

How can you apply for bilateral funding or network management?

Step 1: Find the right partner

If you are looking for a joint R&D project partner or foreign network manager that will help you advance your idea, remember to be thorough in choosing one that matches your project-related needs. Project sketches before proposal submission are welcome.

Step 2: Plan your project

Once you have found a suitable R&D partner or network manager, work together on structuring your R&D project / network and develop a proposal including a consortium agreement. As you plan your joint endeavour, we highly recommend early on consultation with the project management agencies and the respective national agencies of the foreign countries.

Step 3: Submit proposals

Along with a common proposal and consortium agreement, project partners have to submit separate applications to the relevant national funding scheme – in Germany to the project management agencies, foreign partners to the corresponding ministry or agency.

Responsible project management agencies

Head International cooperation / R&D projects

AiF Projekt GmbH
www.aif-projekt-gmbh.de
zim-international@aif-projekt-gmbh.de

International innovation networks

VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH
www.vdivde-it.de | zim@vdivde-it.de

Bilateral funding agreements

- Argentina (ANPCyT)
- Canada (NRC IRAP)
- Catalonia/ Spain (ACCIO)
- Finland (Business Finland)
- France (Bpifrance)
- Singapore (Enterprise Singapore)
- South Korea (KIAT)
- Sweden (VINNOVA)
- Taiwan (ITRI)
- Vietnam (MOST)

→ www.zim.de/international

Multilateral funding network IraSME

- Alberta/ Canada (GCCIR)
- Austria (FFG)
- Brazil (EMBRAPPII)
- Czech Republic (MPO)
- Flemish Region/ Belgium (VLAIO)
- Luxembourg (Luxinnovation)
- Russia (FASIE)
- Turkey (Tübitak)
- Wallonia/ Belgium (SPW)

→ www.ira-sme.net

Multilateral funding network EUREKA

- Israel (ISERD)
- Japan (NEDO)

→ www.eureka.dlr.de

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for Economic Affairs
and Energy



International Cooperation in ZIM

Funding for transnational joint R&D cooperation projects & innovation networks



bmwi.de

How can international partners cooperate?

ZIM is a funding programme of the BMWi that aims to foster the innovative capacity of SMEs. It funds innovative companies which want to develop new or significantly improve existing technical products or technology-based services/processes with a strong market potential.

In general, it is always possible to include foreign partners in ZIM cooperation projects and innovation networks. However, ZIM only provides financial support for the German partners involved. Foreign partners have to secure their own funding. To encourage partnerships between German and foreign companies as well as optionally research and technology organisations (RTOs), the BMWi and several ministries and funding organisations from other countries have launched a number of bi- and multilateral agreements to provide financial support for joint R&D projects through their national or regional funding programmes.

German companies working with foreign partners in a ZIM project receive a bonus of 10% on top of the regular funding rates, up to a maximum funding rate of 60%.

The BMWi also supports ZIM innovation networks in their internationalization efforts by funding network management and organisation services. Management services are intended to aid the conceptual preparation and implementation of R&D cooperation projects within the network, the coordination of R&D activities and the consolidation of the network. In international networks the services are intended to help support international activities as well. German partners benefit from improved funding conditions (increased funding rates and runtime).

What should foreign partners keep in mind?

Partners from other countries can either finance their contributions themselves (to be confirmed by an LOI) or take advantage of the national / regional funding programmes available to them. For many countries, ZIM offers opportunities to cooperate through joint calls for proposals with foreign funding agencies and ministries. In these calls, international partners must meet the criteria of their respective countries' national funding schemes and submit an application to the respective funding agency. Detailed information is available in call announcements.

What should ZIM joint R&D cooperation projects involve?

Eligible projects must involve at least one German company and one foreign partner working together to develop innovative technical products, services or processes with a strong market potential. In order to provide benefits to all participants, the cooperation should be balanced and present a clear advantage and unique opportunities to create value for all partners. This may be an increased knowledge base that leads to an improved ability to meet commercial needs or new application fields for innovative technologies or capabilities.

What should ZIM international innovation networks involve?

Eligible international ZIM innovation networks must involve at least four German SMEs mandating a German organisation to manage the network and at least three partners from other countries (two SMEs and an organisation serving as coordinator providing network management services abroad). The percentage of international SMEs participating in the network should not exceed 50%.

How is the German funding structured?

Funding source

- the international cooperation within the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM)
- financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi)
- administrated by AiF Projekt GmbH & VDI/VDE-IT

Funding rates for cooperation projects

- up to 60% of the maximum eligible project costs (€450,000 per company)
- 100% of the maximum eligible project costs (€220,000 per research institute)

Funding rates for international innovation networks

- 95% of the costs in Phase 1 running up to 18 months (€220,000 per network)
- 80%–40% of the costs in Phase 2 running up to 3 years

Eligibility criteria

- SMEs with less than 250 employees and less than €50 million in annual turnover or a balance sheet of no more than €43 million
- Further medium-sized companies with less than 1,000 employees as cooperation partners of SMEs
- At least one SME in each participating country for cooperation projects
- International innovation network: one German network manager with a mandate by 4 German partners as well as 3 international partners

Each German partner has to submit a ZIM application for cooperation projects to AiF Projekt GmbH and for innovation networks to VDI/VDE-IT. More detailed criteria can be found on the ZIM website (in German only). The application must fulfil the regulations set forth by the ZIM programme which includes being written in German.