



Selected Funding Tools for the Life Sciences Industry

Funding is made available to the life sciences sector from a diverse range of providers (e.g. the European Commission, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy), each with very different objectives. Applicants can apply for funding for international collaborations, while calls for proposals also focus on specialist funding for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), scientific institutions/universities, and spin-offs from universities.

This overview of selected funding instruments can help to provide initial support, as applicants seek to identify the funding organizations – and their respective funding philosophies – that are a good match for their research projects. An overview table is also shown, highlighting the most relevant funding program deadlines (as of April 2021) and providing links to additional information.

A number of programs have a completely new format and design, for example Horizon Europe – the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation – which was completely relaunched this year and will run from 2021 to 2027. The first calls for proposals and funding programs have already been announced.

The EU is also providing funding across borders and at regional level. Funding provided by the EU therefore also has an impact on programs such as Interreg (EU instrument supporting cooperation across borders) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Detailed arrangements for these funding programs are still being developed.

With this revised version of the funding brochure, we would particularly like to draw your attention to the revised Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM) guidelines for 2020 and the Research Allowance Act. For the first time in Germany, the research allowance provides you with a legal entitlement to the tax-incentivized funding of your research and development expenses.

The overview of funding programs is by no means exhaustive, nor should it be seen as a replacement for a one-on-one meeting at an advisory service body with qualified and experienced experts. It does, however, provide potential applicants with a very good overview of available funding programs, their deadlines, and the most relevant contact points so that they can obtain further information.

This text was developed as part of a collaborative effort between ZENIT GmbH/NRW. Europa (<https://www.zenit.de/english/>) and BIO.NRW – The Home of Biotech, the network organization for biotechnology in the state of NRW (<https://bio.nrw.de/en/bio-nrw-2/>). BIO.NRW is supported by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalization, and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (MWIDE).

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1. Financing of Life Science innovations

Innovative projects are generally faced with the problem that technical and economic risks can only be accounted for to a limited extent, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To help companies ensure that innovative projects can be implemented despite this issue, public institutions offer a large number of funding and financing programs with varying sociopolitical objectives. This includes support for the life sciences sector, which has rather specialist project requirements. Such funding instruments are usually aimed at promoting the technical development of new products in a pre-competitive field. Only a few programs are suitable for funding certifications, good manufacturing practice (GMP), or clinical studies. In addition, companies often do not receive 100 % of their requested financing, meaning that they always carry a residual financial risk. Companies must therefore convincingly outline the total financing of the project as well as its future marketing prospects when applying for funding. Funded projects should therefore always be embedded within the company's overall strategy. This particularly applies to projects with a long time frame from development to market launch, such as products requiring clinical studies for market approval.

Each program is predominantly focused on finding solutions to specific research policy questions in the field of life sciences that are important to the respective investors, for example the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) or the European Commission. These political objectives are reflected in the precise requirements regarding the structure and content of project applications, which are almost exclusively subject to a public call for proposals that runs for a limited time only. There is also a range of programs that are not limited to particular technologies or research approaches, ensuring that companies and research institutions from all life science areas are able to apply (e.g. Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM), research for the benefit of SMEs, etc.).

Basic funding categories

Funding programs share some terms and conditions, so that they can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Grant programs
2. Development loan programs
3. General support programs
4. Equity or venture capital
5. Tax-incentivized innovation funding

Grant programs

Grant programs offer non-refundable funding for clearly defined funding objectives. Depending on the amount of funding provided, companies are typically required to make a financial contribution. With a few exceptions, innovation programs particularly aim to support the translation of commercial research and development projects into new products and processes that can be positioned on the market.

Development loan programs

Federal and/or EU-supported development loan programs enable companies to acquire funding for specific purposes (e.g. growth, innovation, start-ups, environmental investments, etc.). These programs are generally subject to a principal bank procedure, meaning that each company's respective bank evaluates the application and forwards it to a relevant loan institution (e.g. the NRW.BANK or the KfW development bank). These loans typically include favorable repayment terms and interest rates, and can be further supported by a public guarantee. Relevant programs for innovation projects include:

- NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen (innovative enterprises) and NRW.BANK. Digitalisierung und Innovation (digitization and innovation)
funding organization: NRW.BANK www.nrwbank.com/en
- ERP Digitalisation and Innovation Loan
funding organization: KfW <https://www.kfw.de/kfw.de-2.html>
- Environment Innovation Programme of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)
funding organization: KfW <https://www.kfw.de/kfw.de-2.html>
- Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank
funding organization: <https://www.rentenbank.de/en>
for projects in the field of agriculture

General support programs

A variety of programs support SMEs, for example in the form of advisory programs (e.g. go-inno/go-digital) or technology transfer instruments that are often available to companies free of charge. Structures are also put in place to promote communication and exchange or to support export activities.

SME status as defined by the EU

Some programs require companies to meet the European Commission's definition of an SME. The criteria for this definition are as follows:

Company category	Staff headcount (annual work unit)	Annual turnover		Balance sheet total
medium-sized enterprise	< 250	≤ 50 m EUR	or	≤ 43 m EUR
small enterprise	< 50	≤ 10 m EUR		≤ 10 m EUR
micro-enterprise	< 10	≤ 2 m EUR		≤ 2 m EUR

Furthermore, the legal form and partnership relationship of the company should be carefully examined. In case of doubt, an external evaluation should be conducted before submitting an application to verify that all criteria have been met. More information is available here:

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en

Equity or risk capital

Relatively high levels of funding are often required in the life sciences sector due to the cost of research and development as well as the financing of costly certifications, clinical studies, and market launch activities. This is one of the reasons why many smaller companies and start-ups seek out investors, business angels, or other capital providers. A number of mechanisms have been established to facilitate such contact at state (NRW), national, and EU level, for example through the provision of equity or the establishment of various support structures (e.g. BIO.NRW Business Angel Network and the win NRW.BANK Business Angels Initiative).

Tax-incentivized innovation funding

The Research Allowance Act (FZuIG), which outlines the introduction of a tax allowance to help promote research and development, entered into force on 1 January 2020. This tax-incentivized funding of research and development thus represents an additional instrument of innovation funding in Germany.

2. Working with funding programs

The overview presented here should provide small and medium-sized enterprises as well as research institutions with an initial insight into potential options to support their innovation projects. Numerous funding products are available, each based on the separate objectives of the funding organizations. These objectives include:

- to support closer collaboration within the European Union
- to strengthen industry competitiveness through new innovations
- to tap into future growth markets
- to pursue labour market policy objectives
- to mitigate the risks of new product developments in SMEs
- to achieve environmental objectives and energy policy goals
- to improve the transfer between science and economy
- to promote business startups

The funding organizations, the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the EU each pursue different economic and sociopolitical goals, with project applications being evaluated on this basis. Applicants should therefore carefully assess the various funding objectives to ensure their applications are tailored accordingly.

Due to changing framework criteria (sociopolitical goals, budget, etc.), funding programs are only available for a limited period. This overview therefore outlines the underlying program requirements without making reference to any specific calls for proposals. Many calls that are focused on very specific topics are not outlined in detail here. This overview serves to provide inspiration and act as a starting point for individual research activities and discussions with independent advisory services.

Evaluation of project ideas

Many companies are not familiar with funding programs. We recommend that they carefully examine the pros and cons of making an application. Applications should be focused on the company's market strategy. In general, companies are not legally entitled to funding. This means that such funding resources should not be accounted for in a business plan, for example. Furthermore, applying for funding and the subsequent accounting and reporting this involves can be very time-consuming for companies. In particular, smaller companies often only have limited additional capacities for research and development. Careful consideration must therefore be given to whether an application is worthwhile.

NRW.Europa is available to provide advice and offer a neutral first assessment of project ideas at any time. They offer an initial assessment free of charge either during a meeting or through a submitted project outline. Additional free services include:

- Review of applications before submission
- International technology transfer
- Support in the establishment of (international) consortia

NRW.Europa Hotline

ZENIT GmbH

Phone: +49-0208 30004-0

NRW.Europa Hotline

NRW.BANK – EU Funding/Foreign Trade and Investment Promotion Department

Phone: +49-211 91741-4000

www.nrweuropa.de

Note:

A selection of programs is presented in the following section, with this overview merely serving to provide initial information. In addition, descriptions have been deliberately generalized, since specific program requirements are subject to change. Certain research policy calls for proposals, as issued by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for example, dedicated to specialist topics (e.g. systems biology, industrial biotechnology, etc.) are not explicitly mentioned. The information given here is based on official references of the project management organizations and funding bodies and their respective information pages as of 10 November 2020. In some cases, entire text passages have been lifted from the respective sources. To improve readability, these passages are not identified as such in the text.

3. Funding programs and deadlines

Program	Objective / deadline	Website
EU funding		
HORIZON EUROPE	<p>3 pillars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent Science – Innovative Europe – Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness <p>Ongoing calls for 2021–2027 available on the Funding and Tenders portal.</p>	<p>https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home</p> <p>https://www.eubuoer.de/nks.htm</p> <p>www.nksgesundheit.de/index.php</p> <p>www.nks-bio-umw.de/home</p>
EIC European Innovation Council	<p>Part of the Innovative Europe pillar within Horizon Europe – more targeted support of innovations at EU level; funding instruments open to all fields and also supports interdisciplinary ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – EIC Pathfinder – EIC Transition – EIC Accelerator – EIC Prizes 	<p>https://www.eubuoer.de/eic.htm</p> <p>www.nks-eic-accelerator.de</p>
Partnerships Section Biotechnology	<p>Topic-related, joint calls of the research management institutions of EU member states for coordinated research funding</p>	<p>www.era-learn.eu</p>
IHI Innovative Health Initiative	<p>PPP (successor to IMI), stay informed of its current status</p>	<p>www.euhealthppp.org</p>
EUREKA	<p>EUREKA network, includes Eurostars program for international calls; open to all fields for SMEs; no information currently available about the follow-on program, but set to be continued</p>	<p>www.eurostars.dlr.de</p>

Program	Objective / deadline	Website
EIT European Institute of Innovation and Technology	Part of the Innovative Europe pillar within Horizon Europe. As an umbrella organization, the EIT promotes Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). – EIT Health	https://eit.europa.eu/ https://eithealth.eu/
Federal Government funding		
BMBF		
KMU-innovativ	Rolling submissions; evaluation rounds on 15 April and 15 October each year	https://www.hightech-strategie.de/en/index.html www.kmu-innovativ.de
GO-BIO initial	The aim is to advance research outcomes of early research ideas in life sciences, which have a clear potential for innovation, to a level where they become eligible for other more established programs, such as VIP+, EXIST Transfer of Research, KMU-innovativ, and GO-Bio; project outlines can be submitted once a year (deadline 15 February)	https://www.go-bio.de/gobio/en/go-bio/go-bio-initial/go-bio-initial.html
BMWi		
ZIM Central Innovation Programme for SMEs	No topic restrictions Rolling submissions	https://www.zim.de/ZIM/Navigation/DE/Meta/Englisch/englisch.html
EXIST	No topic restrictions Start-ups from science EXIST Business Start-up Grant EXIST Transfer of Research	https://www.exist.de/EN/Home
WIPANO Knowledge and technology transfer via patents and standards	Patent funding for universities, SMEs, and inventors	www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de

Program	Objective / deadline	Website
go-inno/go-digital	No topic restrictions; innovation vouchers for SMEs; advice from authorized consulting firms	www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de
Research Allowance Act (FZuIG)		
Research Allowance Act	Tax-incentivized funding of innovations	https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Standardartikel/Themen/Steuern/Steuerliche_Themengebiete/Forschungszulage/2020-04-08-forschungszulage-introartikel.html
Funding through the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW)		
NRW lead market competitions	Not currently running	
Mittelstand Innovativ und Digital	No technology restrictions; SME funding for external consulting, research, and development services; rolling submissions	https://www.mittelstand-innovativ-digital.nrw
NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen (example for loan options)	No technology restrictions; SME funding; rolling submissions before start of programs	https://www.nrwbank.com/en

4. EU funding programs

4.1 Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the new EU research and innovation framework program, planned for the period 2021–2027. It will be the leading EU initiative to fund research and innovation, from conception to commercialization, and will complement both national and regional financing.

Horizon Europe is structured into three pillars:

- Excellent Science
- Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness
- Innovative Europe

The multiannual financial framework (MFF) has outlined a budget of € 90.1 billion for the program. An additional € 5.4 billion will be provided from the EU recovery instrument NextGenerationEU. The new research framework program now has a total budget of € 95.5 billion. Duration: 1 Jan 2021 – 31 Dec 2027

Key changes compared to Horizon 2020:

EIC:

The European Innovation Council is being established to help the EU play a leading role in pioneering, market-creating innovations.

Six thematic clusters:

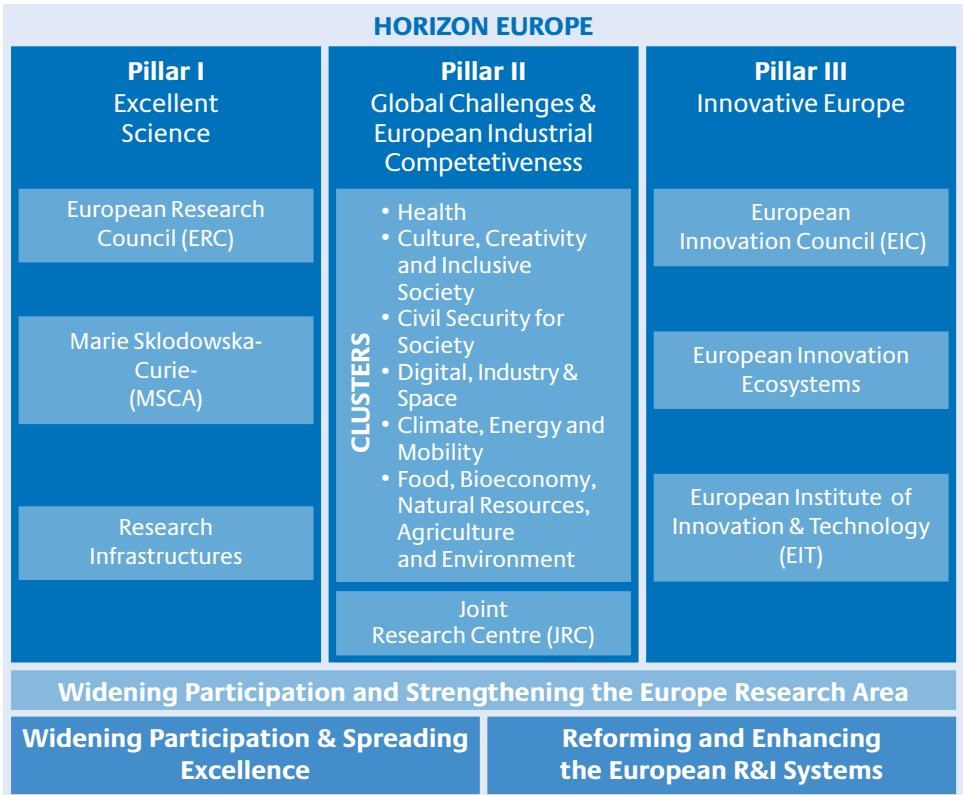
The previous two pillars “Industrial Leadership” and “Societal Challenges” in Horizon 2020 have been split into six thematic clusters.

Definition of missions:

On the basis of five mission areas, research and innovation (R&I) missions with high visibility are defined together with citizens, stakeholders, the European Parliament, and member states.

European partnerships:

The concept of European Partnerships is being simplified, with the number of partnerships being reduced. (Source: FFG 2020)



Quelle: BMBF 2020

Life sciences funding in Horizon Europe

One structural difference between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe is that the topic-specific program sections “Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies” (LEIT) and “Societal Challenges” have been merged into the pillar “Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness”. The previous thematic fields will in future form 6 “clusters” in Horizon Europe. There is a particular focus on cluster 1 “Health” and cluster 6 “Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment”, with the topic of health also playing a role in other clusters.

Cluster 1 “Health”

In annual calls with specified topics, funding is allocated for the networking of basic medical research with clinical, epidemiological, environmental, and socioeconomic research. Digital solutions and healthcare systems are important topics within the research and innovation projects.

Focus areas:

1. Health at all stages of life
2. Ecological and social health factors
3. Non-communicable and rare diseases
4. Infectious diseases
5. Instruments, technologies, and digital solutions for health and care
6. Healthcare systems

Oncological research topics do not form a separate focus of research, but are largely integrated within the mission area “Cancer” (see below).

Mission area: Cancer

A new approach within Horizon Europe involves research and innovation missions that seek to develop solutions to some of the world’s biggest challenges within a set period of time. Within the field of health, the mission area “Cancer” is currently being developed. Its proposed mission is entitled “Conquering cancer: Mission possible”. By 2030, the mission area “Cancer” aims to save, prolong, or improve the quality of life of more than 3 million cancer sufferers. Through a better understanding of cancer as well as optimized prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, the quality of life of all people exposed to cancer will be improved and equal access to cancer treatment ensured across Europe. (Source: ffg.at)

Cluster 6 “Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment”

The Horizon Europe strategic plan of cluster 6 “Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment” anticipates the following impact:

- Carbon neutrality and adaptation to climate change
- Halting and reversing the decline of biodiversity and ecosystems
- Resource-efficient circular economy and sustainable bioeconomy; tackling environmental pollution; bioeconomy
- Ensuring food and nutrition security for all through sustainable food systems (from farm to fork)

- Balanced development of rural, coastal, and urban areas
- Innovative governance models that provide sustainability and enable environmental observation

Calls are mainly issued in the following areas:

1. Environmental observation
2. Biodiversity and natural resources
3. Agriculture, forestry, and rural areas
4. Seas, oceans, and inland waters
5. Food systems
6. Bio-based innovation systems in the EU's bioeconomy
7. Circular systems

A further change is that there is no longer a “Future and Emerging Technologies (FET)” program section. Instead, the program section FET Open has been integrated into the European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator. Funding opportunities for life sciences projects can also be found in subject-specific program sections. (Source: NKS Lebenswissenschaften 2020)

Procedure/deadlines:

Horizon Europe is limited to the period from 2021 – 2027. Applicants can participate by submitting formal applications for periodical, mostly annual, calls for proposals. More details are provided in the respective calls. Various instruments are available that have an impact on funding.

Information can be found and applications submitted electronically through an online portal at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon>

You can find a helpful overview (incl. of Horizon Europe) on the website of the National Contact Point for Life Sciences (NKS Lebenswissenschaften).

Public information and national advisory services:

National Contact Point Health (NCP)

www.nksgesundheit.de/index.php

Health National Contact Point (NCP) Bioeconomy and Environment

www.nks-bio-umw.de/home

Initial advice (non-subject-specific) from NRW.Europa

Phone: +49-208 30004-2020

E-Mail: info@nrweuropa.de

www.nrweuropa.de/meta/gb-flag.html

Sidenote:

ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES

International cooperation is a cross-cutting issue that plays a role in all areas of Horizon 2020. Partners from third countries are able to participate in EU projects as part of a consortium with researchers from the 27 member states of the EU and its associated countries. Associated countries are considered equal to EU member states when submitting an application. [The following countries are currently associated with Horizon 2020](#): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine. (Source: www.horizont2020.de, 12.04.2021)

BREXIT

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 and is therefore no longer an EU member state. After lengthy negotiations, an exit agreement was reached between the EU and the UK. The world of research is also affected by Brexit. The following applies to the future research framework program Horizon Europe:

The EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement will enable British organizations to participate in the future Horizon Europe research framework program (the only exception being funding and investment through the specially created EIC Fund, with the UK able to participate in all other EIC elements). Subsequent to the passage of the regulation establishing the Horizon Europe program, the UK's associated status will be backdated with effect from 1 January 2021. The UK's participation in the first calls of Horizon Europe should still be possible despite its associated status having not yet taken effect. Further information can be found here:

More Information:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_uk-participation-in-horizon-europe.pdf

4.2 European Innovation Council (EIC)

The European Innovation Council (EIC) identifies disruptive innovations that have the potential to become global market leaders. All stages of development are supported from basic research, validation, demonstration, and product optimization to the establishment and development of start-ups and SMEs. There are calls that are open to all fields as well as subject-specific calls.

Three main instruments cover the entire spectrum of development from idea to scale-up:

Pathfinder projects with technology readiness levels from 1 to 4 (TRL 1 - 4) are designed for visionary, radically new technologies. They stem from collaborative research work on high-risk projects and long-term visions. Funding covers all stages – from idea to proof of concept and validation. Funding: grants of up to € 3 million and up to 100 % of costs. Participants: consortia (e.g. research organizations, universities, SMEs, industry) in which three different nations are involved.

Transition Activities (TRL 4 - 6) help to close the gap between the EIC Pathfinder and Accelerator programs. This includes activities to formulate a business plan or set up spin-off companies. Funding: Grants of up to € 2.5 million and up to 100 % of costs. Participants: individual applicants (SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, research establishments, universities) or small consortia (max. 5 partners). Applications need to build on the results of suitable Pathfinder or ERC Proof of Concept projects.

Accelerator projects (TRL 6 - 9) focus on high-risk innovations with the potential to disrupt the market. They are proposed by a single start-up or SME to help transform a prototype into a marketable end product so as to scale-up their business. Funding: Mixture of non-repayable funding of up to € 2.5 million (funding rate: 70 % of costs) and equity capital of up to € 15 million. Participants: individual SMEs (incl. spin-offs and start-ups) and – in exceptional cases – small mid-caps (less than 500 employees).

Calls for proposals can be found here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

Public information and national advisory services:

National Contact Point EIC Pathfinder, DLR Projektträger, EU-Office of BMBF

Phone: 0228 38211650

www.eubuero.de/eic-pathfinder.htm

National Contact Point EIC Transition, DLR Projektträger, EU-Office of BMBF

Phone: 0228 38211650

www.eubuero.de/eic-transition.htm

National Contact Point EIC Accelerator, DLR Projektträger

Phone: 0228 38211368

E-Mail: nks-accelerator@dlr.de

<https://www.nks-eic-accelerator.de/eic-accelerator.php>

4.3 Partnerships

European Partnerships are initiatives in which the European Commission and private and/or public partners make a joint commitment to supporting the development and implementation of research and innovation programs. They play a major role in the EU achieving its political priorities, for example the European Green Deal, European Digital Strategy, and pandemic prevention measures.

Horizon Europe's strategic approach is to improve cohesion among the partnerships and in conjunction with the framework program's other instruments. Furthermore, the aim is for partnerships to be more open and transparent in terms of participants, activities, and results.

European R&I projects should also help to further develop the European Research Area (ERA), overcome the fragmentation of the R&I landscape, avoid any overlaps between national and regional research activities, and promote competitiveness and innovation.

The following partnerships are planned in the field of life sciences:

- European Partnership for Health Innovation – Innovative Health Initiative (IHI): launch 2021 (see also 4.4)
- EU–Africa Global Health Partnership (GHP), launch 2021
- European Partnership for Chemicals Risk Assessment, launch 2021 / 22
- European Partnership – ERA for Health, launch 2021 / 22
- European Partnership on Health and Care Systems Transformation, launch 2022 / 23
- European Partnership for Personalised Medicine, launch 2023
- European Partnership on Rare Diseases, launch 2024
- European Partnership for One Health / AMR (Antimicrobial Resistance), launch 2023 / 24
- European Partnership for a Circular bio-based Europe, launch 2021 / 22
- European Partnership for Rescuing Biodiversity to Safeguard Life on Earth, launch 2021 / 22
- European Partnership for a climate neutral, sustainable and productive Blue Economy, launch 2021 / 22
- European Partnership accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures, launch 2023
- European Partnership for Animal health (PAH), launch 2023 / 24
- European Partnership: Agriculture of data, launch 2023 / 24
- European Partnership for Safe and Sustainable Food Systems, launch 2023 / 24

The launch dates are subject to change. You can otherwise find a complete overview at: www.era-learn.eu. Here, you will be able to find the right programs (also in other EU programs) for you. In all cases, we recommend contacting the respective funding organizations.

4.4 IHI – Innovative Health Initiative

The Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) builds on the work of the Innovative Medicine Initiative (IMI). The aim of the IHI is to help create an EU-wide ecosystem for health research so that scientific findings can be more readily transformed into tangible innovations. These innovations should be safe, effective, human-oriented, and cost-efficient and also cover the aspects of prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and health management.

Just as with IMI, the IHI will bring together various interest groups (universities, companies of all sizes, and other healthcare stakeholders) in collaborative projects focused on areas of disease that place a major strain on patients and/or society. Within IHI, however, there is a much greater focus on cross-sector projects involving the biopharmaceutical, biotechnological, and medical technology sectors, including companies active in the digital sphere.

As with IMI, the EU will be the “public” partner in the partnership, represented by the European Commission. IHI industrial partners will be COCIR, EFPIA, EuropaBio, MedTech Europe, and Vaccines Europe. Furthermore, organizations looking to support certain research areas without becoming a full member of the IHI can apply to become a “contributing partner” (similar to an IMI Associated Partner).

The total budget proposed for IHI is € 2.4 billion.

Further information on project participation is not yet available. Find out more at www.imi.europa.eu.

Information and advice:

National Contact Point Health

www.nksgesundheit.de/de/Innovative-Health-Initiative-IHI-2242.html

4.5 Eurostars/EUREKA

Objective:

Eurostars-2 is a joint funding program of the EUREKA network and the European Commission. It aims to motivate small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to collaborate within European research and development projects. Eurostars works according to the same principle as the overarching EUREKA initiative: its projects are pre-competitive, open to all fields and technologies, and designed for civilian purposes. They also target the development of innovative products, processes, and services. Following a bottom-up strategy, participants are free to choose their project topic. No detailed information has yet been published about the continuation and conditions of Eurostars-3 within the new framework program.

Target group:

Eurostars is particularly aimed at research-driven SMEs.

Various national conditions relating to funding must also be taken into account. They can be found here: www.eurostars-eureka.eu.

Public information and national advisory services:

Project Management Organisation DLR

European and international Collaboration Funding innovative SMEs | Eurostars

Phone: 0228 38211380

www.eurostars.dlr.de

4.6 EIT

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) brings together the world's leading minds in the fields of education, research, and innovation. As an umbrella organization, the EIT promotes Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). Since 2010, eight large KICs have been established in the fields of energy, climate, information technologies, raw materials, health, food, added value manufacturing, and urban mobility. Additional KICs are in the pipeline. Each KIC has a different focus and structure. In general, however, they consist of three pillars in the areas of innovation, start-ups, and academia.

Further information:

<https://eit.europa.eu/>

Side note:

EIT Health

In December 2014, EIT Health was designated as an EIT Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) focusing on innovations for healthy living and active ageing by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

With a budget of over € 2 billion in project funding over ten years, EIT Health is one of the largest health care initiatives worldwide. Its aim is to sustainably improve health care and thus to create the future conditions for the healthier living and well-being of people across Europe. EIT Health benefits from the know-how of more than 130 leading organizations from key health care sectors such as pharmaceutical and medical engineering organizations, cost-bearing agencies, scientific research institutions, and universities.

Please visit www.eithealth.eu for detailed information on partners, objectives, structure, and projects, etc.

Further information:

www.eithealth.eu

Exkurs

Opening up New Markets Through EIT Health's Bridgehead Program

EIT Health's Bridgehead program helps European start-ups in the fields of biotechnology, medical technology, and digital health to access new markets in Europe (Bridgehead Europe) and beyond (Bridgehead Global). Start-ups can apply for the program each spring and summer. Carefully chosen "Catalysers" that support the start-ups in entering new markets are at the centre of the program. These Catalysers include clusters, networks, or incubators that are experts on the respective target country and are able to assist the start-ups in entering the market through their local knowledge and contacts. The start-ups receive funding of up to € 40,000 (Global) or € 30,000 (Europe) to finance the support provided by the Catalysers.

Further information is available:

<https://eithealth.eu/bridgehead/>

Side note:

EIT Health Investors Network

The goal of the EIT Health Investor Network is to interactively involve EIT Health consortium partners and private investors (business angels) in founding and developing start-ups and SMEs through funding and co-investment. The Business Angels Network (see also section 8, page 49), which was originally initiated by BIO.NRW and has since become a well-established network of experienced and successful institutional and private investors as well as federal development banks, served as a model for the consortium. Under the umbrella of EIT Health, the group of private investors co-funding and developing start-ups has increased accordingly.

startups4.eu

As a central tool of the EIT Health Investor Network, we developed and introduced the www.startups4.eu online platform. It provides start-ups and SMEs from the life sciences sector with direct access to private investors and venture capitalists. At the same time, it offers investors a convenient tool to search for young and innovative companies working in the life sciences that are seeking funding.

If you are the representative of a European start-up or SME in the life sciences, you can upload a three-minute video to the platform presenting your company, product, business idea, and team. To do so, you first need to complete a brief registration process.

If you are a private investor, business angel, or representative of a venture capital or corporate venture fund, startups4.eu offers you the opportunity to browse and select the registered young companies according to the characteristics of your portfolio.

Startups4.eu is only the first step of the matchmaking procedure, inviting investors to examine information provided by entrepreneurs and enterprises (including a possible video). As a second step, BIO Clustermanagement NRW GmbH invites both the investors and the selected companies to the BIO.NRW Business Angels Circle in Düsseldorf, a face-to-face, confidential meeting.

The international BIO.NRW Business Angel Congress also takes place every year in Düsseldorf.

www.startups4.eu

4.7 Innovative public procurement

Within the scope of Horizon Europe, the European Commission has a dedicated budget to fund projects focused on the public procurement of innovative solutions. This specialized instrument is relevant to the life sciences sector, for example for hospitals. One particular example is the Thalea project (www.thalea-pcp.eu/), which Aachen University Hospital is involved in. The project is to be continued as part of the Horizon Europe program.

Contact:

KO-INNO EU Contact Point for Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions
ZENIT GmbH

E-Mail: koinno@zenit.de
<https://www.koinno-bmwi.de/en/eu-funding>

5. National funding programs

5.1 High-tech Strategy 2025

The German Federal Government has established the High-Tech Strategy 2025. The life sciences sector forms part of this new strategy to support research and innovation, which defines the Federal Government's strategic objectives for funding programs and initiatives.

Further information:

<https://www.hightech-strategie.de/en>

<https://biooekonomie.de/nachrichten/biooekonomie-der-hightech-strategie-2025>

Funding:

The High-Tech Strategy 2025 indirectly funds companies through federal research and innovation policies. Various measures are part of this strategy. In terms of commercialization, the biotechnology funding initiative GO-Bio (<https://www.go-bio.de/en/index.html>) and the SME funding initiative KMU-innovativ are worth highlighting. Specific calls for proposals are published in various programs by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The topics of these specialist calls are oriented towards the goals of the framework program. These include industrial biotechnology, CO₂ utilization, drug development, and digitization in health care, etc.

Procedure:

Funding program procedures are published in the respective calls for proposals. A notifications service for calls is available.

Deadlines:

Deadlines are published in the respective funding programs or calls for proposals.

Project management organizations:

Various project management organizations are responsible for handling respective calls for proposals. They include:

Project Management Organisation Jülich

<https://www.ptj.de/en/project-funding/health-research>

Project Management Organisation DLR

<https://www.forschung-bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/>

Project Management Organisation VDI / VDE <https://vdivde-it.de/de/themen>

www.bio.nrw.de

BIO.NRW – *Your point of contact for Founders, Startups, SMEs and Investors in Life Sciences.*



BIO.NRW platform www.startups4.eu*



BIO.NRW Business Angel Circle*



BIO.NRW BREAKFAST CLUB

**Knowledge – Exchange – Networking
for Founders and Start-ups**



11th BIO.NRW Business Angel Congress*

SAVE THE DATE
March, 8th 2022, Hyatt Regency
Speditionstr. 19, Media Harbour, Düsseldorf

More information: www.bio.nrw.de/events-de

* In cooperation with the **BIO Clustermanagement NRW GmbH**
phone: +49 211 942 150 49 • email: info@bioclustermanagement.de

BIO.NRW The Home of Biotech • Merowingerplatz 1 • 40225 Düsseldorf
phone: +49 211 38 54 69-9200 • email: bio.nrw@bio.nrw.de

ExcellenceNRW
Cluster North Rhine-Westphalia



5.2 BMBF funding programs

5.2.1 KMU-innovativ

KMU-innovativ is a program that funds the cutting-edge research of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as part of the High-Tech Strategy 2025. Through KMU-innovativ, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) aims to simplify the application and approval of funding for SMEs. KMU-innovativ is active in fields of technology that are particularly important for Germany's future. These include:

- **Bioeconomy**
- Electronics and autonomous driving
- Research for civil security
- **Medical engineering**
- Information and communications technologies
- Materials research
- **Human-technology interaction**
- Photonics and quantum technologies
- Production technology
- **Resource efficiency and climate protection**

Objective:

KMU-innovativ aims to minimize risks for innovative R&D projects, to improve cooperation between SMEs and large companies, as well as research institutions, and to accelerate technology transfer.

Target group:

All SMEs that meet the EU criteria are eligible to apply for funding.

Funding:

All high-risk, industrial research and pre-market development projects that are application-oriented and clearly associated with biotechnology are eligible for funding. In particular, this includes:

- Individual and collaborative projects of smaller companies and SMEs (up to 1,000 employees and annual turnover of € 100 million) with a funding quota of up to 50 % depending on the project's proximity to application. In accordance with the European Commission's definition, different bonus arrangements are possible for small and medium-sized enterprises.

- Collaborative research projects between SMEs and universities or research institutions.
- Collaborative research projects involving large enterprises to support the implementation of R&D results on the market. Large enterprises can receive funding for up to 25 % of eligible costs.

Procedure:

Two-phase application procedure

Deadlines:

Project outlines can be submitted at any time. Deadlines for submission are usually on 15 April and 15 October each year.

Project management organizations:

For more information about the program and to access the application portal, please visit www.kmu-innovativ.de

Different funding organizations are responsible for various topics. An overview is available here: <https://www.foerderinfo.bund.de/en/index.html>

5.2.2 GO-Bio initial

Objective:

Through its GO-Bio initial funding program, the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) aims to identify and develop early research ideas in life sciences that have a clear potential for innovation.

Its purpose is to support project work in order to advance research outcomes to a level where they become eligible for other more established programs which support validation activities, new business founding, and cooperation between businesses, such as the VIP+, EXIST Transfer of Research, KMU-innovativ, or GO-Bio programs. The overall goal is thus to translate promising innovative ideas directly into practical solutions (source: BMBF 2020).

Funding:

The GO-Bio initial program supports research projects that identify and develop ideas for the commercial exploitation of life sciences research, preferably in relation to therapeutic agents, diagnostic reagents, platform technologies, and research tools from their conceptual design to assessment of feasibility and evaluation of possible options for commercial exploitation.

Target group:

Eligible managers or team members of funded research projects particularly include people from research seeking a pathway to application or industrial practice.

Procedure/Deadlines:

Selection rounds take place on 15 February each year.

Project Management Organisation:

Project Management Organisation VDI / VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH

Phone: 030 31 00 78-5515

E-Mail: GO-Bio-initial@vdivde-it.de

https://www.go-bio.de/gobio/en/home/home_node.html

5.2.3 VIP+ – Validation of the innovation potential of scientific research

Objective:

The aim of the VIP/VIP+ funding program is to bridge the gap between academic research and commercial exploitation/application in society in order to strengthen the German innovation system as a whole. The program is divided into three phases:

Discovery phase: In the discovery phase, promising research findings with a high potential for innovation are identified. The discovery phase forms part of the basic research stage when fundamental insights are made.

Validation phase: The validation phase follows on from the discovery phase. The aim is to review, demonstrate, and evaluate the innovation potential of research findings identified in the discovery phase, and to identify possible areas of application.

Commercialization/application phase: The commercialization and application of validated research findings generally sees these findings transformed into innovative products, processes, or services. This phase focuses on commercial exploitation – for example in networks, through licences, and through spin-offs – as well as non-commercial application relating to the economy or society as a whole. (Source: BMBF 2020)

Target group:

- Universities
- Non-university research institutions receiving basic funding from the Federal Government and federal states
- Federal institutions that conduct R&D

Funding:

- Individual and collaborative projects
- Up to € 500,000 in annual funding for up to three years
- Securing of patent rights in the EU member states (as part of VIP+ funding – unless funding provided elsewhere, e.g. SIGNO/WIPANO)
- Further conditions: Projects must be open to utilization and in the public domain

Procedure:

Single-stage evaluation procedure

Submitted applications are subject to evaluation by a panel of reviewers.

Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted to the project management organization at any time.

Project management organization:

Project Management Organisation VDI / VDE + Technik GmbH

Email: vip@vdivde-it.de

www.validierungsfoerderung.de

5.3 BMWi funding programs

5.3.1 ZIM – Central Innovation Programme for SMEs

Funding for individual companies and cooperation projects

Objective:

ZIM is a nationwide funding program open to all technologies and sectors. It is aimed at SMEs and the industry-oriented research institutions that they collaborate with. A revised version of the ZIM guidelines was published at the start of 2020. Through ZIM, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) aims to promote new technologies by:

- minimizing the technical and economic risks associated with R&D activities in technology-based projects
- encouraging SMEs to increase their efforts with regard to market-oriented research, development, and technological innovation
- strengthening collaboration between companies and research institutions, expanding technology transfer, and increasing engagement with R&D partnerships and participation in innovative networks
- accelerating the transformation of R&D results into innovations with a high market impact
- improving the management of innovations, collaborations, and networking in SMEs

Target group:

- SMEs according to EU criteria
- Companies (including affiliated enterprises or partner companies) with less than 500 employees and an annual turnover of less than € 50 million or up to 1,000 employees for collaborative projects
- non-profit research organizations and universities (public or private) as cooperation partners

Funding:

ZIM provides funding for R&D activities dedicated to innovative products, procedures, or technical services without any restrictions in terms of technologies or sectors. Individual projects as well as cooperation projects among several companies or between companies and research institutions/universities are eligible to apply. Collaborative networks are subject to other funding conditions and are not considered here.

Depending on the type of project, the following grants are provided:

Funding for enterprises	max. € 380,000
Research institutes	max. € 190,000
Market launch services (SMEs only)	max. € 50,000
Feasibility studies	max. € 100,000
(only for microenterprises, young companies, first-time funding recipients)	(for collaborative projects, max. € 200,000)

For cooperation projects, financial support for the entire project is limited to a maximum of € 2.3 million.

Projects may not run for any longer than three years. Cooperation and individual projects can receive additional funding for advisory services that support the SME innovation, are closely linked to the concept and schedule of the R&D project, and can be obtained from qualified external suppliers based on economic considerations. The funding rate can be increased for cooperation projects with foreign partners. The foreign partners are not funded directly.

ZIM funding rates

Size of company	Individual projects	Collaboration projects (national)	Cooperation projects (with foreign partners)
Small enterprises in the new federal German states	45 %	55 %	60 %
Small young enterprises	45 %	50 %	60 %
Small enterprises	40 %	45 %	55 %
Medium-sized enterprises	40 %	40 %	50 %
Larger medium-sized enterprises (less than 500 employees)	25 %	30 %	40 %
Larger medium-sized enterprises (less than 1,000 employees; only in cooperation with an SME)		30 %	40 %

Research institutions are provided with a funding rate of 100 %.

Microenterprises (less than 10 employees), young companies (established within the last 10 years) and first-time funding recipients can apply for a feasibility study in preparation of a ZIM project. This study is provided with up to €100,000 in funding (up to €200,000 as part of a cooperation). Depending on the size of the company, the funding rate amounts to 50–70 %.

Procedure:

Application submitted before start of the project

Application submitted to relevant project management organization

Deadlines:

An application can be submitted at any time while the program is ongoing. A project can be launched at an institution's own risk once the application has been submitted.

Contact:

Different Project Management Organisations are responsible for various topics. An overview is available here:

www.zim.de/ZIM/Navigation/DE/Kontakt-Service/Ansprechpartner/ansprechpartner.html

<https://www.zim.de/ZIM/Navigation/DE/Meta/Englisch/englisch.html>

ZIM International und IraSME

At regular intervals, ZIM publishes ongoing calls for proposals to fund bilateral SME projects with various countries (currently more than 20 countries and regions). The German project partner is funded by ZIM while the international partner is supported by a funding scheme in their country. To date, calls for proposals have been established with Spain, South Korea, Israel, Finland, Canada, Argentina, France, Japan, Austria, Flanders, Wallonia, Brazil, Czech Republic, Russia, Catalonia, and others. A number of the calls take place within the framework of the IraSME network www.ira-sme.net. You can find the calls here: www.zim.de/ZIM/Redaktion/DE/Dossiers/international-laender-uebersicht.html

5.3.2 EXIST

Objective:

The EXIST funding program (www.exist.de) aims to create a better climate for business start-ups, encourage entrepreneurship at universities and non-university research institutions, and increase the number of technology-oriented and science-based companies in Germany.

EXIST consists of three pillars, two of which are of particular interest to the biotechnology sector. One such pillar, the EXIST Business Start-up Grant supports students, graduates, and scientists in the preparation of innovative, technology-oriented, and science-based business plans.

The second pillar, EXIST Transfer of Research, supports both the development work required to demonstrate the technical feasibility of research-based ideas, and the preparation required to launch the start-up.

Target group:

Eligible for funding are research-based, innovative start-up ideas developed by students, graduates, and scientists.

Funding:

The EXIST Startup Grant (www.exist.de/EN/Programme/EXIST-Business-Startup-Grant/content.html) funds innovative, technology-based business ideas and innovative services based on scientific findings. Funding is provided in various formats. For example, the grant can cover personal living expenses, the costs of materials and equipment (up to € 10,000), and coaching expenses (up to € 5,000). The maximum funding period is one year. The business cannot be officially established before the start of the funding period.

The EXIST Research Transfer (www.exist.de/EN/Programme/EXIST-Transfer-of-Research/content.html) is divided into two phases. The first funding phase promotes the development of research findings that have the potential to form the basis of a business start-up. The aim is to ensure that the product idea is technically feasible and to prepare the foundation of the start-up. In phase I, personnel costs for up to four employees and material costs of up to € 250,000 are covered for a period of 18 months (or up to 36 months, decided on a case-by-case basis). The second funding phase is focused on the launch of busi-

ness activities and the securing of external follow-up financing for the company. In this phase, a non-refundable grant of up to € 180,000 can be issued, which is limited to 75 % of specific project costs.

Procedure:

Project outlines and applications can be submitted with Project Management Jülich (PtJ), which has been commissioned by the BMWi, via the respective university or non-university research institution.

Deadlines:

Proposals for the EXIST Business Start-up Grant may be submitted at any time. Several deadlines are in place for EXIST Transfer of Research (see homepage)

Project management organization:

Project Management Organisation Jülich

Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH

Berlin branch office

Phone: +49-30-20199-411

E-Mail: ptj-exist-forschungstransfer@fz-juelich.de

<https://www.exist.de/EN/Home>

5.3.3 WIPANO

Focus of funding: Securing patents for companies

Objective:

To provide support with patenting and commercialization

The WIPANO funding program supports SMEs that are initially looking to safeguard their R&D findings through intellectual property rights (IPRs) or that last registered their IPRs more than three years ago. Funding should help to develop a strategic understanding of the patent system and create awareness for the benefits of intellectual property rights.

Target group:

Industrial SMEs and self-employed individuals within all technical or scientific sectors

Funding:

Funding is provided for the entire process of registering a patent, from the assessment of an idea right up to the commercialization of the discovery. Applicants are entitled to use service packages, which are provided by a qualified external provider of the SME's choosing. In addition, funding covers the official charges associated with the patent application.

Funding is provided in the form of partial financing, amounting to up to 50% of eligible costs. Eligible expenditure is limited to € 33,200, meaning that up to € 16,600 in funding can be provided.

Procedure:

Applications are submitted through the electronic form system "easy-Online". Visit the "Unternehmen" (companies) tab under the WIPANO section of the BMWi website for more information (<https://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de/INNO/Navigation/DE/WIPANO/wipano.html>).

Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Project management organization:

Project Management Organisation Jülich

Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH

E-Mail: wipano-ptj@fz-juelich.de

www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de

5.3.4 BMWi innovation vouchers (go-inno/go-digital)

Objective:

Innovation vouchers are issued to promote the innovation and competitiveness of small enterprises (go-inno) as well as the digitization of SMEs (go-digital). Only the go-inno funding module is presented here. Information about go-digital can be found at: www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de/INNO/Navigation/DE/go-digital/go-digital.html.

The go-digital funding module will expire on December 31, 2021.

Target group:

- Small enterprises (less than 100 employees/annual turnover or balance sheet total of max. € 20 million)
- Industrial enterprises and trade businesses with technological potential
- Enterprises based in Germany

Funding:

The go-Inno program provides funding to:

- prepare and execute technical and technological innovation projects (new products or technical processes)
- create internal infrastructures for the successful implementation of innovation projects
- minimize the technical and economic risks associated with product and process innovations
- reduce transaction costs for technology collaborations

Go-inno covers 50 % of the costs of innovation-related consulting services provided by an authorized consultancy firm. Small enterprises pay a contribution to the consultancy costs for a maximum of 50 working days. In accordance with the 50% rule, total funding amounts to € 27,500 and covers three service levels (assessment of potential, realization concept, and project management).

Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Project management organization:

EURONORM

Phone: 030 97003-200

E-Mail: go-inno@euronorm.de

<https://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de/INNO/Navigation/DE/go-inno/go-inno.html>

6. Research Allowance Act (FZuIG)

Objective:

The Research Allowance Act (FZuIG) entered into force on 1 January 2020. Its aim is to strengthen Germany as an industrial location and to boost private investments and innovations.

In contrast to traditional project funding, key aspects of funding according to the FZuIG include:

- legal entitlement to research allowances
- R&D projects can be retrospectively funded from 1 January 2020
- no application deadlines, competitive procedures, or topic restrictions

Eligible R&D categories are as follows:

- basic research
- industrial research
- experimental development

Target group:

Companies subject to tax in Germany are able to claim the allowance, irrespective of their size or age. Affiliated companies: The maximum amount of funding may only be claimed once within such a group of companies. A breakdown among the affiliated companies is permitted. Contractually cooperating companies can each receive the maximum amount of funding.

Procedure:

- For every R&D project, a special review is conducted by the BSFZ certification authority. If possible, however, all R&D projects completed within a financial year should be submitted as part of one application.
- An application can be submitted before, during, or after an R&D project.
- The application for certification is submitted electronically to the BSFZ.
- BSFZ certification is then submitted to the tax office responsible for taxation of the company claiming the allowance.
- The level of funding is determined according to the actual amount of expenses eligible for funding in a respective financial year.
- The research allowance offsets the tax on earnings as part of company tax assessments.

Funding:

- The research allowance amounts to 25 % of eligible costs in a financial year.
- 100 % of internal R&D expenses for salaries are accounted for as eligible costs.
- A maximum of 60 % of external R&D expenses (R&D contracts awarded to external parties) are accounted for as eligible costs.
- Eligible costs can amount to a maximum of € 2 million per year, meaning that the research allowance amounts to a maximum of € 500,000 per year (exception: after June 30, 2020 and before July 1, 2026, eligible costs amounted to a maximum of € 4 million and the allowance amounted to a maximum of € 1 million).
- The personal efforts of individual entrepreneurs and partners are calculated as part of a blanket rate of € 40 per hour for a maximum of 40 working hours per week (de minimis rule).

Contact:

The BSFZ certification authority is managed by AiF Projekt GmbH, VDI Technologiezentrum GmbH, and DLR Projektträger. The entire application and certification process is processed completely digitally via the BSFZ's own web portal: <https://portal.bescheinigung-forschungszulage.de/landingpage>

Information on the application procedure, recommendations, and the official order form can be found on the BSFZ website (www.bescheinigung-forschungszulage.de). The BSFZ currently has no plans to provide individual advice on the research allowance.

ZENIT advises applicants on the suitability of ongoing, completed, and planned activities, project development/initiation, the establishment of a reporting system, and applications for the research allowance.

Sergej Paveliev

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+49-176 63 12 6848

E-Mail: sp@zenit.de

7. Programs provided by the State of NRW

7.1 NRW/EU program “European Regional Development Fund” (ERDF NRW 2021–2027)

Deliberations are still ongoing regarding the ERDF NRW 2021–2027 program.

7.2 MID funding program for innovative and digital SMEs

Objective:

Developing concepts and actions for a digital age is crucial to the competitiveness of Germany’s small and medium-sized enterprises. To this end, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalization, and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia has launched the MID funding program for innovative and digital SMEs. The program aims to support SMEs in the digitization and further development of their products, services, and manufacturing processes in future-oriented fields. It builds on the efforts of its preceding funding program, Mittelstand innovativ! – Innovations- und Digitalisierungsgutschein (innovation and digital vouchers for SMEs).

Target group:

Small and medium-sized companies according to the EU definition based in North Rhine-Westphalia are eligible to apply for MID Vouchers and Invest, small companies (sc) receive higher grants here, MID assistance is limited to small companies.

Funding:

The MID program has been restructured to support four separate modules:

MID analysis: funding of external scientific and technological consulting in the development of a product, service, or manufacturing process. Consulting may only be provided by universities and research establishments. The maximum funding amount has been increased from € 10,000 to € 15,000.

MID innovation: up to € 40,000 in funding for external, implementation-oriented R&D activities for innovative products, services, or manufacturing processes that are exclusively provided by universities and research institutions. The maximum funding amount has been increased from € 15,000 to € 40,000.

MID digitization: funding of consultation for the implementation of digital products, services, and manufacturing processes. In future, there will be a stronger focus here on the future-oriented topics of digitization that are not covered by the federal funding program go-digital; IT advisors will continue to be permitted for funding.

MID assistant: a 2-year funding grant enables small companies to hire a university graduate to help work on innovation and digitization projects. It is now possible to receive the funding amount paid out in advance every two months (funding previously only paid retrospectively).

Corona special program MID-Plus: The selection of digitization projects for which funding can be applied for has been expanded. Until September 30, 2021, the MID digitization voucher variant will now also support the first-time switch from previously physical services (advisory and course offers) to digital instruments as well as the new development of corresponding digital offers for customers. It is recommended to check carefully whether this variant is appropriate in terms of content. As part of the Corona special MID Plus program, the funding rates for the voucher variant have also been increased.

New – MID Invest: Since July 2021, MID Invest has been promoting selected ICT hardware and software that offer the company digital added value and contribute to the digitization and digital optimization of corporate processes. The initial investment in appropriate hardware and software, in the necessary professional implementation and installation and, if needed, even in the instruction of the new systems is funded. For a period of 12 months, the purchase of corresponding licenses is also funded. The grant from MID-Invest is at least 4,000 euros and a maximum of 25,000 euros. Small enterprises receive 50 % of the eligible costs and medium-sized enterprises 30 %. The implementation period is a maximum of 6 months and the application process is carried out using a monthly lottery.

Applications for the MID funding program for innovative and digital SMEs can now be generated via the program home page <https://www.mittelstand-innovativ-digital.nrw/>.

Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Project management organization:

Project Management Organisation Jülich

Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH

www.mittelstand-innovativ-digital.nrw

7.3 NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen

Objective:

The NRW.BANK provides low-interest loans for fast-growing and/or innovative medium-sized enterprises with a 70 % exemption from liability for the company's principal bank.

Target group:

Funding is provided to commercial enterprises and entrepreneurs that fall under one of the following categories:

- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- small-cap and mid-cap companies

Funding:

Applicants can apply for loans to cover investment measures or measures requiring additional operating materials.

- Type of funding: Installment loan
- Financing share: up to 100 % of eligible costs
- Minimum loan amount: € 100,000
- Maximum loan amount: € 7.5 million
- Duration of working capital funding: 3 or 5 years
- Duration of investment financing: 5, 7, or 10 years
- Interest rate: fixed interest rate for the entire duration of funding
- Repayment rate: constant, every three months
- Disbursement rate: 100 %

Procedure:

Applications for NRW.BANK loans should be filed using the appropriate forms at a credit institute of the applicant's choice (principal bank), which then forwards the request to the NRW.BANK (if required, via a central bank). Investments must be made within the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

The applicant must fulfill at least one innovation criterion, as listed in the application forms.

The NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen program is described here as an example of innovation funding. Additional programs can be found at www.nrwbank.de. Support and coaching are available at:

Contact:

NRW.BANK

Service-Center

Phone: +49-211 91741-4800

E-Mail: info@nrwbank.de

<https://www.nrwbank.com/en>

Funding advisory support for the Rhineland and Westphalia

Local, specialized funding consultants provide comprehensive support on a broad range of products offered by the NRW.BANK, as well as other public funding and financing options provided by, for example, the state of NRW, KfW development bank, and Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank. Enterprises receiving funding are able to obtain independent and free advice on their individual financing projects at the NRW.BANK consultation days, for example.

Financial guidance

NRW.BANK's financial guidance team helps NRW-based SMEs with more comprehensive and long-term consulting requirements (e.g. growth plans, safeguarding the company, succession plans) and NRW-based founders with innovative and complex project plans to optimize their financing structures with the aid of public funding from the state of NRW, the Federal Government, and the EU. This support is provided during individual and neutral consulting sessions.

Phone: +49-211 91741-4700

E-Mail: finanzierungsbegleitung@nrwbank.de

www.nrwbank.de/finanzierungsbegleitung

8. Business Angel Network BIO.NRW

The BIO.NRW Business Angel Network was initiated in 2010 in cooperation with experienced and successful business angels and habitual entrepreneurs.

The network supports creative life science start-ups from universities, promising young companies, and international companies in the fields of biotechnology and life sciences that are interested in setting up their business in North Rhine-Westphalia. In addition to start-up funding, the BIO.NRW Business Angel Network also provides follow-up funding for established companies, enabling them to reach their next stage of development. With its know-how, network of contacts, and capital, the BIO.NRW Business Angel Network can play a decisive role in ensuring businesses get off to a successful start.

This investor network has grown steadily over time, including EIT Health consortium partners and members of the private equity community. They all play an interactive role in developing start-ups and SMEs through funding and co-investment.

BIO.NRW Business Angel Circle

As part of the BIO.NRW Business Angel Network, the BIO.NRW Business Angel Circle (BA Circle) was initiated in 2010 on the initiative of the BIO.NRW biotechnology cluster for North Rhine-Westphalia and in cooperation with experienced and successful business angels and habitual entrepreneurs. Within the scope of the BA Circle events, more than 150 start-ups, entrepreneurs, and SMEs have had the opportunity to present their business model in a strictly confidential setting. Many of them have succeeded in convincing investors of their business idea and have received funding, demonstrating that the BIO.NRW Business Angel Circle is a real success story.

The BA Circle meetings take place three to four times a year in Düsseldorf. At each meeting, five to six companies (or start-up projects) have the opportunity to present their business idea, the current state of their company, and their funding requirements. The potential funders include private investors, family offices, and representatives of national banks, venture capital funds, company capital funds, and public funds. Given the number and potential of regularly participating investors, the BIO.NRW Business Angel Circle is certainly unique in Germany.

Please send your application to take part to Dr. Bernward Garthoff (garthoff@biocluster-management.de).

9. Public financial support for export activities

Companies in Germany and in NRW benefit from a wide range of financial programs to promote their export activities. A key objective of these programs is to strengthen the international competitiveness of SMEs and to secure jobs in Germany.

The Federal Government uses investment guarantees to safeguard against the political risks of direct investments made by German companies in developing and emerging countries. To mitigate the political and economic risks of export transactions by German companies, the Federal Government offers export credit guarantees in various formats. The Federal Government has commissioned Euler Hermes AG (Euler Hermes) and PricewaterhouseCoopers AG (PwC) as agents to execute and process these funding activities.

KfW Group offers various funding programs to medium-sized enterprises to finance their projects abroad. These programs include the KfW-Unternehmerkredit (Entrepreneur Loan), the KfW Renewable Energies Programme, the KfW Energy Efficiency Programme, and the KfW-Umweltprogramm (environmental program).

The federal state of NRW supports NRW-based companies in their projects abroad that are likely to have an impact on the national economy by providing them with an indemnity bond. The NRW.BANK offers financial support to NRW companies that are active abroad through its dedicated funding programs NRW.BANK.Auslandskredit (foreign credit) and NRW.BANK.Ausland Export (foreign exports).

In addition, NRW.International GmbH works on behalf of the state government of NRW to help SMEs to tap into important growth markets, particularly through the organization of joint exhibition booths at trade fairs, funding measures for small groups, and delegation and business trips.

Contact:

NRW.BANK – EU Funding/Foreign Trade and Investment Promotion Department

Phone: +49-211 91741 4000

E-Mail: europa@nrwbank.de

10. NRW.Europa – Enterprise Europe Network

ZENIT GmbH, NRW.International, and the NRW.BANK together offer the best possible support to cross-border business in Europe as part of the NRW.Europa network. NRW.Europa provides comprehensive advisory services with regard to internationalization and innovation projects, the search for national and international business partners, and the use of funding programs.

Their services are aimed at companies, industry- and research-related institutions, and universities in NRW, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

NRW.Europa is part of the Enterprise Europe Network (<http://een.ec.europa.eu/>), created by the European Commission at the start of 2008. Today, the network is represented in almost 50 countries, offering a comprehensive range of services for all EU-related inquiries from a single source.

The Enterprise Europe Network services are particularly helpful when it comes to the implementation of innovation projects. They are especially aimed at:

- support in the use of financing and funding tools for innovation and investment projects
- the search for European partners with regard to technology transfer, research projects, and marketing
- internationalization support
- innovation-related services and management

The NRW.BANK's EU Funding/Foreign Trade and Investment Promotion Department provides information and advice on public financial support and funding tools offered by the NRW.BANK, the NRW state government, the Federal Government, and the EU to support the internationalization activities of SMEs in NRW.

In addition, the NRW.BANK provides information on:

- national investment funding programs co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds
- incentives for investments on the European internal market
- funding products and programs offered by development banks in Europe

NRW.Europa offers a free assessment of project proposals and applications.

As part of the network, ZENIT Nordrhein-Westfalen represents the federal state of NRW within the sector groups health care and biochemical technologies.

Contact:

NRW.Europa funding hotline

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www.nrweuropa.de/meta/gb-flag.html



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