



FFG
Promoting Innovation.

8. CALL
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 23. JUNE 2020

**COMET PROJECTS
GUIDELINES
COMET (COMPETENCE CENTERS FOR
EXCELLENT TECHNOLOGIES)**

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

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1 PREAMBLE

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

The Competence Center Programme COMET (Competence Centers 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.

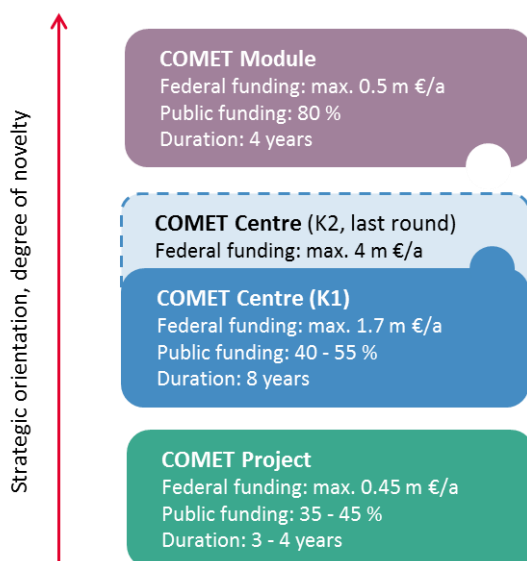
The degree of novelty of the research and thus the strategic orientation is increasing from COMET Project to COMET Centre to COMET Module.

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 Centre (K1) 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 refers exclusively to the programme line COMET Project (former K-Project). The duration is 3 to 4 years.

This call addresses new consortia as well as existing COMET Projects. Existing projects and new initiatives are in competition to each other.

2 KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

Table 1: Facts at a Glance

Key fact	further Information
Instrument	Platform (C8 P)
Short description	Funding is provided for projects performing research of academic and economic relevance in research programmes jointly defined by science and industry being characterised by high research expertise and connection to science as well as by high relevance of implementation in industry.
Funding per COMET Project in Euro	Federal and provincial funding: max. € 2.7 million / € 675.000 per year Federal funding: max. € 1.8 million / € 450.000 per year Provincial funding: max. € 0.9 million / € 225.000 per year
Funding rate	35% to 45% depending on type of research
Contribution of CP /SP	Company partners (CP): min. 45% Scientific partners (UP): min. 5%
Duration	3 or 3.5 or 4 years
Consortium	at least 1 scientific partner and at least 3 company partners The consortium leader has to be located in Austria

Key fact	further Information
Budget 8. Call COMET Projects	€ 10 million federal funding plus additional provincial funds
Start of call	11. November 2019
Submission deadline	Submission of short description via eCall latest on the 21. April 2020, 12:00:00 MET by the consortium leader (see chapter 5.1) ATTENTION! New submission deadline for the main application: 23.06.2020, 12:00 MET
Jury decision	10. and 11. November 2020
Project start	between January 2021 and June 2021 on the first of each month
Language	English
Contact	<p>Tel. +43 5 7755 (extension)</p> <p>Programme-Management: Budiono Nguyen, extension 2104; budiono.nguyen@ffg.at Julia Bissenberger, extension 2103; julia.bissenberger@ffg.at Nicole Firnberg, extension 2409; nicole.firnberg@ffg.at Ingrid Fleischhacker, extension 2102; ingrid.fleischhacker@ffg.at Barbara Kunz, extension 2404; barbara.kunz@ffg.at Adelheid Merkl, extension 2714; adelheid.merkl@ffg.at Reingard Repp, extension 2107; reingard.repp@ffg.at Otto Starzer, extension 2101; otto.starzer@ffg.at</p> <p>eCall: Adelheid Merkl, extension 2714; adelheid.merkl@ffg.at Julia Bissenberger, extension 2103; julia.bissenberger@ffg.at</p> <p>Costs and financing: Christa Meyer, extension 6080; christa.meyer@ffg.at Christine Löffler, extension 6089; christine.loeffler@ffg.at</p> <p>An advisory interview can be arranged!</p>
Information on the web	www.ffg.at/ausschreibungen/comet-8-ausschreibung-comet-projekte

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

3 CALL OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the programme line COMET Project 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.

4 THE BASIS OF FUNDING

4.1 What are COMET Projects?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMET Projects have to be submitted and continued by consortia.

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

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

4.2 What criteria must be met by the consortium?

Partners may participate in a COMET Project either as a scientific partner or as a company partner. Applicants can be consortia with

- at least 1 scientific partner (SP) and
- at least 3 company partners (CP) that are 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 of CP and SP in the consortium is evidenced by a “Letter of Commitment” (LOC) including the relevant contribution (see LOC template).

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

The cooperative character of the programme is emphasised by the mandatory conclusion of an Agreement specifying the rights and obligations of the partners involved. FFG provides templates for Consortium Agreements and COMET Side letters.

4.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

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

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

The consortium appoints one partner to act as consortium leader, who submits the application for funding. The consortium leader has to be located in Austria.

4.4 Who is eligible to receive funding?

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

The following are eligible for funding:

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

Eligible to participate but not to receive funding are:

- Subcontractors: they are not partners within a COMET Project. They provide defined tasks for partners which are listed under the cost category “third-party costs” and are not entitled to exploit the project results.
- Other participants: these are persons or institutions that do not receive funding, but are mentioned in the funding contract, including the scope of their participation. Their rights and duties are also stipulated by contract.

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

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

4.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have partners from outside Austria.

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

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

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

4.6 How much support is granted?

Support is paid in the form of non-repayable grants. The maximum level of public funding (federal and provincial) is max. EUR 2.7 million over the maximum 4-year duration of the COMET project.

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2: [Maximum aid intensities](#)

Research Categories	Small Enterprise	Medium Enterprise	Large Enterprise
Industrial Research	80%	75%	65%
Experimental Development	60%	50%	40%

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

A single project may also be predominantly assigned to industrial research if more than half of the eligible project costs are incurred for activities of this category.

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

Non-commercial activities of research institutions include:

- primary activities such as education
- research and development, independent or as part of an effective collaboration
- knowledge dissemination and transfer (according to the [community framework](#))

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

4.7 How are COMET Projects financed?

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

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

Table 3: Example of financing for a COMET Project

Financing	in EURO	in %
Federal funding	1.800.000	30%
Provincial funding	900.000	15%
Contribution of scientific partners	300.000	5%
Contribution of company partners	3.000.000	50%
Overall costs	6.000.000	100%

Federal funding

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

Provincial funding

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

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

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

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

Contribution of scientific partners

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

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

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

Contribution of company partners

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

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

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

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

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

4.8 What costs are eligible?

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

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

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs is given in the [Cost Guidelines Version 2.1.](#)

The following regulations apply in addition to the provisions of the Cost Guidelines as amended:

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

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

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

4.9 What points should be considered relating to IPR?

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

For more information, see the [FFG sample consortium agreement](#) and the COMET side letter

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the consortium. The provisions of the [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#) 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 that adequately reflects their work, contributions and interests. If the rights are assigned to the companies involved, the research institutions shall receive compensation equivalent to the market price; the contributions (cash/in-kind) provided may be offset.

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

4.10 What are the evaluation criteria for funding applications?

Evaluation criteria for COMET Projects

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

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

Evaluation criteria

Table 4: Evaluation criteria— Quality of the Project

1. Quality of the Project	max Points of 30
<p>1.1 Scientific quality of the Research Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the research programme meet / exceed the international state-of-the-art in science and technology? Have existing national and international research activities been sufficiently taken into account? – Have the objectives of the research programme been described clearly? How do you rate the approaches and methods to achieve these objectives? – What is the added value of the research programme as compared to a sum of individual projects? Do the individual projects complement each other? Do they provide significant synergy effects? – If the project relates to people: Have gender aspects in the research topic, respectively in the methodological approach, been adequately taken into account? (Projects not relating to this point (without gender relevance in their research programme) will not lose points.) 	21 points
<p>1.2 Quality of planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the work and time schedules in line with the planned research programme? – Are the costs and financing plans realistic at programme and project level? Is the size of the individual projects adequate for the research programme? – Are the Areas and individual projects coherent in terms of structure and content? Are the collaborative relationships (multi-firm) and the allocation of tasks between the partners at project level plausible? 	9 points

Table 5: Evaluation criteria — Suitability of the applicants / project partners

2. Suitability of the applicants / project partners	max points of 30
<p>2.1. Quality of the consortium from a scientific perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you rate the scientific qualifications and resources of the consortium to ensure implementation of the research programme? – Can the key persons demonstrate relevant reference projects? Do the key persons have the potential to make new findings? – Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	12 points
<p>2.2. Quality of the consortium in terms of the company partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you rate the technical and economic qualifications and resources of the company partners to ensure successful implementation of the research programme? – Can the key companies demonstrate relevant reference projects? Do the key companies have the potential to implement new findings on the market? – Is the consortium complete or does it require additional expertise and relevant partners? 	12 points
<p>2.3. Organisation and management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the organisational structure and management of the COMET Project adequate? – Are the planned target values adequate and reasonable? – How do you rate the performance of a possible predecessor COMET Project? – How do you rate the planned measures for gender mainstreaming? Is gender balance given within the project team in order to better the situation typical for the sector? 	6 points

Table 6: Evaluation criteria — Benefit and exploitation

3. Benefit and exploitation	max points of 30
<p>3.1 Economic relevance of the research results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What benefits will the project results bring to the companies or users? – To what extent are the expected research results suitable for initiating new products, processes and services? – What are the market opportunities and the potential for commercial exploitation? – Are relevant measures of technology and knowledge transfer to industry in place? To what extent will the research results be exploited by the partners (in the form of IPR, patents, licences, etc.)? 	30 points

Table 7: Evaluation criteria — Relevance to the call

4. Relevance to the call	max points of 10
<p>4.1. Incentive effect of funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To what extent does the funding influence the project positively in one or more of the following dimensions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementation: the funding enables the project to be implemented in the first place – Acceleration: the funding accelerates implementation – Scope: the funding increases the scope of the project – Range: the funding makes the project more ambitious through: a more radical innovation approach, higher risk, new or extended collaborations, long-term strategic orientation 	10 points
Overall assessment	max. total points: 100

Key indicators and target values

The evaluation will also involve an assessment of key figures and indicators based on individual target values defined upon submission of the application. The review will determine to what extent these target values are reasonable and realistic in the context of the given research field and environment. The target values (or subsequently adjusted, if required) will be included in the reporting process and verified in the mid-term and ex-post evaluations (comparison between target and actual values).

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

Further information about the results of previous COMET Projects can be found in the annually published [monitoring reports](#).

4.11 What documents are required for submission?

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via [eCall](#).

[Templates](#) are available on the FFG website and must be used.

The following table lists all relevant documents for submission.

Table 8: Overview call documents

Call documents
Call information
Call Guidelines COMET Projects 8th Call Cost Guideline Version 2.1
Templates / funding application
Application COMET Projects - Project Description Project description; upload as pdf file eCall online Cost Plan Costs and finances have to be entered into the eCall. Obligatory master data: annual data of the last two years for all partners of the consortium
Annex
ANNEX 0: Cover letter of reapplication ; upload as pdf file optional ; in case of resubmission, changes and/or improvements of the current

Call documents

submission compared to a previously rejected COMET application can be explained in this document.

ANNEX 1: References

Literature used in drawing up the application; upload as pdf file

ANNEX 2: List of Consortium Partners; upload as excel file

Costs & finances of the eCall have to correlate with Annex 2

ANNEX 3: CVs and List of Publications; upload as pdf file

Please upload all CVs and publications in a single file via eCall (no scans)

ANNEX 4: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Scientific Partners; upload as pdf file

ANNEX 5: Letters of Commitment (LOC) Company Partners; upload as pdf file

Duly executed letters of commitment of all scientific and company partners including their relevant contributions (cash and in-kind)

ANNEX 6: Declaration(s) of Federal Province(s); upload as pdf file

Written declaration(s) of the participating provinces (province of domicile must provide a declaration upon submission of the application)

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

The attachment of any further documents is not permitted.

4.12 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

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

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

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

These projects have to be listed in the project description.

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

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

4.13 Is scientific integrity ensured?

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

The FFG is a member of the [Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity – OeAWI](#) and is thus committed to safeguarding good scientific practice.

If a lack of scientific quality or misconduct is suspected during the evaluation or in the course of the formal checks, the relevant documents may be forwarded to the OeAWI's Commission for Scientific Integrity. The OeAWI will then decide whether to initiate an independent investigation procedure and, if necessary, will undertake the necessary investigations.

If the investigation reveals a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct (e.g. plagiarism), the application will be rejected for formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding will be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

5 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

5.1 What is the procedure for submission?

The electronic application must be submitted prior to the submission deadline via [eCall](#).

Due to the current Covid-19 Crises, the deadline for the 8th COMET Project call has been **extended to 23.06 2020**.

To ensure a timely selection of evaluators, a **concrete short description** has to be handed in via eCall by **21.04.2020** (12:00:00 MET), consisting of:

1. Completion of the tab 'Project Data' in the eCall (with the exception of the list of projects) Please ensure that your abstract is clear and to the point. The following points have to be considered (max 4000 characters)
Objectives: What is the motivation to carry out the COMET-Project (initial situation, scientific-technological challenges ...)?
Methods: How do you plan to realise the objectives of your proposed research (e.g. methods, approaches, models/tools chosen)?
Results: What are the expected main results?
2. Upload Annex 3: CVs and Publications
3. The planned project partners have to have assigned themselves to the main application in the eCall by 21.04.2020.

By latest 21. April 2020 (12:00:00 MET) an eCall message declaring your intention to submit an application for the 8th COMET Project call has to be sent. It shall confirm that the provided short description in the eCall can be used for the selection of evaluators.

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

How does it work?

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

Not necessary:

- Additional postal submission of a duly signed copy

Not possible:

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

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

A detailed [Tutorial on the eCall](#) is available.

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

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

The written declaration is usually a letter of reference on behalf of the funding application in which the provincial government confirms its funding commitment in the event that the COMET Project is approved. The entire amount of provincial funding (2 federal: 1 provincial funding) must in any case be covered by (a) written declaration(s)

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

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

Prior to the the deadline a so-called Core Form, containing the key figures of the project, must be submitted to the relevant provincial governments. The form is available from the contact offices of the provincial governments or from the FFG website. Concerning the postponement of deadlines for the Core Form and other

relevant dates, please refer directly to the contact offices of the provincial governments

The funding applicants must send the complete application to the relevant authority of the province(s) involved by 23. June 2020 (call dead line).

A list of relevant contacts and important information about specific conditions in the individual provinces can be found on the [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.

FFG will notify the consortium leader of the result of the formal check within four weeks via an eCall message.

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

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 Projects are evaluated in a one-stage process.

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the criteria (listed in chapter 4.10) by national FFG experts and external international experts (peers) based on the documents submitted.

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

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

FFG experts will check the financial potential (credit rating and liquidity) of the participating enterprises. It is not possible to provide funding to undertakings in difficulty. The definition of undertakings in difficulty is to be found in the [General block exemption Regulation](#).

An evaluation panel (jury) will subsequently make a funding recommendation based on the defined 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 on the basis of the funding recommendation from the evaluation panel, including any requirements and/or conditions.

- Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT)
- Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW)

7 FUNDING PROCEDURE

7.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

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

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

The funding contract specifies:

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

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

Details on how to conclude a funding contract can be found on the [FFG website](#):

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

7.2 How should requirements and recommendations be taken into account?

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

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

Prior to payment of the 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.

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

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

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

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

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

FFG instalment scheme

Table 9: FFG instalment scheme

Report number and instalment	3 to 3,5 years project duration	4 years project duration
Number of reports (interim and final)	3	4
1st instalment in % of funding amount	30%	30%
2nd instalment in % of funding amount	30%	20%
3rd instalment in % of funding amount	30%	20%
4th instalment in % of funding amount	none	20%
Final instalment in % of funding amount	10%	10%

7.4 What reports and accounts are required?

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

A scientific final report and final accounts must be submitted within 3 months of the end of the project using the reporting function of the eCall system.

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

The reports must be prepared using the templates provided in the [downloadcenter](#).

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are set out in the [Cost Guidelines Version 2.1](#).

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

The COMET Programme and the funding body have to be mentioned suitably in publications and activities of the funding recipient, that relate to the funded project.

The FFG is responsible for reporting, controlling and auditing the COMET Projects with regard to both federal and provincial funding. The consortium leader has to

deliver the reports to the relevant provinces, as needed. The provinces may accept the results of this audit, but may also perform audits of their own.

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
- cost reallocations between partners

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

The Review results in the formulation of a set of requirements and recommendations for the remaining duration of the COMET Project. The consortium leader has to prepare a [Core Document](#) in English for the assessment of the COMET Project.

7.8 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 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. Further information about eligible costs can be found in the [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 January 2016) as a legal basis.

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

9 ANNEX

9.1 Glossary of the Guidelines

Incentive Effect

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

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

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

Area

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

Cash contributions

Cash contributions are payments in cash.

Research and knowledge dissemination organisation or research organisation

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

Research Categories

Experimental Development

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

This may also include:

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

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

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

Industrial research

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

This may also include:

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

Industrial research does not extend beyond the proof of concept.

Industrial research takes place mainly in the laboratory or at laboratory scale. The development risk is higher than for experimental development. The technology readiness level is lower. The time horizon for market introduction is longer.

For a more detailed definition, please refer to the Struktur-FTI-Guidelines 12.1.

Research programme

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

In-kind contributions

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

Key Researcher

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

Multi-firm Criterion

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

Non-COMET area (only relevant for COMET Centres)

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

Public Funding

Public funding comprises federal and provincial funding.

Projects

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

Strategic research projects

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

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

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

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

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

Province of domicile

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

9.2 Abbreviations

AGVO: Allgemeine Gruppen Freistellungsverordnung

LOC: Letter of Commitment

FFG: Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft mbH / Austrian Research Promotion Agency

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 (

Programmdokument: 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

