



FFG

Promoting Innovation.

2. CALL
SUBMISSION DEADLINE 14. APRIL 2021



COMET
COMPETENCE CENTERS FOR EXCELLENT TECHNOLOGIES
COMET MODULE GUIDELINES

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

1 PREAMBLE

This guideline supports you in submitting a COMET Module. Here you will learn

- How to apply for funding
- What terms apply
- The process of application
- Specifics of the call

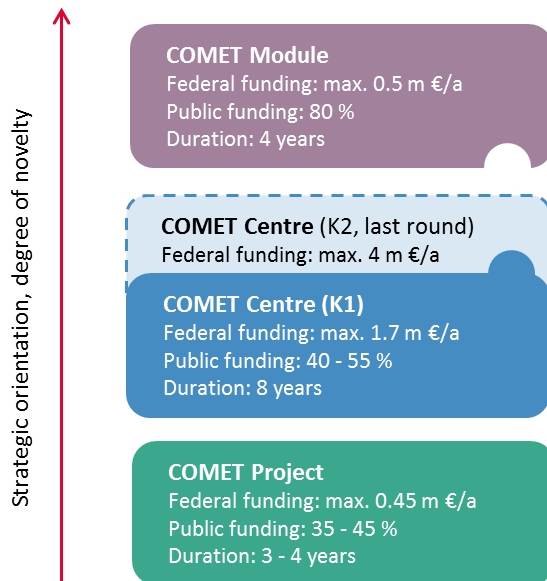
The Competence Centre Programme COMET (Competence Centres for Excellent Technologies) comprises three programme lines (COMET-Project, COMET-Centre, COMET-Module), which are characterised by high research expertise and links to science as well as by high relevance of implementation in industry. The degree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

Figure 1 The 3-line model



The current call is competitive and refers exclusively to COMET Modules and is, with a view to a broad approach to innovation, 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.

2 KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

Table 1: Facts at a Glance

Key Fact	further information
Instrument	Competence Centre (C8 M)
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- and provincial funding: max. € 3,0 million, respectively € 750.000 per year</p> <p>Federal government: max. € 2,0 million, respectively € 500.000 per year</p> <p>Provincial government: max. € 1,0 million, respectively. € 250.000 per year</p> <p>These limits must not be exceeded!</p>
Funding rate	80%
Financing by partners	<p>Company partners (CP):.15%</p> <p>Scientific partners (SP): 5%</p>
Duration	4 years
consortium	<p>at least 1 scientific partner and at least 3 company partners</p> <p>The consortium leader has to be situated in Austria.</p>
Budget 2 nd Call COMET Module	€ 12 million federal funding plus additional provincial funds
Start of Call	04. November 2020
Deadline for submission	14. April 2021, 12:00 (CET)

Key Fact	further information
Limitations	A maximum of 2 Modules per COMET Centre (K1) can be applied for in each call. A maximum of 2 Modules per COMET Centre (K1) can be funded at the same time.
Jury meeting	19. October 2021, funding recommendation
Project start	01. 01., 01.04., 01.07. or 01.10. 2022 aligned with the reporting period of the COMET Centre (K1)
Langage	English
Conatct	<p>Tel. +43 5 7755-extention (DW)</p> <p>Programme-Management (<i>in alphabeticl order</i>): Doris Aufner, DW 2109; doris.aufner@ffg.at Julia Bissenberger, DW 2103; julia.bissenberger@ffg.at Nicole Firnberg, DW 2409; nicole.firnberg@ffg.at Ingrid Fleischhacker, DW 2102; ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at Barbara Kunz, DW 2404; barbara.kunz@ffg.at Adelheid Merkl, DW 2714; adelheid.merkl@ffg.at Budiono Nguyen; DW 2104; budiono.nguyen@ffg.at Reingard Repp, DW 2107; reingard.repp@ffg.at Otto Starzer, DW 2101; otto.starzer@ffg.at</p> <p>eCall: FFG Funding Service, DW 0; funding@ffg.at</p> <p>Information concerning costs and financing: Christa Meyer, DW 6080; christa.meyer@ffg.at Alexander Glechner, DW 6082; alexander.glechner@ffg.at Martina Amon, DW 6081; marina.amon@ffg.at</p> <p>Advisory interviews can be arranged.</p>
Information online	www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-2-ausschreibung-comet-modul
Application	ecall.ffg.at

Funding applications may only be submitted electronically via [eCall](#), completely and before the deadline

3 CALL OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the COMET programme are:

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

4 THE BASIS FOR FUNDING

4.1 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”.

4.2 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 independent 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 template](#)).

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 innovation](#), (ABI 2014/C 198/11), apply to collaborations between commercial companies and research institutions. FFG supplies a [sample consortium agreement](#).

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.

4.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader (the COEMT Centre) is for the entire duration of the COMET Module responsible for:

- project management
- communications with the funding agency and the partners of the Centre
- checking the reports and financial accounts of all partners

The consortium leader commits to:

- manage and distribute the funding
- communicate changes in due time
- report and account in accordance with the funding contract

Prior to payment of the first instalment, the consortium leader must confirm that a consortium agreement exists. The consortium agreement must meet all requirements of the call.

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.

4.4 Who is eligible to receive funding and/or to participate?

4.4.1 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.

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.

4.4.2 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
 - Universities (see glossary)
 - 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”.

Not eligible to participate are

- Organisations that, within the last three years, have been commissioned either by FFG or the respective ministries to contribute substantially in the design or evaluation of the current call, may not participate in this call due to conflict of interest.

FFG reserves the right to exclude participants due to conflict of interest.

4.4.3 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).

4.5 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.

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.

4.6 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.

4.6.1 Amount of federal funding

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

4.6.2 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 max **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 5.2.

4.6.3 Amount of Funding Rate

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

4.7 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:

Table 2: Example of financing for a COMET Module

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%

4.7.1 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.

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

4.8 What projects are eligible for funding?

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

1. Activities in the field of industrial research
2. Activities in the field of basic research related to activities listed in a) above
3. 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.

4.9 What costs are eligible?

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

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 2.1](#).

The following regulations apply in addition to the Cost Guidelines:

- 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.

4.10 What points should be considered relating to IPR?

The provisions of the [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#) (Abl. 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.

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.

4.11 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.

Evaluation criteria

Tabelle 2: Evaluation criteria – Quality of the project

1. Quality of the project	max. points 35
1.1 Quality of strategic research in promising/emerging fields <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? 	28

1. Quality of the project	max. points 35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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? 	
1.2 Quality of planning <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

Table 3: : Evaluation criteria – Suitability of the applicant / project partners

2. Suitability of the applicant / project partners	max. 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? 	9

2. Suitability of the applicant / project partners	max. points 30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	
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

Table 4: : Evaluation criteria – Benefit and exploitation

3 Benefit and exploitation	max. 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

Table 5: : Evaluation criteria – Relevance to the call

4. Relevance to the call	max. points 20
4.1 Development of human resources	
<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
4.2 Internationalisation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is cooperation with internationally renowned researchers and research institutions planned? 	8

- 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?

4.3 Incentive effect of funding

- To what extent does the funding influence the project positively in one or more of the following dimensions?
 - 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

4.11.1 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 Concept](#) (Chapter 3).

4.12 What documents are required for submission?

The templates are available from [the FFG website](#) and must be used. More explanations can be found in the [relevant forms and templates](#).

Table 6: Overview call documents

Call documents
Call information
<p>Call Guidelines COMET Module 2nd Call</p> <p>Cost Guideline Version 2.1</p>
Templates / funding application
<p>Project Description: Project description - thematic funding application (upload as pdf file)</p> <p>Financial Tables: The costs and finances have to correlate with the written explanations in the project description. (upload as excel). The total costs and finances have to be entered into the eCall. Obligatory master data (Centre only): annual data of the last two years for all</p> <p>Monitoring Tables: Monitoring tables including quantitative target values (upload as Excel file)</p>
Annexes
<p>ANNEX 1: References: Literature used in drawing up the application (upload as pdf file)</p> <p>ANNEX 2: Project Sheets: Description of the projects (upload as pdf file)</p> <p>ANNEX 3: Partner Descriptions: Short description of the organisations, roll in the COMET Module, expected benefit, key persons, etc. (upload as pdf file)</p> <p>ANNEX 4: CVs and List of Publications: Please upload all CVs and publications in a single file via eCall (upload as pdf file, no scans)</p> <p>ANNEX 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners: Duly executed letters of commitment of all scientific partners including their relevant contributions (cash and in-kind, upload as pdf file)</p>

Call documents

ANNEX 6: [Letters of Commitment \(LOC\) Company Partners;](#)

Duly executed letters of commitment of all company partners including their relevant contributions (cash and in-kind, upload as pdf file)

ANNEX 7: Declaration(s) of Federal Province(s):

Written declaration(s) of the participating province(s) (at time of application at least province of residence, no template, upload as pdf file).

Additional Information:

Annex 1-7: Uploads max. 20MB per file.

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

4.13 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

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.

4.14 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 – OeAWI](#) 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.

5 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

5.1 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. 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 are available on the [FFG website](#) 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.

- **Not necessary:** Additional postal submission of a duly signed copy
- **Not possible:** Resubmission or modification (not even of individual parts) of the “Project description COMET Modules” after the application has been submitted.

A detailed information on the eCall is available in [the eCall tutorial](#).

5.2 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). 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.

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 **24 March 2021**. 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 **14. April 2021** (call dead line).

A list of relevant contacts in the individual provinces, including information on specific conditions can be found at the [FFG website](#).

5.3 What about the security of confidential project data?

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

- Processing of the funding application and assessment of whether the general and specific funding requirements have been met,
- Conclusion of the funding contract and (if a funding contract has been concluded) compliance with the relevant contractual obligations, including but not limited to administration of the funding payments and monitoring of compliance with funding requirements,
- Compliance with statutory obligations, including but not limited to reporting obligations and control purposes in order to avoid double funding (i.e. Sec. 38 in conjunction with 18, 27, 28 ARR, as well as Sec. 12 FTFG and Sec. 9 FFG-G).

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

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

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

External experts may be commissioned to evaluate projects in individual cases. Such experts act as processors on behalf of the FFG and are required to take technical and organisational measures to ensure data security and data confidentiality.

Project content and results may only be published (e.g. on the website or in social media forums) with the consent of the funding recipient (Art 6 (1) (a) GDPR) unless the FFG has a legal obligation to do so.

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

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

The FFG will ensure a level of security appropriate to the risk in terms of confidentiality, integrity, availability and resilience of the systems by implementing technical and organisational measures within the meaning of Art. 32 GDPR that are

sufficient and appropriate for protecting the data against accidental or unlawful destruction, loss and unauthorised access.

Further information about ensuring the confidentiality and security of personal data during the course of the project is available in the [eCall tutorial](#).

6 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

6.1 What is the formal check?

During the formal check, the application is checked for formal correctness and complete-ness. 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](#).

6.2 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 4.11 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.

6.3 Who takes the funding decision?

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

- BMK - Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology
- BMDW - Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs

7 FUNDING PROCEDURE

7.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

If funding is granted, FFG communicates the consortium an offer of funding, including the key data of the funding contract, via eCall. This must be accepted by the consortium leader within a specified period of time.

If the consortium leader accepts the draft contract within the specified period of time, a funding contract will be drawn up and sent to the consortium. The consortium leader must return the duly signed original for it to become valid. Before that, the COMET Module has no claim for funding.

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.

Changes resulting from the evaluation have to be communicated via eCall before the funding contract can be finalised.

7.2 How should recommendations and conditions be taken into account?

During the evaluation requirements and recommendations may be formulated.

Two types of requirements are possible:

- Requirements, that need to be fulfilled in order for the funding contract to be concluded.
- Requirements, that the consortium needs to meet during the funding period.

Requirements are part of the funding contract.

Requirements and recommendations as well as their implementation have to be documented before the contract is signed or before the respective instalment in the eCall or the interim report.

Prior to payment of the first instalment, the consortium leader has to confirm that a consortium agreement, which lays down the necessary regulations according to the Union's framework, exists. A submission of the consortium agreement to FFG is not necessary.

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

The payment amount will be based on the approved eligible costs and the funding rate agreed in the funding contract, taking into account cost incurred so far.

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

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

Instalment scheme

Table 7: COMET Module instalment scheme

Report number and instalment	48 months project duration
Number of reports (interim and final)	5
1st instalment in % of funding amount	25 %
2nd instalment in % of funding amount	25 %
3rd instalment in % of funding amount	25 %
4th instalment in % of funding amount	15 %
Final instalment in % of funding amount	10 %

7.4 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 summary and final accounts must be submitted within 3 months of the end of the project using the reporting function of the eCall system. 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.
- In case the Module is terminated before the end of the funding period, the consortium leader has to deliver a technical final report. If the funding paid exceeds the eligible costs, FFG may reclaim funds.

Requirements for reports and accounts:

- All reports and accounts must include the activities and associated costs of all partners in the consortium
- The reports must be prepared using the templates provided in the [download centre](#).
- Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are set out in the [Cost Guidelines Version 2.1](#).
- 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.
- In addition, the funding recipient is obliged to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministry departments to **support PR work** as and when required. This includes in particular making available non-confidential project information

(e.g. fact sheet, success stories) and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes.

7.5 How should changes to the project be communicated?

Changes to contractually agreed parameters like project contents, consortium partners, costs, deadlines or duration have to be explained to and require approval by FFG:

- via eCall message
- in the interim or final report

All relevant documents should be sent in an eCall message. Any modifications to the contract parameters require the approval of the FFG.

Immediate notification is required for:

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

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

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

7.6 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

7.7 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.

The Review results in the formulation of a set of requirements and recommendations for the remaining duration of the COMET Module.

7.8 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

At the end of the funding period, the consortium delivers a scientific final report, and the final accounts. Apart from a verification of the proper use of funds by the FFG, an ex-post evaluation takes place.

Review of final accounts

At the end of the funding period the FFGs project controlling & audit verifies the proper use of funds.

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 [Cost Guidelines](#).

8 LEGAL BASIS

This Call uses the guidelines for the promotion of the commercial and technological development of research, technology and innovation ([Richtlinien zur Förderung der wirtschaftlich-technischen Forschung, Technologieentwicklung und Innovation](#)) as well as the [COMET Programme Document](#) (dated September 2020) as a legal basis.

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

All EU regulations are to be applied in the respective valid version.

9 FURTHER INFORMATION

9.1 Glossary of the Guideline

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

Cash contributions

Cash contributions are payments in cash.

Research and knowledge dissemination organisation or research organisation (In accordance with AGVO, Struktur-FTI-Guidelines and Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of RTI)

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 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').

Basic Research (see current [Guidelines](#))

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

Industrial research (see current [Guidelines](#))

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).

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.

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.

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.

Province of domicile

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

Universities

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 (e.g. work groups) may not participate as project partners.

Companies

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](#).

9.2 Abbreviations

Table 8: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AGVO	Allgemeine Gruppen Freistellungsverordnung
LOC	Letter of Commitment
FFG	Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft mbH / Austrian Research Promotion Agency
FP	Funding Period
Struktur-FTI-Richtlinie	Richtlinie zur Förderung der wirtschaftlich-technischen Forschung, Technologieentwicklung und Innovation (FTI-Richtlinie 2015) Struktur-FTI-RL / guidelines for the promotion of the commercial and technological development of research, technology and innovation (
Programme document	Programme document of the COMET Programme for Competence Centers
Union framework	Union framework for State aid measures for the promotion of research, technology and innovation
CP	Company partner
SP	Scientific partner

9.3 Call Milestones (up to the first instalment)

Figure 2: Call Milestones

