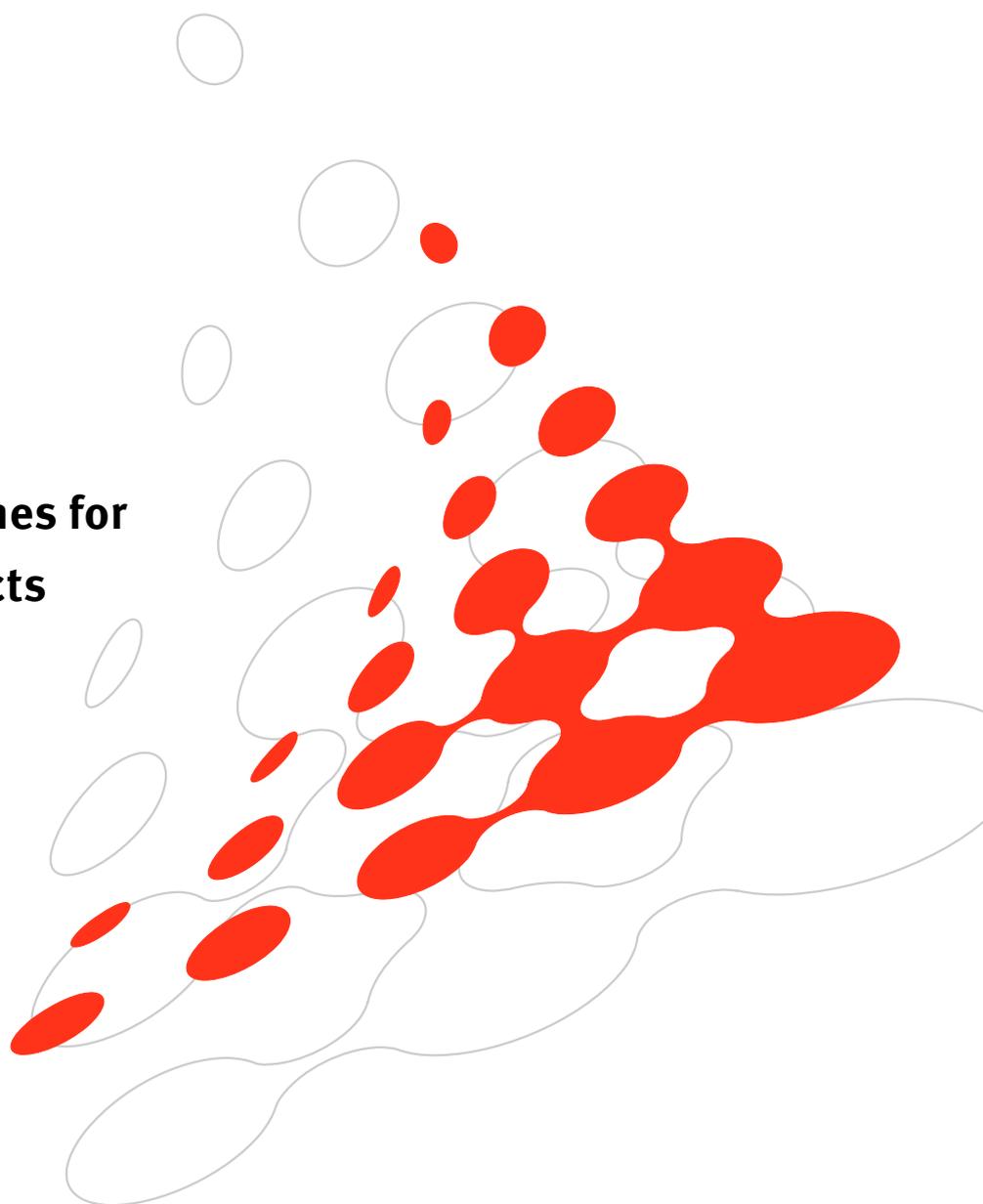




FFG

Technical Guidelines for Exploratory Projects

Version 1.7



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0 PREAMBLE

The Guidelines for Exploratory Projects contain the fundamental **requirements, funding conditions and procedures** for the submission of exploratory projects.

When a call for applications is published, the call announcement will present the specific details of the particular call, including its goals and priorities, the budget and the deadline for submissions.

1 REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING CONDITIONS

1.1 What are Exploratory Projects?

Exploratory projects are designed to provide preparatory work for research and development projects. Exploratory projects can be carried out to examine the technical feasibility of innovative ideas and concepts, to assess the viability of potential future R&D projects (individual, cooperative or flagship projects) and to provide a basis for concept development for flagship projects.

Exploratory projects may be submitted by individual applicants or as a cooperative project of several consortium partners. Exploratory projects to be carried out in preparation for a flagship project must be submitted by a consortium. Large enterprises are only eligible to participate in cooperation with a research institution or a SME¹.

1.2 What demands are placed on the project?

The duration of exploratory projects is limited to a **maximum of 12 months**. The **maximum** amount of **funding** is **EUR 200,000**.

If the exploratory project is submitted by a consortium the cooperative character of the project must be demonstrated by a **Declaration of Cooperation**.

The consortium appoints one partner as consortium leader, who will be regarded as the funding applicant and act as the contact point for the FFG.

1.3 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader is responsible for project management and for communications with the funding agency and the project partners for the entire duration of the project. This includes checking the reports and financial accounts of all partners in the consortium on the basis of the data and information provided by the consortium partners. In doing so, the consortium leader confirms to the FFG that

¹ With regard to the size of companies, the current definitions of SMEs given in the EU competition law are applicable. (Definition of small and medium-sized enterprises and of independent businesses in accordance with recommendation 2003/361/EC of the Commission dated 6 May 2003, (ABl. L 124 of 20.5.2003, pp. 36-41)
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

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

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

1.4.1 Who may receive funding?

Legal bodies, private companies and sole traders are eligible to receive funding provided they are not part of the federal administration.

The following list illustrates some possible legal forms of organisations eligible for funding:

legal bodies	private companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporations, such as limited companies, joint stock companies (GmbH; AG); • Universities in accordance with § 6 of the 2002 Universities Act; • Private universities • Associations; • Autonomous bodies; • Juridical entities with partial legal capacity outsourced from the federal administration • Federal states and municipalities; • Legal bodies separate from the State as providers of FH degree programmes and universities of applied sciences (FHs); • European associations (SE) • European cooperative societies (SCE) • European economic interest groupings (EEIG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open companies (OG); • Private limited partnerships (KG);
	sole traders

Organizations eligible to receive funding may take part in the call for applications as consortium leaders or as project partners and receive a funding rate corresponding to the funding category and the type of organization (s. Chapter 1.6)

1.4.2 Who may participate but may not receive funding?

Natural persons and **partners from outside Austria** that do not meet the funding criteria (see Chapter 1.5) are entitled to participate **as project partners** but will not receive any funding.

Natural persons and partners from outside Austria may also be considered as **subcontractors**. However, subcontractors are not partners in the sense of a Cooperative R&D Project. They have no right to exploit project results but provide defined tasks for partners, which are listed under the cost category “third-party costs“.

1.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

A consortium may have **partners from outside Austria**. Non-Austrian partners may not have any financial links to Austrian companies.

Unless specifically excluded in a particular call for applications, the **costs** incurred by the non-Austrian partners – whether or not they come from EU Member States – are eligible for funding under the following conditions:

- Non-Austrian partners create added value for the Austrian consortium and/or Austria as a location for business and research.
- The application for funding contains a detailed justification for paying support to the partner from outside Austria with regard to the resulting benefit to Austria as a location for business and/or research;
- Grants paid to the partner from outside Austria do not exceed 20% of the total funding for the project;
- The evaluation committee expressly recommends providing funding to the non-Austrian partner;
- Before the contract comes into force the partner from outside Austria proves its credit-worthiness and liquidity in accordance with the criteria applied to assess Austrian partners; and
- The non-Austrian partner accepts the FFG’s obligation and entitlement to check the project’s performance as specified in the funding agreement and submits documentation in German or English in accordance with the requirements placed on Austrian partners.

Alternatively, non-Austrian organizations may cover their costs from **their own funds and/or from support provided by their country**. There are **collaborative agreements** in place with some European and non-European countries **permitting the joint administration of funding**. Whether these collaborative agreements may be used to cover cooperative exploratory projects submitted under a call for applications will be **announced** in the call announcement.

Organizations from outside Austria may be involved as subcontractors.

1.6 How much support is granted?

The maximum level of support is EUR 200,000.

Support is paid in the form of **non-repayable grants**.

The **funding rate for each partner is based on the research category** to which the project is allocated **and on the type of organization in question**.

V1.7 valid as of 01.09.2014

Small enterprise	Medium-sized enterprise	Large enterprise	Research institution
70%	60%	50%	80%

Applicants are essentially divided into two groups: commercial enterprises and research establishments.

Micro-enterprises are treated as if they are small enterprises.

Universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), non-university research institutions and other scientifically oriented organizations (e.g. trade associations, associations with an appropriate purpose) are considered to be research establishments.

Federal states and municipalities are considered to be large enterprises. Other **public agencies and non-scientifically oriented associations** (according to the association articles) are treated according to the current definition of SMEs in the EU competition law.

If there is no information on a business available in the Austrian Business Compass (“Firmen-Compass”) based on the commercial register (e.g. for associations, start-ups, sole traders, companies from outside Austria), a Declaration of SME Status must be provided upon submission of the proposal. In the draft provided by the FFG applicants must (as far as possible) categorize their business for the last three years according to the SME definition.² The draft for the Declaration of SME Status will be provided in the download centre of the respective call.

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

1.7 Which costs are eligible?

All costs and expenses attributed to the project are eligible provided they result directly, actually and additionally (to the normal operational costs) during the duration of the funded research activity.

The earliest possible date for the start of the project is following submission of the application for funding. The period when **costs may be recognized** corresponds to the **contractual project period**, which commences with the start date and ends with the conclusion of the project.

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are given in the “Guidelines for the Accounting of Project Costs in Funding Applications and Reports” – known in brief

² http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf

as the Cost Guidelines, which may be found under the Internet address www.ffg.at/kostenleitfaden.

For exploratory projects, it is additionally specified that

- **partners** may **not simultaneously** be listed as **subcontractors** in the cost category “third-party costs”.
- **third-party costs** should **not exceed 50%** of the total costs. Any excess should be justified in the written application.
- The overhead costs of foreign partners are limited to 20% of personnel costs.

1.8 What points should be considered in regulating the rights to the results?

Intellectual property rights relating to the project results belong to the applicant (individual applicant or consortium). In the case of cooperative exploratory projects a duly executed **Declaration of Cooperation** must be deposited with the **consortium leader** prior to payment of the first instalment of funding. The Declaration regulates the collaboration and especially the **intellectual property rights (IPR) relating to the project results**.

In the case of collaborations between commercial companies and research institutions, the research institutions are also entitled to take up intellectual property rights (use, licence fees etc.). The companies must thus pay a consideration at normal market rates to the research establishments for their share of the IPR if they intend to exploit the results commercially. In all cases the provisions of the Community framework for state aid for research and development and innovation (2006/C 323/01) relating to the collaboration between research establishments and commercial companies must be observed.

1.9 What criteria are used to assess applications for funding?

The evaluation of applications for funding is based on the following **four main criteria**:

- The project’s relevance to the call for applications
- The quality of the project
- The qualifications of the applicant / project partners
- Economic potential and exploitation

The following table provides the relevant **sub-criteria** and the questions used to assess them. In the course of the assessment, points are assigned to each criterion. The criteria are weighted based on the maximum achievable points and the respective threshold value as a percentage of the maximum achievable points. Irrespective of the number of points achieved, projects are only funded if they reach the threshold value for each criterion and achieve at least a total of 60 points.



Funding criteria – explanations	points	threshold
1. Relevance to the call	20	12
The project's relevance to the call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the project address one or more of the call topics and contribute to reaching the goals of the call? 	
Incentive effect of the funding* (additionality)		
Shorter project completion time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the project be completed in a shorter period of time? 	
Larger project size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the size of the project be expanded? 	
Wider project scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the funding allow the project to be set up in a more ambitious manner? e.g. by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ focusing on more radical leaps in innovation ○ following a more long-term (non-market oriented) and research-intensive approach - as opposed to market oriented and development intensive ○ involving a higher technical risk ○ involving a higher market risk ○ leading to new or more extensive collaborations 	
Higher R&D investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the funding stimulate higher R&D investment on the part of the project partners beyond the project at hand? e.g. by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ creating additional R&D jobs ○ leading to investment in additional R&D infrastructure ○ stimulating additional R&D projects 	
The project's contribution to gender aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have gender aspects been taken into account in the research design and project planning? Can positive consequences be expected? (see page 21) 	
The project's contribution to societal/ethical and environmental considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have societal/ethical and environmental considerations been taken into account in the project planning and can positive consequences be expected? [This point includes in particular consequences on the occupation, quality of work, working conditions and the environment, as well as the ethical and societal implications of the projects. These aspects should be considered as and when they arise.] 	
2. Quality of the project	40	24
Presentation of the state of the art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the state of the art (level of knowledge/technology) presented sufficiently and understandably? 	



Technical and scientific quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How high is the level of innovation/invention in relation to the state of the art? • How risky is the development? [Development risk is to be viewed positively in this context. Nevertheless, it is a precondition that the project is at the cutting edge of knowledge in the field and that the methods are sound. Projects that are risky because they have been poorly conceived should not be rewarded.] • Are the planned methods and/or the scientific and technical approach appropriate to reach the goals and to produce the desired results? 		
Quality of the planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the time plan and the working programme well structured, transparent and realistic? • Are the project partners well integrated with regard to their capacity and their expertise? • Is/are the financial planning and/or the planned costs transparent and appropriate? 		
3. Qualifications of the applicant/project partners		20	10
Scientific/technical ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the consortium include the scientific, technical and organizational expertise required for the project? 		
Potential of the consortium and/or the applicant to realize the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the consortium's (economic) potential to realize the project and to achieve the project goals be assessed? • Is the composition of the consortium appropriate with a view to achieving the project goals? 		
Management ability and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the consortium have the required managerial ability, capacity and structure to perform the project? 		
Composition of the project team in terms of gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the composition of the project team balanced in terms of gender mainstreaming? • Are there improvements to the gender ratios normal for the field? [The gender-specific balance should be taken into account equally for men and for women.] 		
4. Economic potential and exploitation		20	10
Client orientation/ client benefit and unique selling proposition/ leadership in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the description of the client orientation, the client benefit and/or unique selling proposition/ leadership in the area reasonable and realistic? • Have gender aspects been taken into account with regard to client orientation and/or client benefit of the expected results? 		
Knowledge of the market (target markets, market potential and competitors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the application make clear that the consortium and/or the applicant have appropriate knowledge of the market? • Is the description of the target markets and the market potential sufficient and reasonable? • Are the competitors and their market positions known? • Is there sufficient market potential? 		
Marketing strategy (incl. IPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the description of the marketing strategy reasonable and realistic? • Is the planned protection strategy (IPR) sufficient, reasonable and adequate? 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which economic advantages would result for the project participants (cost-effectiveness, synergies with other products etc.)? 	
Total		100 60

* Pursuant to the EU Community Framework for State Aid for Research, Development and Innovation, large enterprises involved in consortia are required to provide evidence demonstrating the incentive effect of the funding (additionality) in detail.

1.10 Which documents are required for submission?

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via **eCall** at the Internet address <https://ecall.ffg.at>. As **part of the electronic application**, the following documents must be attached **by means of the eCall upload function**:

- **project description:** scientific proposal – upload as pdf document
- **cost plan:** financial part of the proposal – upload as Excel document

Attachments to the electronic application:

- The annual statement of accounts (balance sheet, profit and loss account) from the past two financial years
- Declaration of SME Status (if no data are available in the Austrian Business Compass, “Firmen-Compass”)
- Evidence of incentive effect of funding for large enterprises – attachment to eCall message

If any additional documents or attachments are required, this will be specified in the application form.

If the **project** involves partners outside Austria, the individual collaborative agreements with European or non-European countries may require documents that are not to be submitted via eCall. The relevant information will be given in the call announcement.

In individual cases additional supporting documents may be requested.

The **language** in which proposals are to be submitted will be specified in the call announcement and the corresponding application form.

1.11 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

The application for funding must list those projects that have received or are receiving public funding from Austria and/or the EU. All current projects must be listed, as well as all projects that have been concluded within the past five years and all projects for which funding has been requested if their content is related to the call for applications or to the application submitted. This requirement serves to ensure that the current

project is clearly separated from other projects that have already been funded or that are underway or for which funding has been requested.

The complete and comprehensive presentation of all support received or requested in the thematic field does not reduce the chance of receiving funding in the framework of the current call. It rather serves to prevent the risk that the same project might be funded twice and proves the consortium's expertise in the area.

These projects must be mentioned in the scientific part of the project application.

1.12 Scientific integrity

Funding may only be granted to people who show high scientific quality both in the application and during the course of the project. To ensure that the scientific quality is appropriate, the FFG is a member of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity – OeAWI (<http://www.oeawi.at/statuten.html>).

By its membership, the FFG supports the observance of the rules of good scientific practice. During the formal checks on applications and in the event of suspected scientific misconduct the FFG may forward details and any necessary supporting documents to the OeAWI's Commission for Scientific Integrity. The OeAWI will decide whether to initiate an independent investigation and, if necessary, will undertake the investigation.

If the investigation reveals details that prove that the scientific quality of the project is insufficient or that scientific misconduct (e.g. plagiarism) has taken place, the FFG may decide to request a revision of the application for funding or may reject it for formal reasons. In the case of projects that have been granted support, such cases may lead to the reduction, retention or reclaiming of financial support that has been granted and/or already transferred.

2 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

2.1 What is the procedure for submission?

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via **eCall** at the Internet address <https://ecall.ffg.at>. Applications must be **complete** and submitted **on time**, before the deadline for submission .

The application forms for the call for applications are to be used without exception (s. Chapter 1.10). These will be made available for downloading via eCall.

The application for funding may not be submitted until **all partners** have **completed and submitted** partner applications in eCall.

An application is considered to have been submitted when **it is finalized in eCall** and “Submit application” (“*Einreichung abschicken*”) has been clicked. When an application is received, an **acknowledgement** will be sent automatically by e-mail. It is **not possible** to submit **additional documents** or to resubmit parts of the application form. Once an application has been submitted, it is no longer possible to revise it once the deadline for submissions has passed.

It is not necessary to submit the application for funding by post, duly executed. The online submission is sufficient.

The actual submission must be undertaken by the consortium leader or by a duly authorised person. Proof that this person is entitled to represent the consortium leader must be provided to the FFG at any time on demand. If this cannot be done, the FFG reserves the right to reject the applications in question for formal reasons.

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

2.2 What measures are taken to protect confidential project data?

The FFG is under a legal obligation to maintain secrecy concerning information provided by the funding applicant pursuant to Sec. 9 para 4 of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency Act (FFG-G, Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 73/2004) and is therefore obliged to treat as confidential any company and project information received in connection with its activity. The FFG may therefore publish project contents and results only with the consent of the funding recipient. External experts who are involved in the assessment of individual projects are also subject to confidentiality obligations.

The names of the funding recipients, the amount of aid, the aid intensity and the industrial sectors in which the funded projects are carried out will be reported to the EU in compliance with the relevant reporting obligations.

Please note that all personal data obtained in connection with the initiation and performance of the contract the use of which is an essential prerequisite for the FFG to fulfil its legal mandate or is permitted in accordance with Secs. 7 to 11 of the Data Protection Act (DSG 2000), may be used by the FFG for the conclusion and performance of the funding agreement, for fulfilling its legal mandate and for control purposes. This

may mean that the data must be transferred or disclosed in particular to bodies and authorised representatives of the Federal Audit Office, the Federal Minister of Finance and the EU.

3 PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND FUNDING DECISION

3.1 What is the formal check?

During the formal check, the application is checked for **formal correctness and completeness**. The information contained in the application is not examined during the formal check; this takes place during the assessment procedure. 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 **result** of the formal check will be communicated within **four weeks by means of an eCall message**.

If the formal criteria are not met and the problem(s) cannot be rectified, the application for funding will fail the formal check and will not enter the subsequent steps of the procedure. If the formal check reveals problems that can be rectified, the applicant is given the opportunity to rectify these problems within a reasonable period of time.

The relevant **“Checklist”** can be found in the corresponding project description template.

3.2 How is the evaluation procedure organized?

The actual scientific assessment is based on the criteria given in Chapter 1.9. It is undertaken by **national and/or international experts** on the basis of the documents submitted.

After the initial review based on the defined assessment criteria, 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 organizations) for justified reasons. eCall contains an entry field for this purpose.

Subsequently, internal experts at the FFG undertake a **check of the financial potential** (credit rating and liquidity) of the participating commercial partners. It is on no account possible to support enterprises that are insolvent.

3.3 Who takes the funding decision?

The funding decision is the responsibility of the responsible **Federal Minister(s)** and will be taken **on the basis of the funding recommendation made by the evaluation committee**.

4 PROCEDURE AFTER THE FUNDING DECISION

4.1 How is the funding agreement concluded?

If funding is granted, the FFG sends the consortium/funding recipient an **offer of funding**, which must be accepted within a certain time. If the consortium/funding recipient accepts the offer, including any terms and conditions that may be imposed, within the specified period of time, a funding agreement will be prepared.

The **funding agreement** specifies, among other points, the funding recipients, the title of the project, the level of eligible costs, the amount of funding approved, the period of funding, the payment of funding, the reporting requirements and any additional terms and conditions.

The funding agreement must be duly executed and the original returned to the FFG.

Until the funding agreement has been concluded, the applicants have no legal right to receive funding.

4.2 How should requirements and recommendations be taken into account?

Recommendations or binding requirements may be formulated during the assessment of the application. Requirements may be preconditions for the conclusion of the funding agreement or may represent conditions to be met during the course of the project.

The consortium leader of cooperative exploratory projects must, prior to payment of the first instalment, confirm in the eCall “Conditions” section that a Declaration of Cooperation duly signed by all partners has been deposited with the consortium leader. The Declaration of Cooperation need not be sent to the FFG.

4.3 How are the instalments of funding paid?

The first instalment will be paid once the funding agreement has been signed and any requirements and conditions have been met.

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

Before payment of the final instalment, the final report and the final project accounts will be checked. The **costs are only approved upon final approval** of the project following the auditing by the FFG’s Project Controlling & Audit Division.

FFG instalment scheme	
Project duration in months	0 - 12
Number of reports (final report)	1
1st instalment in % of contractual funding	50 %
Final instalment up to % of contractual funding	50 %

4.4 What reports and accounts are required?

Within three months of the project's conclusion a **final report** and the **final accounts** must be submitted **via the eCall reporting function**.

All reports and accounts must include the activities and associated costs (of **all consortium partners**, if applicable) for which support is paid by the FFG.

The **templates** in eCall are to be used in the preparation of the reports.

Detailed information on eligible and non-eligible costs are set out in the "Guidelines for the Accounting of Project Costs in Funding Applications and Reports" available at www.ffg.at/Kostenleitfaden.

In addition, the funding recipient undertakes to work together with the FFG and the responsible authorities to support PR work, as and when required. This relates in particular to the making available of non-confidential information and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes.

4.5 How should changes to the project be communicated?

The FFG must be informed of **substantial changes to the project** or of **changes to the partners in the consortium** (e.g. changes in ownership, bankruptcy proceedings) immediately after they become known.

Any **changes to points specified in the contract** (project contents, partners in the consortium, costs, timing, funding period etc.) shall require a justified request to and **approval by the FFG**.

The **request** for such a change, together with an appropriate description and justification, is to be placed via an **eCall message or via the reports**. Any necessary supporting documentation should be uploaded as an attachment to the eCall message or sent by post.

It is possible to reallocate costs (e. g. material costs to personnel costs), if required even between partners.

Minor cost reallocations should be justified in a report. Minor cost reallocations **within the cost categories of a particular partner** are taken to mean the reallocation of

amounts below 15 % of the partner's total costs or below EUR 15,000. Minor cost reallocations **between partners** are taken to mean the reallocation of amounts below 10 % of the total project costs and below EUR 100,000.

Larger cost reallocations are all reallocations that cannot be considered as minor. Larger cost reallocations must be requested in advance by means of the cost reallocation table ([FFG template](#)) and a detailed explanation and justification. In the event of larger cost reallocations between partners, the consent of the partners in question must be submitted in the form of a duly signed letter, scanned and attached to the eCall message.

4.6 Can the period of funding be extended?

The **cost-neutral extension of the funding period for exploratory projects** is possible **only in exceptional cases for up to a maximum of 6 months**.

The **preconditions** for extension are that the funding recipient is not responsible for the project's delay and that the project is still eligible for funding.

In such cases, an **application for extension of the funding period** must be placed by means of an eCall message **within the approved project period**.

4.7 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

After **the check of the final report and the final accounts**, the FFG's Project Controlling & Audit Division will undertake an audit to establish whether the support has been used in accordance with the regulations. During the course of the **audit the final level of eligible costs will be established**.

The **result** of the audit **will be communicated in writing to the funding recipients**. If the checks of the project are positive, the FFG will confirm that the support has been used in accordance with its regulations; in the event of a **negative** result, procedures may be initiated to secure **repayment** of funding.

If the result of the audit is **positive** and if the level of cost initially envisioned has been reached, the final instalment specified in the funding agreement will be transferred. If **the project is underspent** the level of funding will be **reduced accordingly**.

The level of support paid may also be reduced for scientific reasons, as well as on formal and legal grounds.

5 Annex: Why gender in the selection process?

Gender budgeting has been introduced in Austria as a result of the budget reform (Federal Budget Act 2013). The principle of impact orientation with the aim of achieving effective gender equality for women and men entered into effect on 1 January 2013 as one of the new principles of federal budgeting (Art. 51 para. 8 of Federal Constitutional Law (B-VG), Art. 51 para. 9 (1)).

The allocation of public funds can be used to achieve an impact in this respect at two levels:

- 1) impact at project level, including the exploitation of project results
- 2) impact at the individual level

ad 1) ***Public funds are to be invested in projects of high quality designed to enhance the scientific and economic performance of Austria.***

Appropriate consideration of gender in research contributes to the **quality of research projects**: If, e.g. (groups of) persons are the research object and/or persons will use, apply or be affected by the research results, this must be reflected in the research design (research topics, methodology etc.).

These aspects are included in the assessment criterion “Relevance of the Project”. Applicants are required to provide information about the state-of-the-art, research topics and methods in the chapter “Quality of the project” in the Project Description, considering gender aspects if relevant to the project.

Appropriate consideration of gender aspects in the market perspective will enhance the **exploitation potential of the project results**.

This is taken into account in the assessment of the economic and exploitation potential (“Customer orientation/customer benefits”).

ad 2) ***Public funds are to be allocated in a way to achieve equality of women and men in research and contribute to attracting the brightest minds to research.***

The criterion “Qualification of the Consortium” assesses the balanced composition of the project team in terms of gender mainstreaming. This issue must be addressed in chapter 3 “Qualifications of applicants/project participants” of the Project Description.

The data on the composition of the project team are subsequently recorded in the project reports in the course of gender monitoring.