



FFG
Forschung wirkt.

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**Guidelines for
COOPERATIVE R&D PROJECTS**

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0 PREFACE

The FFG is your partner for research and development. These Guidelines are designed to support you in submitting your Cooperative Research and Development Project (R&D Project). It describes:

- how to obtain funding
- what conditions must be met
- how the application process works

The goals and priorities, the budget and the submission deadlines that are relevant to your project are described in the corresponding call announcement.

1 GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 What are Cooperative R&D Projects?

Cooperative Research and Development Projects are collaborations of several consortium partners working together on a common project with defined R&D goals. Research and development has the target to develop new products, procedures or services or to improve existing products, procedures or services significantly.

The rights and duties are stipulated in a Consortium Agreement.

The following criteria must be met:

- Maximum duration 3 years
- Funding amounts between approx. 100,000 and max. 2 million euros
- The consortium leader must have a branch office in Austria
- The consortium leader is the contact point for the FFG
- The consortium leader submits the application for funding

1.2 What demands are placed on the consortium?

The consortium must consist of at least 1 company with 1 or more partners that are independent¹ of each other. The consortium must in any case include:

- at least 1 small or medium-sized enterprise (SME)² or
- 1 research and knowledge dissemination organisation³ (research institution) or
- 1 partner from another EU member state or contracting party to the EEA Agreement

Both collaborations between enterprises and collaborations between enterprises and research institutions are possible.

Additional criteria:

- Individual enterprises account for a maximum of 70% of the eligible project costs with shares of affiliated companies counting as one enterprise.
- The research institutions together account for a maximum of 70% of the eligible project costs
- Research institutions must have the right to publish the results they have obtained in the project
- Contract research and the provision of research services are not considered as collaborations within the definition of a Cooperative R&D Project

The Consortium Agreement regulates the collaboration within the consortium and the intellectual property rights (IPR) relating to the project results. A [sample Consortium agreement](#)⁴ is available to help you in drawing up a Consortium Agreement.

¹ Enterprises that are independent of each other mutually hold less than 25% of each other's capital or voting rights. This rule also applies to shareholdings via parent companies. For more information see [SME definition](#)

² [Details see SME definition](#)

³ Details see GBER 2014, L 187/24

⁴ Sample Consortium agreement: <https://www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag>

1.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader has the following responsibilities throughout the project duration:

- project management
- communications with the funding agency and the project partners
- examining the reports and accounts provided by the consortium partners

In your capacity as consortium leader you confirm to us that:

- you manage and distribute the funding yourself
 - the costs charged can be clearly attributed to the project
 - the project costs and content are in accordance with the approval
 - you communicate any changes in due time
 - you provide accounts and reports in accordance with the Funding Contract
- Before payment of the 1st funding rate, the consortium leader confirms that before the start of the project the conditions are determined in a consortium agreement.

1.4 Who is eligible to receive funding?

Legal entities, partnerships and sole traders that are not part of the Austrian federal administration are eligible to receive funding.

The following are eligible for funding:

- Companies of any legal form
- Institutions of research and knowledge dissemination
 - Universities⁵
 - 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
- Other non-commercial institutions
 - Local authorities⁶ and autonomous bodies
 - Non-profit making organisations such as NPOs⁷

⁵ The smallest possible unit of a university is an institute of the university or a organisation comparable to a UOG 2002/§20 organisation unit. It is a precondition that the participating organisation unit (institute or comparable unit) is authorised with corresponding mandate according to UOG 2002/§ 27. Units below (for example working groups) can not act as project partners.

⁶ **Activities of local authorities falling within their statutory mandate are not eligible for funding.**

⁷ “Non-profit making organisations” do not distribute profits to their owners, members or other natural persons or legal entities in accordance with their legal status or articles of association.

The following may participate but may not receive funding:

- Subcontractors: they are not partners within the definition of a Cooperative R&D Project. They provide defined tasks for partners which are listed under the cost category “third-party costs” and are not entitled to exploit the project results.
- Other participants: these are persons or institutions that do not receive funding, but are mentioned in the Funding Contract, including the scope of their participation. Their rights and duties are also stipulated by contract.
- Their participation needs to be justified in the application. Potential “other participants” may also include persons or institutions of the Austrian federal administration.

1.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have partners from outside Austria.

Partners from outside the EU may also receive funding unless this is specifically excluded in the relevant call.

The following conditions apply:

- The non-Austrian partners create benefit for the Austrian consortium partners and/or Austria as a business and research location;
- This benefit is explicitly indicated in the application for funding;
- Grants paid to partners from outside Austria do not exceed 20% of the total funding amount;
- The evaluation committee recommends providing funding to the non-Austrian partner;
- The partner from outside Austria proves its credit-worthiness and liquidity in accordance with the criteria applied to Austrian partners prior to contract formation;
- The non-Austrian partner accepts the FFG’s obligation and entitlement to review the project as specified in the Funding Contract and submits relevant documentary evidence in German or English.

Alternatively, non-Austrian organisations may cover their costs from own funds and/or from funds provided by their home country. Collaborative agreements for joint funding are in place with several European and non-European countries.

The European **EUREKA**⁸ initiative, for example, provides funding support for cross-border collaborations across programmes. The call announcement will specify whether these collaborative agreements can be used for a specific Cooperative R&D Project.

Organisations from outside Austria may also be involved as subcontractors.

⁸ [EUREKA Network](#) or [EUREKA auf der FFG Homepage](#)

1.6 How much support is granted?

Support is paid in the form of non-repayable grants and is limited to a **maximum of EUR 2 million** per project.

The funding rate varies depending on the type of partner.

- The funding rate for enterprises is based on the research category and company size
- The funding rate for research institutions and other institutions is based on the research category only, provided that the contribution involves a non-commercial activity.
- If the contribution to the project involves a commercial activity the funding rates are the same as those for enterprises.
- It has to be stated in the application if additional funding is granted by any other funding institution. If multiple funding is gained the cumulative funding must not exceed the European funding limit.⁹

Funding rates

Type of organisation	Research category	
	Industrial research	Experimental development
Small enterprise	80 %	60 %
Medium-sized enterprise	70 %	50 %
Large enterprise	55 %	35 %
Research institutions (non-commercial activities)	85 %	60 %
Non-commercial institutions (non-commercial activities)	80%	60%

Table 1: Funding rates

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 transfer¹⁰

⁹ [AGVO: Verordnung \(EU\) Nr. 651/2014, ABl. L 187/48](#)

¹⁰ [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#) (2014/C 198/8), 2.1.1, 19).

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

The company size is to be determined according to the SME definition as specified by EU competition law: [information on SME definition¹¹](#).

The research category must be clearly specified to be able to determine the permissible funding rate. A distinction is made between experimental development and industrial research.

Experimental development

Experimental development involves developing something new from something that already exists and/or improving something that already exists. This includes:

- acquiring existing knowledge and abilities
- combining existing knowledge and abilities
- shaping existing knowledge and abilities
- using existing knowledge and abilities

Irrespective of whether the project involves scientific, technical, economic or other knowledge and abilities – the aim is to develop new or improved products, procedures or services.

Experimental development does not include routine or regular adaptations, even if these modifications would represent improvements¹².

Industrial research

Industrial research has the following characteristics:

- The focus is on planned research or critical investigation to acquire new knowledge and abilities
- Industrial research takes place mainly in the laboratory or at laboratory scale
- The development risk is higher than for experimental development
- The technology readiness level is lower
- The time horizon for market introduction is longer

For details on both research categories see the [Annex](#).

The evaluation committee decides to which research category the project belongs. A 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.

¹¹ Information SME Definition: https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtliches_service_KMU

¹² See RTI Guidelines 2015 ([Themen-FTI-Richtlinie 2015](#)), 12.1 Definition of Terms.

1.7 What costs are eligible?

Eligible costs must be allocable directly to the project. This means that:

- they are incurred additionally to the normal operating costs during the funding period
- they are in accordance with the Funding Contract
- they can be evidenced by receipts

The earliest possible date for the start of the project is after submission of the application for funding.

For details on the eligibility of costs see the [Cost Guidelines](#).

Special provisions for Cooperative R&D Projects:

Third-party costs are limited to 20% of the total costs per partner. Any excess must be justified in the Project Description. This limit does not apply to services provided by affiliated companies which are shown as third-party costs.

1.8 What about intellectual property rights?

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the consortium. The provisions of the [Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation](#), 2014/C 198/11, apply to collaborations between commercial companies and research institutions¹³.

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. 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.

1.9 What criteria are used to assess applications for funding?

Applications for funding are evaluated according to 4 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. In addition, there is a threshold value for

¹³ [Unionsrahmen: https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/dok/anlage_2_amtsblatt_f_e_i_unionsrahmen.pdf](https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/dok/anlage_2_amtsblatt_f_e_i_unionsrahmen.pdf)

each criterion. Reaching zero points in one of the sub criteria of the 4th criteria “Relevance to the Call” the project will be rejected.

Funding criteria

1. Quality of the project	
Points	30
Threshold	18
1.1. How well are the state of the art (level of knowledge/technology) and/or the commercially available products and services described and how plausible is the assessment?	6
1.2. What is the level of innovation beyond the state of the art and/or existing products and services and how high is the associated risk?	13,5
1.3. What is the quality of planning based on the following criteria? – Transparent structure of work packages – Transparent presentation of costs – Transparent description of work packages according to the scope of work – Adequate relationship between costs and work plan – Adequate scope of project management – Provisions for risk management – Realistic implementation of plan (duration, deadlines, milestones, results) – Clarity and coherence of cooperative relationships – Efficient distribution of tasks among the consortium partners	6
1.4. If the project relates to people: ¹⁴ To what extent have gender-specific topics been taken into account in project planning? – Quality of the analysis of gender-specific topics – Integration in the methodical approach of the project	4,5
2. Suitability of the applicant / project partners	
Points	20
Threshold	12
2.1. Does the consortium have the scientific, technical, economic and management skills required to achieve the project goals?	8,5

¹⁴ If (groups of) persons are the research object or persons will be affected by the research results, this must be reflected in the research design. Projects whose content and focus have no gender relevance according to this analysis will score full points in this subcategory.

2.2. To what extent do the consortium partners have the required qualifications and resources to ensure successful implementation of the cooperative project?	8
2.3. Does the composition of the project team reflect the aim to improve the gender balance in the sector?	3,5
3. Benefit and exploitation	
Points	30
Threshold	18
<p>3.1. What is the benefit for those applying the project results and the exploitation potential? Different dimensions are relevant depending on the research category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For all research categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – communication of benefits to the relevant target group has been documented in a transparent manner – Benefits, advantages or USPs have been described quantitatively and qualitatively and are plausible – For projects of industrial research (IR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge increase in the relevant scientific-technical target group – For projects of experimental development (ED) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Users, markets and market segments have been specified and substantiated by turnover figures – Turnover potential of the innovation or added value of market growth in relation to the planned project costs – Resources required to bring the results to the market 	11
<p>3.2. What is the impact or strategic significance of the project results for the organisations involved? For example by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing R&D capacities on a long-term basis – securing or extending their R&D position – expanding existing R&D activities to include new fields of application – development of R&D platforms – opening up new business fields etc. 	9

<p>3.3. How complete and transparent is the exploitation strategy based on the following criteria?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quality of exploitation and dissemination strategy for the scientific results – Quality of exploitation strategy for the economically relevant results – If people are affected by the exploitation of the project results: Consideration of gender-specific issues in exploiting the economic potential – Adequate protection strategy or strategy for ensuring a competitive edge – Exploitation skills – either in house or via existing contacts and collaborations in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – dissemination and exploitation of project results (IR) 		10
4. Relevance to the Call		
Points	20	
Threshold	12	
4.1. To what extent does the project address the call topics?	8	
4.2. To what extent does the project contribute to achieving the goals of the call?	8	
<p>4.3. To what extent does the funding influence the project positively in one or more of the following dimensions?</p> <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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a more radical innovation approach – higher risk – new or extended collaborations – long-term strategic orientation 		4

Table 2: Funding criteria

1.10 What documents are required for submission?

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

Please upload the following documents via the eCall upload function:

- Online Cost-Plan (Kostenplan)
- Project Description: descriptive part of the application (upload as pdf file)

Attachments to the electronic application:

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

If any additional documents or attachments are required, this will be specified in the form for the project description (application form).

If the project involves partners outside Austria, collaborative agreements with European or non-European countries may require the submission of documents that cannot be uploaded via eCall. The relevant information will be given in the call announcement. In individual cases additional supporting documents may be requested.

The call announcement also specifies the language in which applications are to be submitted, which is usually German and/or English.

1.11 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.

1.12 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 we suspect a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct in the course of the formal checks or of the proposal check, therelevant 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 has to be rejected due to formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding must be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

2 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

2.1 What is the procedure for submission?

Applications must be electronically submitted via [eCall](#) before the deadline.

The funding application may not be submitted until all partners have submitted their partner applications via eCall.

How does it work?

- Download application form via eCall and fill it
- Fill in the online calculation – the system verifies, if the funding requirements are met (e.g. max. funding, max. size of the project)
- Upload the required documents
- Finalise application in eCall and click “Submit application” (“Einreichung abschicken”)
- Upon successful submission, an acknowledgement will be sent automatically by email
- Not necessary: additional postal submission of duly executed copy

Not possible:

- Resubmission or modification of individual parts of the application form
- Revision after submission

The application documents are to be submitted by the consortium leader or by a duly authorised representative. The FFG may request evidence that this person is

authorised to represent the consortium leader. If you are unable to provide such evidence the FFG reserves the right to reject the application for formal reasons. An eCall tutorial is available [here](#).

2.2 How will confidential project data be used?

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, KLIEN)
- 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 .

3 ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

3.1 What is the formal check?

In the formal check the application is examined for formal correctness and completeness.

You will be notified 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, you may rectify these problems within a reasonable period of time.

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

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

3.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

The documents submitted will be reviewed by national and international experts based on the criteria given in Chapter 1.9.

An evaluation committee will make a recommendation on funding taking into account the written reviews.

It is possible to exclude reviewers (individuals or staff of particular organisations) in justified cases. 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 difficulty¹⁵.

¹⁵ Undertakings in difficulty as defined in the General block exemption Regulation (EU) N°651/2014 of 17 June 2014

Additional recommendations and requirements may be formulated in the course of the assessment. Recommendations are non-binding remarks of the evaluation committee, which should support the consortium in the implementation of the project.

Requirements are binding, see Chapter 4.2.

3.3 Who takes the funding decision?

The funding decision is taken by the responsible Federal Ministers on the basis of the funding recommendation made by the evaluation committee.

4 FUNDING PROCEDURE

4.1 How is the Funding Contract concluded?

If funding is granted, the FFG will send the consortium an offer of funding in the form of a draft contract, which must be accepted within a specified time. If the consortium accepts the offer within the specified period of time, a Funding Contract will be prepared.

The Funding Contract includes the following information:

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

The consortium must sign and stamp the Funding Contract and return the duly executed original to the FFG.

4.2 How are requirements taken into account?

Binding requirements may be formulated in the course of the assessment of the funding application.

Two types of additional requirements are possible:

- Requirements that must be met prior to the conclusion of a funding contract.
- Requirements that must be met by the consortium during the course of the project.

These requirements shall form an integral part of the contract.

4.3 How are the instalments of funding paid?

The first instalment will be paid once the requirements have been met and the Funding Contract has been signed. Payments are made to the bank account specified by the consortium leader. For more information, see the [sample Consortium Agreement¹⁶](#).

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

If the interim reports indicate a delay in project progress or if the costs are below budget the instalment can be reduced.

The payment of funding during the course of the project does not imply approval of the costs.

FFG instalment scheme

Project duration in months	0 - 18	19 - 30	31 - 36
Number of reports (interim reports and final report)	1	2	3
1st instalment in % of funding amount at contract conclusion	50 %	50 %	30 %
2nd instalment up to % of funding amount		40 %	30 %
3rd instalment up to % of funding amount			30 %
Final instalment up to % of funding amount	50%	10%	10%

Table 3: FFG instalment scheme

4.4 What reports and accounts are required?

- Within 1 month after the reporting deadlines specified in the Funding Contract, an interim report and interim accounts must be submitted via the eCall reporting function.
- For projects with a duration of less than 19 month, no interim report is intended.
- Within 3 months of the conclusion of the project a final report and the final accounts must be presented, again via the eCall reporting function.

¹⁶ [Sample Consortium agreement](#)

- If the project is aborted during the project term the consortium must submit a final report and final accounts. The FFG is entitled to reclaim money if the funding already paid exceeds the eligible costs.

The reports and accounts must meet the following requirement:

- They contain the description of activities and in addition the cost statements of all consortium partners who are mentioned in the funding contract.
- Reports must be prepared using the eCall templates.

Support of public relations: The funding recipients agree to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministries to support PR work, if required. This includes in particular the provision of non-confidential project information and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes

4.5 How should changes to the project be communicated?

Any changes to contractual points such as project content, consortium partners, costs, deadlines or funding period must be substantiated and submitted for approval:

- via eCall message
- in the interim or final report

All relevant documents should be uploaded as an attachment to the eCall message or sent by post. Any modifications to the contract parameters require the approval of the FFG.

Immediate notification is required for:

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

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

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

4.6 Can the funding period be extended?

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

The following requirements must be met:

- the funding recipients are not responsible for the delay
- the project is still eligible for funding
- an eCall application for extension has been submitted within the approved funding period

4.7 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

The consortium submits a final report and final accounts after the end of the project. The FFG Project Controlling & Audit Division will examine whether the funding has been used appropriately. The audit will establish the final level of eligible costs.

You will receive the result of the audit in writing:

- In the event of a positive result, the appropriate use of the funding will be confirmed.
- In the event of a negative result, procedures may be initiated to secure repayment of funding.

Funding details: The final instalment will be transferred once the specified cost has been reached. If the project is underspent the level of funding will be reduced accordingly. The funding amount may also be reduced for scientific reasons, as well as on formal and legal grounds.

For more information about eligible costs, see the [Cost Guidelines](#).

5 ANNEX

5.1 Research Category “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.

The following questions may help you allocate your project to the appropriate category. If the answers to most of these questions are yes the project is to be allocated to industrial research:

- Does the project exclude the direct commercial exploitation of the results?
- Does the project involve planned research or critical investigation with the aim to acquire new knowledge and abilities?
- Do the research activities mainly take place in the laboratory or at laboratory scale?
- Does the project involve a high research risk?
- Is the project characterised by a low level of technological maturity or integration?
- Does the project have a long time horizon in terms of market readiness with respect to the relevant sector?
- Are the prototypes used exclusively for the validation of technical fundamentals and does the project exclude the building of prototypes beyond the laboratory environment?
- Does the project exclude the development of a prototype whose form, shape, scale, function, operation and manufacture are largely similar to the final product?

5.2 Research Category “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.

The following questions may help you allocate your project to the appropriate category. If the answers to most of these questions are yes the project is to be allocated to experimental development:

- Does the project build on existing scientific, technical, economic or other relevant knowledge and abilities so that it generates new expanded knowledge and abilities or recombines existing knowledge?
- Does the project exclude routine or regular modifications to products, production lines, production processes, existing services or other ongoing operational processes?
- Does the project exclude the direct commercial exploitation of the results or the final product? Exception: commercially usable prototypes and pilot projects if they inevitably represent the commercial end product and its production would be too expensive for demonstration and validation purposes alone.
- Does the project explicitly exclude activities aimed at series production?
- Does the project explicitly exclude activities aimed at market introduction?

5.3 Technology Readiness Levels

Where a call refers to the TRL scheme (Technology Readiness Levels¹⁷), the following definitions apply:

Technology Readiness Levels

Research category	Technology Readiness Level
Oriented basic research	TRL 1 Basic principles observed
Industrial research	TRL 2 (Technology) concept formulated
	TRL 3 Experimental proof of (technology) concept at component level
	TRL 4 Technology validated in lab (on lab scale) at system level
Experimental development	TRL 5 Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
	TRL 6 Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
	TRL 7 System prototype demonstrated in operational environment
	TRL 8 System complete and qualified
Market introduction	TRL 9 System proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies)

Table 4: Technology Readiness Levels

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission: [A European strategy for Key Enabling Technologies – A bridge to growth and jobs'](#): p 18

5.4 Call milestones (up to first instalment)

