 1. January 2016	

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

³ GZ BMVIT-609.986/0011-III/I2/2014 und GZ BMWFW-97.005/0003-C1/9/2014

⁴ part of the COMET- Programme Document (annex)

5. THE BASIS OF FUNDING

5.1 What are COMET Modules?

The new programme line COMET Modules aims to establish promising/emerging fields of research and to develop new fields of expertise in order to strengthen Austria's position as a research location and prepare it for the challenges of the future. COMET Modules are characterised by particularly high-risk research.

COMET Modules are thematically distinct research units that perform research on the highest level to open up new promising/emerging fields of research that are way beyond the current state of the art. This enables particularly high-risk research. Incremental research is not a goal of COMET Modules.

In COMET Modules the COMET Centres have to cooperate with the best researchers and research institutions on a national and international level in order to achieve an international top position that is to be established through continuous benchmarking with the best.

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, as a result of cooperation and joint strategic orientation, creates substantial added value.

COMET Modules consists exclusively of strategic projects due to the high degree of novelty required. (see Glossary). The participation of company partners is possible, but single-firm projects (with the participation of only one company partner) are not.

The COMET Module generally consists of several individual projects of an appropriate and reasonable size.

Individual projects must be described in the annex of the funding application in so-called "Project Sheets".

5.2 What criteria must be met by the consortium?

Partners may participate in a COMET Module either as a scientific partner or as a company partner. Participation as both scientific partner and company partner is expressly excluded.

Applicants can be consortia with

- at least 1 scientific partner (SP) and
- at least 3 company partners (CP) that are independent⁵ 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.

⁵ 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](#).

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 template⁶).

The funding must have an incentive effect (for definition see Glossary) for the Centre as the funding recipient and should also have an incentive effect for the partners. eCall therefore requires both the consortium leader (the Centre) and each partner to explain whether and to what extent the project could be carried out without funding.

Rights and obligations of the partners are to be specified in a cooperation agreement (consortium agreement)

The provisions of the Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation⁷, 2014/C 198/11, apply to collaborations between commercial companies and research institutions.

FFG supplies a sample consortium agreement⁸.

The requirements to the consortium have to be fulfilled at all times after the project start until the end of the project. Otherwise funding can be reclaimed.

5.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader (the Centre) is responsible for the project management and communications with the funding agency and the partners of the Centre for the entire duration of the COMET Module. 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 COMET Module;
- the COMET Module is fully in line with the funding contract in terms of costs and content and that any alterations have been notified in good time;
- 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 and/or to participate?

5.4.1 Who is eligible for funding?

The COMET Centre (K1) is the sole funding recipient (and contracting party). Company partners and scientific partners are not funding recipients, but may claim eligible costs relevant for the calculation of the total funding amount.

⁶ provided here <https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul>

⁷ Community framework: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=DE](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=DE)

⁸ Sample Agreement: <https://www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag>

The granting of funding for a COMET Module depends on the existence of the COMET Centre (K1). If the COMET Centre ends before the COMET Module, the continuation of the Module has to be applied for and will be approved by FFG.

5.4.2 Who is eligible to participate?

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

Especially:

- Companies of any legal form
- Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination
 - Universities⁹
 - Fachhochschulen
 - Non-university research institutions
 - Technology transfer institutions, innovation agents and other research-oriented organisations such as associations with a relevant purpose

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.

Sub-contractors are not considered as partners in a COMET Module. They are not entitled to use the project results and provide defined services for the Module, which are to be included in the cost category “Third-party costs”.

5.4.3 Can existing competence centres participate?

A co-operation between existing competence centres is possible. The COMET Centres may join as scientific partners in their non-economic area. 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-COMET area” see glossary).

5.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have partners from outside Austria.

A major aim of the Programme is to promote internationalisation by involving internationally renowned researchers, organisations and companies in order to strengthen the competitiveness of science and industry.

The participation of international (research) partners is therefore desired and should be set out accordingly in the application.

⁹ The smallest possible organisational unit of a university that is able to participate as a scientific partner is a university institute or a comparable unit according to UOG 2002/§20. To participate, these organisational units have to possess the necessary power of attorney according to UOG 2002/§ 27. Organisational units underneath the level of university institutes or comparable units (eg work groups) may not participate as project partners.

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 or as associated partners if they do not provide regular services for the Centre and are not Agreement Partners.

5.6 How much support is granted?

The level of public funding per COMET Module is max. EUR 0.75 million per year (federal and provincial funding) or max. EUR 3.0 million over the 4-year duration of the COMET Module.

5.6.1 Amount of federal funding

The maximum amount of federal funding is EUR 0.5 million per year.

5.6.2 Amount of provincial funding

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 0.25 million per year.

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

For details concerning the application of provincial co-funding see chapter 6.2.

5.6.3 Amount of Funding Rate

Due to the high degree of novelty, the overall funding rate is 80% for the complete COMET Module.

5.7 How are COMET Modules financed?

The total financing of a COMET Module comprises public funding (federal and provincial funding) as well as contributions of the scientific and company partners:

- Public funding: 80 %
- Contribution by scientific partners: min. 5 %
- Contribution by company partners: min. 15 %

The balance must be covered.

Example of financing for a COMET Module (in EUR per year) with a funding rate of 80% and maximum eligible funding:

Type of contribution/costs	amount in EU	amount in %
Federal funding (max.)	500.000	53,33%
Provincial funding (max.)	250.000	26,67%
Contribution of scientific partner	46.875	5,00%
Contribution of company partner	140.625	15,00%
Total costs	937.500	100,00%

5.7.1 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.

5.7.2 Contribution of company partners

The contributions of the company partners must be at least 15% of the eligible overall costs for COMET Module.

Company partners may provide both cash contributions and in-kind contributions. As a matter of principle, company partners are not allowed to provide general co-financing in the form of a basic subsidy.

Costs of the company partners are to be accounted for as in-kind contributions¹⁰.

5.8 What projects are eligible for funding?

The COMET Programme provides funding exclusively for the following project types:

- a) Activities in the field of industrial research
- b) Activities in the field of basic research related to activities listed in a) above
- c) Training measures related to activities listed in a) above

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

5.9 What costs are eligible?

Costs eligible for funding are exclusively limited to costs incurred directly in the context of the COMET Module.

¹⁰ Services from company partners may only be purchased in justified individual cases and require prior approval.

All costs attributable to the COMET Module 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, annual payroll accounts, time records).

The period for which **costs may be recognised** corresponds to the **contractual duration of the Module**, which commences with the start date and ends with the conclusion of the project. Funding amounts that have not been used cannot be carried over.

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs is given in the Cost Guidelines Version 2.1¹¹.

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. members of the International Advisory Board).
- In contrast to the Cost Guidelines, project costs and services charged to the Centre by the scientific partners are eligible for funding. These costs are to be included in the costs of scientific partners.

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

- Costs for the establishment and maintenance of the legal entity (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.

5.10 What points should be considered relating to IPR?

The provisions of the Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation¹², 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.

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the consortium.

It has to be ensured however, that the Centre is strengthened in its role as shared knowledge base and relevant expertise is developed and built up at the Centre.

¹¹ Cost Guidelines Version 2.1: <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-21>

¹² Community framework:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=DE](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=DE)

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.

5.11 What are the evaluation criteria for funding applications?

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 35
<p>1.1 Quality of strategic research in promising/emerging fields</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the research programme open up to promising/emerging fields and develop new expertise? • Are the approaches characterised by high risk (no incremental research) and are they designed to meet grand challenges? • Does the research go way beyond the state of the art? Have existing national and international research activities been sufficiently taken into account? • Does the research programme have potential to generate ground-breaking new findings? • Have the objectives of the research programme been described clearly? Are the approaches and methods adequate 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 people: Have gender aspects been adequately taken into account in the research topic? 	28
<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? Is the size of the individual projects adequate for the strategic research of the COMET-Module? • Are the individual projects coherent in terms of structure and content? Are the collaborative relationships and the allocation of tasks between the partners at project level plausible? 	7



2. Suitability of the applicant / project partners	Points 30
2.1 Quality of the consortium from a scientific perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the scientific qualifications and resources of the consortium sufficient to ensure successful implementation of the research programme? • Can the key persons demonstrate relevant reference projects? Do the key persons have the potential to make new ground-breaking findings? • Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	15
2.2. Quality of the consortium in terms of the company partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent can the company partners contribute to the future exploitation of the results from the research programme? • 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? 	9
2.3. Organisation and Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the planned management of the COMET-Module adequate? • Are the planned target values adequate? 	6
3. Benefit and exploitation	Points 15
3.1. Market relevance of strategic research in promising/emerging fields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the new research fields address potential future markets with a long-term development potential? • How large is the potential market and what is the competitive advantage and the impact on the sector? • Can the expected research results provide a basis for new ground-breaking technologies? 	12
3.2. Benefit and exploitation at the Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the research results be exploited at the Centre or by the partners (in the form of IPR, patents, licences, non-COMET projects, etc.)? • Is the work designed to establish a knowledge base for the future of the Centre? 	3

4. Relevance to the call	Points 20
<p>4.1. Development of human resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What measures are put in place to attract internationally renowned researchers to the COMET-Module? • Are the measures for recruiting and personnel development coherent with the research programme of the COMET-Module? • Are the planned gender mainstreaming measures sufficient? Does the Module provide for a balanced participation of women researchers? 	8
<p>4.2. Internationalisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is cooperation with internationally renowned researchers and research institutions planned? • What are the options / the potential of the Centre to reach a top position in the Module's research area in comparison with the internationally best? 	8
<p>4.3. 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 	4

5.11.1 Key Figures and indicators

The evaluation will also involve an assessment of key figures and indicators based on individual target values defined by the applicant 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 (as defined in the application or as adjusted by the jury) will be included in the reporting process and verified in the review and ex-post evaluation by comparing planned and actual values).

Quantitative target values must be entered in the Monitoring Tables of the application (see Table V. Target Values). Explanations to the individual indicators are provided in column "explanations".





An allocation of key figures and indicators to the individual COMET Programme goals can be found in the COMET Monitoring and Evaluation Concept¹³ (Chapter 3).

5.12 What documents are required for submission?

The templates are available from the FFG website and must be used:

<https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul>

More explanations can be found in the relevant forms and templates.

-  **Project Description COMET-Modul:**
Project description - thematic funding application (upload as pdf file)
-  **Cost Plan: Kosten und Finanzierungstabellen:**
The costs and finances have to correlate with the written explanations in the project description.
-  **Monitoring Tables:**
Monitoring tables including quantitative target values (upload as Excel file)
-  **Annex 1-7** (Uploads as pdf)
 - Annex 1:** References (no template): literature used in drawing up the application
 - Annex 2:** Project Sheets
 - Annex 3:** Partner Descriptions
 - Annex 4: CVs and List of Publications:**
Please upload all CVs and publications in a single file via eCall (no scan)
 - Annex 5*:** Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners und
 - Annex 6*:** 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 7*:** Declaration of Federal Province(s):
Written declaration(s) of the participating province(s)

* The LOCs are to be scanned for the electronic application; the originals remain with the consortium leader (COMET Centre)

It is not permitted to enclose additional Annexes.

5.13 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

To support the assessment of the content of the project, 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:

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

¹³ COMET-Monitoring- und Evaluation Concept:
https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_1_Allgemeines

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.

Additional projects should be listed in the Project Description or in the Monitoring Tables
Other funding applied for or approved for the relevant project proposal must be indicated directly in the eCall application (under Costs and Funding/Other Funding), with the exception of applications for provincial co-funding under the COMET Programme.

5.14 Is scientific integrity ensured?

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

The FFG is a member of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity – OeAWI¹⁴ and is thus committed to safeguarding good scientific practice.

If a lack of scientific quality or misconduct in the course of the formal checks is suspected, 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 must be rejected 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 consortium leader (COMET Centre) has to submit the application.

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

The documents have to be uploaded in the specified order.

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

Directions for online submission:

All Documents relevant for application (see chapter 3) are available on the FFG website: <https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-1-ausschreibung-comet-modul> and must not be modified.

- Open an application in the eCall, invite partners
- fill in cost (aggregated) 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.

¹⁴ OeAWI Statuten: <http://www.oewi.at/de/statuten.html>

Not necessary:

- Additional postal submission of a duly signed copy

Resubmission or modification (not even of individual parts) of the “Project description COMET Modules” is not possible. As soon as the application has been submitted, no further changes can be made.

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

6.2 What is the procedure for applying for provincial co-funding?

Every funding application must be accompanied by a written declaration of the province of domicile (i.e. the province in which the COMET-Centre 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 4 weeks after submission of the application.

The consortium leader should contact the province of domicile (see Glossary) first to agree upon further procedures.

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 Module is approved. The entire amount of provincial funding must in any case be covered by (a) written declaration(s).¹⁵

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 prior to the application deadline **10 October 2018**. The form is available from the contact offices of the provincial governments or from the FFG website.

The complete application has to be sent to the relevant authority of the province(s) involved **24 October 2018** (call dead line).

A list of relevant contacts in the individual provinces can be found at <https://www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-zentren-k1-5-ausschreibung> (also including information on specific conditions).

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.

¹⁵ The province may also confirm in its written declaration that it will not participate in the COMET Centre if it deems the Centre to be incompatible with the interests of the province. In this case the Federal Government reserves the right to provide funding for the K Centre without a contribution being made by the province.

Personal data can be used 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, bodies of the EU, other federal or provincial funding agencies as well as the Federal Ministries 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.

7. ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

7.1 What is the formal check?

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

The consortium leader will be notified by FFG of the result of the formal check within 4 weeks via an eCall message.

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

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

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

7.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

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

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the criteria listed in Chapter 5.12 by FFG experts (internal) and international experts /peers (external) based on the documents submitted. External reviews are carried out in close cooperation with the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and the Christian Doppler Research Association (CDG).

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.

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

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 Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW)

8. FUNDING PROCEDURE

8.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

If funding is granted, FFG sends the consortium leader (COMET Centre) an offer of funding in form of a draft contract which must be accepted 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 Centre will be the exclusive funding recipient.

The Funding Contract specifies, among other points 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 Funding Contract must be duly executed and the original returned to the FFG.

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

The Module Plan forms an integral part of the Funding Contract and must be drawn up prior to the conclusion of the Funding Contract. Compliance with the obligations as well as the recommendations formulated by the jury and any resulting changes to the application need to be addressed. The Module Plan consists of a thematic part and tables including a cost plan as well as additional annexes.

8.2 How should recommendations and conditions be taken into account?

Recommendations and/or mandatory requirements may be formulated during the evaluation of the application. Requirements may take the form of conditions for the conclusion of the Funding Contract or conditions to be met within the funding period.

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

8.3 How are the instalments of funding paid?

The amount payable for the relevant annual period will be paid in advance.

- The instalment for the first funding year will be paid as soon as the Funding Contract has been signed and the recipient has met all relevant requirements. The maximum amount for the first instalment for COMET Modules is EUR 500.000 (federal funding).
- Before the 1st instalment can be paid, the existence of a consortium agreement has to be confirmed, which regulates the collaboration and especially the intellectual property rights (IPR) relating to the funded project results.
- Subsequent instalments will be paid in accordance with the progress of the project respectively for the following funding year will be paid once the reports been reviewed and approved. The payment amount will in principle be calculated from the costs already incurred and the costs budgeted for the following year applying the funding rate specified in the Funding Contract or for the budget adjustments for the current year (at the annual report).
- The funding agency reserves the right to reduce the funding amount in justified cases (e.g. actual costs lower than planned 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/Module Plan. With the end of the contractual duration of the Module, 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 payment of funding during the term of the COMET Module does not imply approval of the costs.

If the reports show delay in the scheduled progress of the project or if costs are behind plan, the instalment might be adjusted accordingly.

The **costs will only be approved** once the COMET Modules final accounts have been approved by the FFG project controlling & audit division at the end of the funding period.

The FFG will carry out on-site audits during the duration of the funded COMET Module and may also check the accounts submitted by the funding recipient and the partners for accuracy and the correct and legal use of the funds. The audits will be duly announced by the FFG.

8.4 What reports and accounts are required?

A technical interim report including monitoring data, as well as interim accounts must be submitted within one month of the reporting deadlines specified in the Funding Contract using the reporting function of the eCall system. The reporting must correspond to the actual requirements of FFG.

A scientific final report, a (publishable) short summary¹⁶ and final accounts must be submitted within 3 months of the end of the project using the reporting function of the

¹⁶ Publication of the short summary may be omitted if it contradicts the commercial exploitation, due to obligations to confidentiality for security reasons or because of privacy policy.

eCall system. Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are set out in the Cost Guidelines Version 2.1¹⁷ chapter 5.10.

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 COMET Modules with regard to both federal and provincial funding.

The consortium leader (COMET Centre) has to send the reports to the relevant bodies of the 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?

Any deviations from the planned or approved activities must be explained in the reports (e.g. changes to the work schedule, new Projects, entry and exit of partners etc.).

Substantial changes to the research programme and expected major deviations, especially from the values stipulated in the Module Plan, must be reported to the FFG immediately they become known via eCall.

The FFG should generally be notified as soon as possible of any changes that occur in the Centre, and in any case of any major changes in the costs and/or contributions, so that further procedure can be discussed and agreed.

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 Modules a review is foreseen for the mid of the COMET Module. This review allows for a first feedback for the COMET Module and is primarily of advisory character. It assesses the degree to which goals have been achieved, development and management and implementation of planned measures.

¹⁷ <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-21>

The Review results in the formulation of a set of requirements and recommendations for the remaining duration of the COMET Module. The consortium leader has to prepare a Core Document¹⁸ in English for the assessment of the COMET Module.

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 Module, 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”¹⁹ in English for the final assessment of the COMET Module.

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 Module.

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 Guidelines²⁰.

¹⁸ Relevant templates are available at: https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_3_Reviews

¹⁹ Final Evaluation Core Document: https://www.ffg.at/page/comet-downloadcenter#Anker_4_Berichtswesen

²⁰ Kostenleitfaden: <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-21>

9. ANNEX

9.1 Glossary of the Guideline

Basic Research (see Struktur-FTI-Richtlinie 2015)

Basic research is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new basic knowledge, without any particular application or use in view.

Cash contributions

Cash contributions are payments in cash.

Consortium Agreement

The Consortium Agreement is concluded by the consortium partners involved (Centre, company partners, scientific partners) and defines the basic principles of cooperation within the COMET Module. The issues to be regulated include, but are not limited to, the rights and obligations of the contracting parties, IPRs, liability issues, organisational and decision-making procedures, admission and withdrawal of partners, aims and reporting obligations.

Incentive Effect (Anreizeffekt)

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

Industrial research (see Struktur-FTI-Richtlinie 2015)

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.

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).

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 COMET Module 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.

Province of domicile

The province of domicile is the province in which the COMET Centre is based.

Research and knowledge dissemination organisation or research organisation²¹

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.

²¹ In accordance with AGVO, Struktur-FTI-Guidelines and Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of RTI

Research programme

A research programme is defined jointly by science and industry and outlines the area of activity for the COMET Centre within the COMET- funded K area. 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').

Strategic research projects

Strategic research projects are characterised by a high degree of novelty and excellence and are based on a Centre's long-term objectives beyond the short-term requirements of company partners. They should drive new research impetus in their fields and be open to high-risk research. Such research is generally far from development and implementation.

9.2 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
CP	Company partners
SP	Scientific partners

9.3 Call milestones (up to first instalment)

