

BRIDGE EARLY STAGE

Call Guidelines

4th Call for Proposals

Submission period
16 March 2016 to 17 May 2016, 16:00



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0 INTRODUCTION

Basic research projects carried out at universities but directly aimed at industrial application had difficulties obtaining funding in the past. Collaborations between scientific research institutions and RTDI companies were largely restricted to contract research.

Close collaboration and regular exchange between science and industry can be beneficial for both sides and open up new perspectives. The BRIDGE Programme, launched in 2004 as a joint initiative of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), thus set out to provide funding for projects at the interface between scientific basic research at institutes and experimental development in businesses.

The Bridge Programme (FFG) and the Translational Research Programme (FWF) were run jointly by FFG and FWF from 2004 to 2012. In these 8 years, the two programmes proved to be internationally recognised initiatives and received a number of positive evaluations.

The Translational Research Programme run by FWF was phased out at the end of 2012 and as a consequence the Bridge Programme run by FFG had to be adjusted to the new framework conditions. The main focus of this further development and reorientation was on extending the programme to include basic research (BRIDGE Early Stage).

BRIDGE Early Stage (since 2013)

This funding instrument launched in 2013 is designed to provide funding for scientifically excellent projects which are carried out by consortia of partners involved in scientific research and industrial commercialisation.

The projects are allocated to the category of **industrial research**.

Changes from 2015

The programme focused on international collaboration from the start and has now further strengthened this aspect as a consequence of enhanced internationalisation efforts in research and development.

From 2015, projects submitted to the BRIDGE Early Stage programme must involve international scientific partners to be eligible for funding. An interdisciplinary approach in the definition of the project will also contribute to a positive evaluation.

1 GOALS

BRIDGE Early Stage focuses specifically on the funding of cooperation projects at very early stages of industrial research.

Funded projects are to build on the basic research of scientific institutes and taken closer to potential commercialisation through collaborative research with businesses.

The projects carried out as part of concrete research collaborations are to enable an effective exchange of research results and expertise. Another aim is to foster communication between science and industry, opening up new perspectives for all partners. The funding of collaborative projects is designed to facilitate mutual access to

each other's expertise and help companies overcome their apprehension about (basic) research.

The programme will thus provide a foundation on which innovative Austrian companies can build their R&D strategies in line with the Austrian research, technology and innovation policy goals.

The BRIDGE Early Stage programme has the following objectives:

1. To further develop and transfer basic research findings to industrial application and to initiate and extend international research collaborations between science and industry.
2. To intensify research performance in the field of high-level scientific research and to integrate companies into international networks at very early stages of industrial development.
3. To use the existing human resource potential for industrial research by facilitating the transfer of experts from scientific to industrial research (intense involvement of doctoral students and post-docs in projects).

2 CALL TOPICS

The call is open for all topics and scientific disciplines.

An interdisciplinary approach in the definition of the project will contribute to a positive evaluation.

3 KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

This call invites proposals for the **FFG funding instrument “Early Stage Science Transfer”**, hereinafter referred to as BRIDGE Early Stage.




Overview	
Instrument	Early Stage Science Transfer
Brief description	Funding will be granted for scientifically excellent projects of basic research conducted in (international) cooperation between science and industry (international partners min. 10% of overall project costs). The project must originate in scientific research. The majority of project work (max. 90 %) is carried out by the scientific partners. The commercialisation partners provide in-kind contributions of at least 10%.
Topics	Call Topics
Topics	Open call, no specified topics
Key data	
Funding amount (€)	<i>No max. funding amount</i>
Funding rate (%)	up to 90 %
Duration (months)	max. 36 months
Cooperation required	yes
Total budget	min. EUR 3 million
Submission deadline	17 May 2016, 16.00
Language	English

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Information on the Web	<p style="text-align: center;">https://www.ffg.at/programme/bridge</p>

The full set of proposal documents must be submitted exclusively via eCall (<https://ecall.ffg.at>) by the submission deadline.

4 APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via **eCall** (<https://ecall.ffg.at>).

Overview of call documents - funding	
Call Guidelines	 BRIDGE Early Stage Call Guideline for the 4 th Call (this document)
Project Description	 Project Description template (see eCall, “Attachments”)
General cost regulations	 Cost Guidelines_2.0 (Guidelines for the Accounting of Project Costs)

4.1 What documents are required for submission?

As **part of the electronic application**, the following documents must be **uploaded by the consortium leader**:

- Project description (templates in eCall): **scientific proposal** – upload as pdf file
- **eCall** online cost plan (per partner)
- Re-submission: separate document specifying the changes
- Proposals by international scientific partners, if included in third-party costs

Obligatory submission of the financial documents of all industrial partners (including international partners) in the eCall annual data:

- Financial statements (balance sheet and profit and loss account) of the 2 previous financial years
- Preliminary financial statement or current account balance of the previous financial year
- For new or restructured companies: business plan

Please observe the **submission deadlines!** No modifications, uploads etc. will be permitted in eCall after the submission deadline.

4.2 Additionality

The FFG must examine the incentive effect of the funding according to the FFG’s OFFENSIV Guideline (effective as from 1 January 2015), which provides the legal basis for BRIDGE Early Stage.

The incentive effect of funding is taken to mean the impact of the funding granted, i.e. what effects will the funding have that would not be achieved without this support?

In the project description, the applicants are therefore requested to explain whether or in what form the project would be carried out without financial support.

5 REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING CONDITIONS

5.1 What are BRIDGE Early Stage projects?

Open topic

The BRIDGE Programme is an open-topic programme, i.e. the projects submitted are not subject to any thematic restrictions.

Basic research

BRIDGE Early Stage projects are defined as scientific research projects at a very early stage of industrial research, which have their **origins and basis** in scientific research carried out at university institutes or research institutions. The projects are initiated by the scientific partners.

The **project** must involve high-level scientific research with a commercialisation perspective. This means that the companies involved (as potential commercialisation partners) must be able to adequately contribute their expertise to the project.

Cooperative

The projects must be designed as collaborative projects carried out by at least one scientific research institution and at least one company acting as commercialisation partner. The majority of the work must be carried out by the scientific partner.

In order to ensure the scientific quality and basic research character of the project, (a maximum of) **90 %** of the overall project costs must be incurred by the scientific partner.

At least 10 % of the overall cost must be met by the participating companies in the form of in-kind contributions. These contributions must provide a substantial benefit to the project!

International

Applications for BRIDGE Early Stage projects **must** include **international scientific collaboration**. International scientific project partners (universities, universities of applied sciences and scientific institutions, no companies) may be involved either as consortium partners or as sub-contractors of Austrian scientific partners (stated under third-party services in the cost plan).

International scientific project partners must account for **at least 10%** of total project costs.

Interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary projects (to be presented in the project description) will be rated positively in the evaluation process.

Duration

The duration of BRIDGE projects is limited to a **maximum of 36 months**.

Project volume

There are no formal lower or upper limits for the size of BRIDGE projects.

The funding amount and project volume should, however, be in line with the call budget and the average size of “usual” BRIDGE projects. The average volume of funding provided for projects in the previous call was approx. € 340, 000 for a project duration of 3 years.

5.2 Does my project fit into the programme?

The decision as to whether a project should be submitted for funding depends primarily on how far the **research work has progressed towards commercial exploitation**.

BRIDGE Early Stage projects are, by definition, situated at a very early stage of industrial research. This implies that the basic research carried out in the project **must not lead to direct commercial exploitation**.

Upon successful completion, however, the project may result in development work which may subsequently lead to commercially exploitable results.

The following rule of thumb can be used as **guidance**:

There should be **a period of at least 5 years** between the project and the production of commercially exploitable results.

For a definition of “Industrial Research” see Annex I.

Clinical studies are not the focus of the BRIDGE Programme and are thus not eligible for funding.

5.3 What demands are placed on the consortium?

The consortium must consist of **at least one Austrian scientific partner** and **at least one Austrian commercialisation partner**. The number of partners is not limited.

Scientific partners from outside Austria must account for substantial parts of the project (at least 10% of costs). They may be involved either as consortium partners or as sub-contractors of Austrian scientific partners.

International commercialisation partners may also be involved in the project.

The **consortium** appoints one partner as consortium leader. This partner submits the application for funding and serves as contact point for the FFG.

The collaborative character of the project will be underlined by the mandatory conclusion of a **Consortium Agreement** specifying the partners’ rights and obligations.

The scientific partners must have the right to publish the results of their work conducted in the course of the project.

Newly established cooperations will stand a better chance in the evaluation process.

5.4 Who should act as consortium leader?

The consortium lead can only be taken by a scientific partner based in Austria.

5.5 What are the responsibilities of the consortium leader?

The consortium leader is responsible for the entire project management and receives the funding.

The consortium leader is responsible for communications with the funding agency and the project partners for the entire duration of the project. This includes checking and submitting the reports and financial accounts of all partners in the consortium on the basis of the data and information provided by the consortium partners. 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.

5.6 What are the responsibilities of the commercialisation partners?

The companies involved participate in the project according to schedule and account for their share in the costs (in-kind contributions).

Companies will also be subject to inspection and evaluation by the FFG.

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

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

Any legal entities, partnerships or sole proprietorships that are not part of the federal administration are eligible to receive funding and/or to participate.

5.7.2 Who can act as a scientific partner?

Scientific partners participating in BRIDGE projects must be research institutions in accordance with the Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01, 1.3.ee).

The scientific project partners must provide evidence that they are qualified to carry out **high-level scientific research** in the area relevant for the project. These can be universities, universities of applied sciences, research institutions or R&D companies.

R&D companies may only participate as scientific partners if they cannot exploit the project results within the framework of their normal business activities and if they meet all requirements for research institutions.

Scientific cooperation partners must provide evidence of their **qualification** in the field of scientific research and in relation to the project specific basic research in the application. Applicants are required to list relevant previous projects funded by the FWF, FFG or EU and explain any differences to the research topics specified in the application.

5.7.3 Who can act as a commercialisation partner?

Commercialisation partners are usually Austrian companies that are able to **further develop** and **exploit** the project results within the framework of their normal business

activities. Consortia that enable and promote commercial exploitation will stand a better chance in the evaluation process.

It is possible, however, that the industrial cooperation partner **applies** the project results within its own company, but does not intend to exploit them commercially. In this case the consortium will receive a lower rating in the evaluation process.

Professional unions and associations do not qualify as commercialisation partners; such associations have access to other funding options in the field of cooperative research.

At least one Austrian company must be involved in the project as a commercialisation partner. The involvement of additional commercialisation partners from outside Austria is possible.

5.7.4 Are Competence Centres (COMET, K Centres, CDG) also eligible to apply for funding?

COMET Centres, K Centres and CDGs may in principle submit applications for funding.

Projects submitted by consortia which already receive funding under COMET, K_plus, K_ind or CDG programmes are only eligible for funding under the BRIDGE Programme if they address a new research topic. Projects submitted by COMET, K_plus and K_ind Centres and partners of CDG laboratories must address a **new research topic (“Non-K area“)** (clear distinction from the existing research programme **must** be shown); if possible, companies should not already be part of the Competence Centre.

Newly established cooperations will stand a better chance in the evaluation process.

5.7.5 Can partners from outside Austria participate?

BRIDGE Early Stage consortia **must** include **international scientific partners** (see 5.1 and 5.3).

If consortium partners from outside Austria participate in a project, however, it must be ensured that **total foreign participation does not exceed 30 % of the overall project cost.**

Scientific project partners from non-EU countries should preferably be accounted for in the costs of the Austrian scientific partner (under third-party services).

International commercialisation partners may only participate in BRIDGE Early Stage projects if **at least one Austrian commercialisation partner** is involved in the consortium.

5.8 How much support is granted?

BRIDGE Early Stage projects will receive funding of **up to 90% of the total project costs.** Funding will only be granted for the costs of the scientific project partners (corresponding to a 100% funding rate for scientific partners).

No funding will be provided for the costs of industrial partners

5.9 What 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 period when **costs may be recognised** 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”, or **Cost Guidelines**, available at <http://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/kostenleitfaden/version-2>.

Partners involved in **BRIDGE Early Stage projects** may not simultaneously be listed as subcontractors in the cost category “third-party costs”.

The following **deviating and/or supplementary provisions** apply in addition to the Cost Guidelines (V 1.3):

- 1. Costs of post-docs and doctoral students** can be charged according to the Collective Agreement for University Employees or at the applicable FWF rates (<https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/personnel-costs/>) (40 hrs/week are permitted for doctoral theses). These rates are considered as guide values.
- 2. Personnel of universities and outsourced research institutions**
University employees are paid from the global budget of the university and are thus not regarded as federal employees. Outsourced research institutions are also responsible for their own budget. The general provisions concerning the calculation of personnel costs thus also apply to universities and outsourced research institutions. **University professors with a full-time employment** contract can charge a maximum of **300 hours/year**.
- 3. Patent costs**
Costs incurred by participating SMEs in the course of patent application can be claimed as part of their in-kind contribution. Costs for patent maintenance and patent costs for universities are not eligible for funding.

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

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

There are no special provisions for the allocation of the intellectual property rights within the consortium. The regulations of the Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01, 1.3.ee) must however be observed. According to this provision, any intellectual property rights and access to the results must be allocated to the different partners of the collaboration so as to adequately reflect their respective interests, work packages, and financial and other contributions to the project.

The cooperation between the partners and the allocation of intellectual property rights should be regulated in the course of the application process, and in any case prior to the commencement of work (see 8.5.1 Consortium agreement).

Irrespective of the regulation of intellectual property rights, the scientific partners must be granted the **right to publish** the research results.

5.11 What criteria are used to assess applications for funding?

Each Early Stage Science Transfer project will be evaluated by at least **2 international scientific reviewers** and at least **1 FFG reviewer** in terms of its technological and scientific content. **FFG financial experts** will additionally assess economic aspects relating to the commercialisation and financial viability of the project within the consortium. The evaluation will be carried out according to specified criteria.

5.11.1 Assessment criteria

The application will be evaluated according to the following **four main criteria**:

- quality of the project
- qualifications of the funding applicant/project partners
- economic potential and exploitation
- relevance of the project to the objectives of the call

The following table specifies the relevant **sub-criteria** and the questions used to assess them. In the course of the assessment, points are assigned to each criterion.

Funding criteria – explanations	
1. Quality of the project	
Innovation content in relation to the state of the art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the state of the art (level of knowledge/technology) presented in an adequate and comprehensible form? • Is the project idea innovative? • How do you rate the innovation content of the application in relation to the current level of research/knowledge?
Scientific excellence, originality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you rate the quality of the problem solving approach? Does the scientific project exceed average standards? • Does the project provide scientific added value and can thus act as a model for similar projects?
Suitability of methods, quality of problem solving approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the goals described clearly? • Are the methods used for attaining the project goals adequate to the task and in accordance with the current state of knowledge? Can the goals be achieved better/faster with other means?
Suitability of cost and work plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the time and work schedule well structured, transparent and realistic? • Are the project partners well integrated with regard to their capacity and their expertise? Can the work be carried out within the specified time horizon? • Are the planned costs adequate and plausible? Is the infrastructure to be acquired necessary for the project?
2. Economic potential and exploitation	
Commercialisation potential/benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential customer benefit – what is the market potential for the project results (time horizon at least 5 years)?

Market experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the commercialisation partner already gained experience in the target market?
3. Qualifications of the applicants/project partners	
Qualification of the researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the researchers' qualifications in the subject area? Can they provide evidence of previous scientific work and publications?
Technical project management and implementation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the consortium partners have the organisational expertise required for the project and has this expertise been adequately presented in the funding application? • What are their implementation skills?
Project resources (personnel and technical equipment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the personnel resources and technical equipment sufficient for the implementation of the project?
Financing of the BRIDGE project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the companies involved provide match funding for the project? (Funding applicants who are/were involved in insolvency or extrajudicial reorganisation proceedings are usually not considered to meet the relevant criteria.)

4. Relevance of the project to the programme	
Basic research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the planned project activities in accordance with the research category (very early stage of industrial research)? Is there a clear focus on basic research work?
Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project involve basic research initiated by the scientific partners or can it be described as contract research?
Future perspective/structural effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the composition of scientific partners and companies provide for collaboration in the longer term? • Will the project lead to an effective and sustainable knowledge transfer (including at personnel level) for the future benefit of both partners?
Quality of cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the partnership been newly established or have there been longstanding relationships between the company and the institute? • How would you rate the quality of international cooperation? Will there be an intensive exchange with international partners? • Is the project interdisciplinary? Does the interdisciplinary approach provide added value for the project?
Scientific networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project integrated into the international research environment? Is there an added value for the project? • Does the project follow an interdisciplinary approach?
Gender relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have gender aspects (e.g. different patterns of use, physical differences) been taken into account in project planning? Can positive effects be expected? • Is the composition of the project team balanced in terms of gender mainstreaming? • Are there improvements to the gender ratios normal for the field? [gender balance should be taken into account equally for men and for women.]
Additionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the project be carried out irrespective of funding? If so, in what form?

5.12 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

Applicants are required to list additional projects related to the proposed project in the Project Description in order to facilitate the evaluation. The results and expertise obtained must be presented. Relevant projects include:

- previous projects whose results provide the basis for the proposed project
- ongoing or completed projects (of the past 3 years) that are thematically related to the proposed project

Double funding of costs that have already been funded is not permissible. The proposed project must be clearly differentiated from thematically related projects that have already received funding.

There are basically **no restrictions on the number of projects that can be submitted or carried out simultaneously**. The size and capacity of the institution will however be assessed in relation to the projects submitted in the course of the project evaluation.

5.13 Scientific integrity

Funding may only be granted to applicants 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/en/statutes.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 review 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 already been granted and/or transferred.

6 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

6.1 What is the procedure for submission?

Project applications may only be submitted electronically via **eCall** (<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. These will be made available for download via eCall.

The consortium leader must not submit the application for funding until **all partners** have **completed and submitted** their partner applications via eCall.

An application is considered to have been submitted when **it is finalised in eCall** by clicking the “Submit application” (“*Einreichung abschicken*”) button. When an application is received, an **acknowledgement** will be sent automatically by e-mail. Once an application has been submitted, it is **not possible** to modify the application or submit **additional documents** (e.g. individual parts of the application form).

It is not necessary to submit the duly executed application by post. 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 application in question for formal reasons.

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

6.2 What measures are taken to protect confidential project data?

The FFG undertakes to treat as confidential any company and project information received from the funding applicant in connection with its activity. The FFG may therefore publish project contents and results only with the consent of the funding recipient.

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 contract, 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.

Pursuant to the relevant EU provisions (GBER), information about each individual aid award exceeding EUR 500,000 must be published.

The funding applicants further agree that the FFG may collect and transmit the above personal data (beyond the information provided by the applicant) for verifying the eligibility for and proper use of the funding from other federal authorities, legal entities (granting or managing relevant funding) or other third parties. There is also the possibility to obtain information from the transparency portal according to Sec. 32 (5) of the Transparency Database Act (TDBG 2012).

The FFG shall obtain a declaration of consent for any use of such data going beyond this provision.

6.3 What else is important to consider when submitting an application?

6.3.1 Project start

The earliest possible date for the start of a project is **following submission** of the application for funding.

The period when costs may be recognised corresponds to the contractual project period, which commences **after** the BRIDGE advisory board has made the funding decision for the project.

We recommend not to start the project until the FFG has announced the funding decision.

6.3.2 Length of the application? German or English?

The entire application **must** be submitted in **English**. Points 1 to 3 inclusive of the project description are limited to **20 pages** for formal reasons.

The above does not apply to the summary on the eCall online form. The field “**Short project description**” (“*Projektkurzbeschreibung*”) must be completed in **German**.

7 PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND FUNDING DECISION

The applications will be evaluated by international and FFG reviewers in the weeks following submission. A funding decision can be expected after about **seven months**.

7.1 What is the formal check?

The formal check serves to examine the application for **formal correctness and completeness**. The information contained in the application is not examined during the formal check.

If the formal requirements are not met and the deficiencies cannot be corrected, the application for funding will fail the formal check and will not enter the subsequent steps of the procedure.

A relevant checklist for submission may be found in the Project Description template.

7.2 How is the evaluation procedure organised?

The expert review is based on the criteria given in Chapter 7.11 and is undertaken by international and FFG reviewers on the basis of the documents submitted.

It is possible to **exclude external reviewers** (individuals or staff of particular organisations) for justified reasons. eCall contains an entry field for this purpose.

An **evaluation committee** (BRIDGE advisory board) will discuss the projects based on the expert reviews and make a recommendation for funding (including conditions and/or additional requirements).

7.3 Who makes the funding decision?

The funding decision will be made by the advisory board of the FFG General Programmes, which will pay special attention to appropriate budgetary cover for the proposal. It will base its decision on the recommendation of the BRIDGE advisory board.

The final funding decision is the responsibility of the FFG Management and will be taken on the basis of the decision by the advisory board of the FFG General Programmes, including any conditions and additional requirements.

8 PROCEDURE AFTER THE FUNDING DECISION

8.1 Funding decision

The applicant is notified **via eCall** of whether the funding application has been accepted **immediately after the meeting at which the decision is made**.

8.2 What if my application is rejected?

The decision to reject the application will be communicated to the applicant **by eCall immediately after the meeting at which the decision is taken.**

The consortium leader will receive a letter **by post** stating in detail the reasons for the decision to reject the application.

The letter usually provides an indication whether it is sensible to submit another funding application for one of the next calls after having fulfilled specific conditions or made changes to the project configuration.

8.3 Resubmission

Resubmissions are project applications where the project goals and consortium remain largely the same. Such resubmissions are possible in principle, but must be marked as such via the corresponding eCall checkbox (also applies to rejected projects from other FFG Programmes).

When resubmitting an application, applicants must **specify the changes** made to the original application in a **separate document** (additional eCall attachment) addressing the **points of criticism raised in the letter of rejection** (formal criterion).

If you are not sure whether your project proposal is a resubmission or a new application, we recommend that you mark it as a resubmission and highlight the changes and modifications.

All resubmitted applications for a BRIDGE project will again be examined by the original reviewers and additionally by new reviewers.

It is therefore not expedient to resubmit an (almost) unchanged application.

8.4 How is the funding contract concluded?

If funding is granted, the FFG sends the consortium a draft contract (**offer of funding**) by **eCall**, which must be accepted within a specified period of time. If **all consortium partners** accept the terms and conditions listed in the draft contract within the specified period of time, a funding contract will be drawn up. The funding contract will be sent electronically via eCall and by post.

The contract is issued in **German**.

The **funding contract** specifies, among other points, the funding recipient, 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 conditions and requirements.

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

8.5 How should requirements and conditions be taken into account?

Requirements or conditions may be formulated during the assessment of the application and become an integral part of the contract. These are designed to ensure the desired project result and thus the efficient use of the funds. Such conditions and obligations may include securing match-funding, providing evidence of employment relationships for project staff, evidence of company registration, references to cost structure, cost cuts etc.

8.5.1 Consortium agreement

A consortium agreement between the partners must be concluded prior to the start of a BRIDGE project.

The consortium leader must therefore confirm prior to payment of the first instalment that a **consortium agreement duly signed by all partners has been deposited with the consortium leader.**

The consortium agreement must meet all requirements of the call. The following issues must be regulated in particular:

Allocation of tasks, allocation of costs, project financing (acc. to funding contract), IPR and publication rights to the project results, possibility for the FFG to carry out cost audits at all project partners.

Help in the preparation of a consortium agreement is available in the form of a **sample consortium agreement**, which can be downloaded from www.ffg.at/konsortialvertrag. Use of this sample agreement is not mandatory.

8.6 How are the instalments of funding paid?

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

Subsequent instalments will be transferred according to **project progress** after a review of the **interim reports** (including **interim accounts**) and after any further requirements have been satisfied, based on the contractual instalment payment plan. If the work carried out and the costs incurred comply with the project plan and if any additional requirements and conditions are met, the subsequent instalment will be paid within the following weeks.

If the interim report indicates a **delay in project progress** or if the costs have not been incurred as planned, the payment of the relevant instalment may be postponed or the instalment reduced accordingly.

The payment of an instalment may also be postponed if, and as long as, circumstances prevail that are deemed to prevent the due performance of the contract.

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 accounts will be reviewed. The **costs are only approved upon final approval** of the project following the audit by the FFG.

FFG instalment scheme			
Project duration in months	0 - 18	19 - 30	31 - 36
Number of reports (interim reports and final report)	2	2	3
1st instalment (% of contractual funding)	50 %	50 %	30 %
2nd instalment (up to % of contractual funding)	30 %	40 %	30 %
3rd instalment (up to % of contractual funding)			30 %
Final instalment (up to % of contractual funding)	20 %	10 %	10 %

8.7 What reports and accounts are required?

An **interim report** and **interim accounts** must be submitted **via eCall** within one month of the reporting deadlines specified in the funding contract.

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

All reports and accounts must include all the activities and associated costs of **all consortium partners** for which support is paid by the FFG. Reports, time records etc. must be provided in **German or English**.

The **templates** provided 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“ (https://www.ffg.at/sites/default/files/dok/kostenleitfaden_v_2_0_s.pdf).

8.8 How should changes to the project be communicated?

The FFG must be notified of any substantial changes to the project as soon as 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 **written approval by the FFG** as soon as they become known.

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

A reallocation of costs can only be requested in the course of the interim and/or final report. Reasons for the request must be stated in the chapter "Details on costs & financing".

8.8.1 Changes in the consortium

The FFG must be informed of any changes involving consortium partners (e.g. changes in ownership, bankruptcy proceedings) immediately after they become known. In the event of changes in the **consortium structure** the FFG will examine whether the overall project still meets the eligibility criteria.

8.8.2 Can the funding period be extended?

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

An **application for extension of the funding period** must be submitted within the approved funding period via eCall.

Conversely, the duration of the **project may also be reduced** upon application of the funding recipient (e.g. earlier conclusion of the project, foreseeable significant cost overrun).

8.9 What happens if a project cannot be completed successfully?

The FFG must be informed immediately if

- unsolvable technical problems arise during the project period,
- the project cannot be completed successfully due to other circumstances.

If the project is aborted, the funding recipient must prepare a final report including final accounts. If the amount of funding paid by the FFG exceeds the eligible costs, the FFG is entitled to reclaim funding.

8.10 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

After the final report and the final accounts have been examined, the **FFG Project Controlling & Audit Division** will undertake an audit to establish whether the funding has been used for the intended purpose. The audit serves to establish the final amount of eligible costs and to examine whether the company partners have provided the agreed match funding for the scientific project partners.

The **result** of the audit **will be communicated to the consortium leader in writing**. If the result is positive, the FFG will confirm that the support has been used for the intended purpose; in the event of a **negative** result, procedures may be initiated to secure **repayment** of funding.

If the result is **positive** and if the level of cost initially envisioned has been reached, the final instalment specified in the funding contract will be transferred. If **the project is underspent** the level of support will be **reduced accordingly**. The level of support paid may be reduced for scientific reasons, as well as on formal and legal grounds.

The FFG will immediately reclaim any amounts the funding recipient has received without being entitled thereto, charging interest at a rate of 2% per annum above the applicable base rate of interest published by the Austrian National Bank from the date of disbursement of the funding.

The funding recipients must at any time allow the FFG auditors to inspect their documents and receipts, provide them with all necessary information concerning the funded project and grant them access to their laboratories, warehouses, offices, etc.

8.11 Are there cases where funding must be repaid?

Reasons for repayment include:

- provision of incomplete or incorrect information to the FFG
- failure on the part of company partners to provide the agreed match funding
- neglect of reporting obligations
- unapproved substantial changes in the project schedule
- bankruptcy of the funding recipient

For further details see the General Funding Conditions or the applicable FFG Guidelines.

9 LEGAL BASIS

At the national level, the programme is based on the Guidelines of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency for the Funding of Research, Technology, Development and Innovation (FFG-Richtlinie OFFENSIV, <https://www.ffg.at/recht-finanzen/rechtsgrundlagen>).

At the European level, the programme is based on the COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (General Block Exemption Regulation) and the

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION - Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01) of 27 June 2014 for specific parts of RTI funding, such as eligible costs or for distinguishing between economic and non-economic activities of research institutions.

10 FURTHER FUNDING OPTIONS

The FFG offers a wide range of funding options and support for participation in international programmes.

The following overview lists relevant funding options related to the present call. Please **contact the FFG staff members listed below for further information.**

Relevant FFG funding options	Contact	Link
Intelligent Production Topic-specific funding of research and development projects for companies, research institutions etc.	Mag. Alexandra Kuhn T +43 (0)5 7755 – 5082, E alexandra.kuhn@ffg.at DI (FH) Reinhard Pacejka MSc T +43 (0)5 7755 – 5084 E reinhard.pacejka@ffg.at	www.ffg.at/intelligente-produktion
General Programme Funding of open topic development projects for companies, applications can be submitted at any time	Karin Ruzak T +43 (0)5 7755 – 1507, E karin.ruzak@ffg.at	www.ffg.at/basisprogramm
Industrial Dissertations	Mag. Doris Aufner Programme Management T +43 (0)5 7755-2308 E doris.aufner@ffg.at	www.ffg.at/dissertationen/ausschreibung2015
Finding Talent: Researchers – career grants	Mag. Christine Kreuter T +43 (0)5 7755 – 2709, E christine.kreuter@ffg.at	www.ffg.at/karriere-grants/ausschreibung

International funding options	Contact	Link
EUREKA Programme independent mechanism for the funding of national project parts	Dr. Olaf Hartmann T ++43 (0)5 7755 – 4902, E olaf.hartmann@ffg.at	www.eurekanetwork.org/in-your-country

11 ANNEX I: What is “Industrial Research”

The research category “**Industrial Research**” is characterised by:

- especially high degree of innovation
- increased development risk
- following on from the research category “Basic Research”
- lack of market focus

Industrial Research

“Industrial Research” denotes **planned research or critical investigation to acquire new knowledge and abilities** with the goal of developing new products, procedures or services or to effect significant improvements to existing products, procedures or services. It includes the creation of parts of complex systems necessary for industrial research and in particular for the validation of the technological basis, with the exception of prototypes, which fall under the research category “Experimental Development”.

The following questions may be **helpful in allocating** a project to the category “Industrial Research”:

- Is the level of innovation particularly high?
- Will the new knowledge and abilities serve to develop new products, procedures or services?
- Will the new knowledge and abilities contribute to effecting significant improvements to existing products, procedures or services?
- Does the project exclude the production of a prototype?
- Does the project exclude direct commercial exploitation of the results?
- Is there (presently) no commercial market for the envisaged results?
- Will research institutions account for a large proportion of the costs?

12 ANNEX II: Calculation Examples

If for example the total project costs amount to € 100,000, with € 90,000 being incurred by the scientific partner and € 10,000 by the commercialisation partner, the FFG funding will be € 90,000.

This funding amount will cover 100% of the scientific partner’s costs. The company partner will bear its own costs of € 10,000 and will receive no funding.

13 ANNEX II: 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 relevant information about the state-of-the-art, research topics and methods in the chapter “Quality of the project” in the Project Description.

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.