



## Selected Funding Tools for the Life Sciences Industry

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Funding for the Life Sciences sector is available from a broad range of organizations, including the EU Commission, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) and the corresponding federal state administrations, each with different objectives. Applicants can, for example, obtain funding for international collaboration projects, but there are also dedicated programs to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), scientific institutions, universities or startup companies emerging from academic research.

This overview of selected funding tools serves applicants in diverse areas of the Life Sciences sector to identify funding organizations with objectives and a “funding philosophy” that best match their business or research project. In addition, this summary includes an overview table of the most relevant funding program deadlines (as of May 2019) and links to additional information.

The present funding overview does not claim to be exhaustive and cannot replace personal advice by qualified and experienced experts at funding bodies or advisory services. Still, it provides an excellent overview of available funding programs, their deadlines and the most relevant contact points offering further information.

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ZENIT GmbH/ NRW.Europa  
Benno Weißner  
Bismarckstr. 28, D-45470 Mülheim  
Tel.: +49 (0)208 30004-59  
[bw@zenit.de](mailto:bw@zenit.de)  
[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)

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# 1. Financing of Life Science innovations

Innovative projects generally struggle with the difficulty in estimating both technical and economic risks, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To help companies implement innovative projects, public institutions offer a large number of funding and financing programs with different societal objectives, including support for the Life Sciences sector with its rather specialized project requirements. Usually, dedicated funding tools are targeted solely to promote the technical development of new products in a pre-competitive field. Only few programs are suitable to fund certifications, good manufacturing practice (GMP) or clinical studies. Additionally, companies usually do not receive 100% of their requested financing, leaving an individual financial risk. Therefore, applications must include a convincing commercialization strategy and funding projects should always be embedded within the company's overall financial strategy. This applies in particular to projects with a long timeframe from development to launch, such as products requiring clinical studies for market approval.

Each program targets mainly Life Science research policy questions that are important to the respective investors, e.g., the Federal Ministry of Education and Research or the EU Commission. These political objectives are reflected in precise requirements for the structure and content of project applications that are almost exclusively tendered publicly and for a limited time only. Besides, there are programs not limited to particular technologies or research approaches, encouraging companies and research institutions of all Life Science areas to apply (e.g., Central Innovation Program for small and medium-sized enterprises (ZIM), research for 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 risk capital

### Grant programs

Grant programs offer non-refundable funding for a clearly defined purpose. Depending on the grant level provided, companies are typically required to allocate their own specified financial contribution. With few exceptions, innovation programs are particularly geared at supporting the translation of commercial research and development projects into new products and processes that can be positioned in the market.

### Förderkreditprogramme

Federal or EU entities support development loan programs to enable companies to acquire funding for dedicated purposes (growth, innovation, founding, environmental investments, etc.). These programs are typically processed by the company's principal bank. That is, the bank evaluates the application and forwards it to a relevant loan institution, like the NRW.BANK or the Credit Institute for Reconstruction (KfW, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau). These loans typically entail favorable redemption and interest rates and can often be supported further by a public guarantee. Interesting programs for innovation projects include:

- NRW.BANK.Innovative Enterprises (NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen) and NRW.BANK.Digitization and Innovation (NRW.BANK.Digitalisierung und Innovation). Funding organization: NRW.BANK [www.nrwbank.de](http://www.nrwbank.de)
- ERP digitization and innovation loan (ERP-Digitalisierungs- und Innovationskredit). Funding organization: KfW [www.kfw.de](http://www.kfw.de)
- Environment Innovation program of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU-Umweltinnovationsprogramm) Funding organization: KfW [www.kfw.de](http://www.kfw.de)
- Agribusiness projects (Rentenbank). Funding organization: [www.rentenbank.de](http://www.rentenbank.de)

## General support programs

A variety of programs support SMEs for example in the form of counseling programs (e.g., go-Inno / go-digital) or technology transfer instruments that are often available to companies free of charge. Besides, formalized structures promote communication and information exchange or support export activities.

## SME status as defined by the EU

Some programs require companies to meet SME criteria as defined by the EU Commission:

Company category	Staff headcount (annual work unit)	Annual turnover		Balance sheet total
<b>medium-sized enterprise</b>	< 250	≤ 50 Mio. EUR	oder	≤ 43 Mio. EUR
<b>small enterprise</b>	< 50	≤ 10 Mio. EUR		≤ 10 Mio. EUR
<b>micro-enterprise</b>	< 10	≤ 2 Mio. EUR		≤ 2 Mio. EUR

Furthermore, the legal form and structure of the company should be carefully examined. In case of doubt, an external evaluation should be conducted to verify that all criteria are met. More information is available here:

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en)

## Equity or risk capital

Relatively high funding levels are often required in the Life Sciences sector because the cost of research and development as well as extensive certifications, clinical studies and launch activities must be financed. This is one of the reasons why many small and startup companies seek the support of investors, business angels or other capital providers. Over time, several mechanisms have been established to facilitate access to this support at the federal (NRW), national and EU level, for example through provision of equity or establishment of the respective networking or contact structures (e.g., Business Angels Network BIO.NRW).

## 2. Working with funding programs

The present overview provides preliminary insight into potential options to support your innovation projects. Numerous funding products are available, each based on the different goals of their respective organizations, for example:

- to support convergence within the European Union
- to foster economic competitiveness through innovations
- to develop growth-relevant future markets
- to pursue employment policy objectives
- to mitigate the risks of new product developments in SMEs
- to achieve environment protection and energy policy goals
- to improve the transfer between science and economy
- to promote business startups

The funding organizations, for example the State of North-Rhine Westphalia, the Federal Republic of Germany or the EU pursue different economic and societal goals with their funding programs and evaluate project applications according to the respective political guidelines. Therefore, applicants should carefully assess the different funding philosophies to avoid misdirected applications.

Due to changing framework criteria (societal goals, budget, etc.), funding programs are available for a limited period only. Therefore, this overview describes the underlying program requirements without listing any specific schedules. Many calls for proposals designed for very narrow topics are not outlined in detail. This overview serves as inspiration and 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 to carefully examine the pros and cons of applying before submission, taking business and market strategy into account. It is important to note that there is no legal claim to obtain funding, so the financial means should not be part of the business plan. Furthermore, writing the application and the subsequent project reports and statements can be time-consuming and can limit resources available for research and development. Especially small companies should carefully evaluate whether an application is worth the effort.

NRW.Europa offers free advice and an initial neutral evaluation of project ideas in a personal discussion or based on project outlines. Additional free advising services include:

- Review of applications before submission
- International technology transfer
- Support in setting up (international) consortia.

### **NRW.Europa Hotline**

ZENIT GmbH

Phone: +49-208 30004-2020

### **NRW.Europa Hotline**

U and foreign trade promotion by NRW.Bank (EU- und Außenwirtschaftsförderung der NRW.BANK)

Phone: +49-211 91741-4000

[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)

#### **Note:**

The following is intended as initial information and therefore presents only a selection of programs. In addition, descriptions are kept deliberately high-level because specific program requirements are subject to change. Targeted research policy tenders, as published for example by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in specialist or themed programs (e.g., Systems Biology, Industrial Biotechnology, etc.) are not explicitly mentioned. The information given here is based on official references and information pages published by the funding bodies and organizations as of 12 April, 2019. In some cases, entire text passages have been copied from the respective sources. To improve readability, verbatim text is not explicitly marked.

### 3. Funding programs and deadlines

Program	Objective / deadline	Website
<b>EU funding</b>		
<b>HORIZONT 2020</b>	Translational research Dedicated calls for proposals	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/h2020">https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/h2020</a>
<b>Societal challenges:</b> Topic 1: Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing Section 2: Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bioeconomy	Work program 2019/2020	<a href="http://www.horizont2020.de/index.htm">www.horizont2020.de/index.htm</a>  <a href="http://www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de">www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de</a>
<b>Leading role of the industry</b> Section Biotechnology	Work program 2019/2020	<a href="https://www.horizont2020.de/beratung-nks-biotech.htm">https://www.horizont2020.de/beratung-nks-biotech.htm</a>
<b>ERA-NET</b> European Research Area Networks	Topic-related, joint calls of the research management institutions of the Member States for harmonized research funding	<a href="http://www.era-learn.eu">www.era-learn.eu</a>
<b>EUREKA Eurostars</b>	No technology restrictions Rolling submissions Two annual evaluation rounds	<a href="http://www.eurostars.dlr.de">www.eurostars.dlr.de</a>
<b>IMI Innovative Medicines Initiative</b>	Public-private partnerships (PPP) 7 indication-based topics	<a href="http://www.imi.europa.eu">www.imi.europa.eu</a>
<b>EIC Accelerator Pilot</b>	No technology restrictions SMEs only Replaces former „SME Instrument“ program	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/programs/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/eic-accelerator-pilot">https://ec.europa.eu/programs/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/eic-accelerator-pilot</a>

Program	Objective / deadline	Website
<b>National funding</b>		
<b>Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)</b>		
<b>Innovative SMEs (KMU-innovativ)</b>	Rolling submissions Evaluation rounds on 15 April and 15 October each year	<a href="http://www.hightech-strategie.de">www.hightech-strategie.de</a>  <a href="http://www.kmu-innovativ.de">www.kmu-innovativ.de</a> <a href="http://www.foerderinfo.bund.de/en/funding-for-smes-1786.php">www.foerderinfo.bund.de/en/funding-for-smes-1786.php</a>
<b>Go Bio</b>	Founder teams in the Biotechnology sector  No current announcements	<a href="http://www.go-bio.de/en">www.go-bio.de/en</a>
<b>Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi)</b>		
<b>ZIM</b> Central Innovation Program for medium-sized enterprises (Zentrales Innovationsprogramm Mittelstand)	No topic restrictions Rolling submissions	<a href="http://www.zim.de">www.zim.de</a>
<b>EXIST</b>	No topic restrictions For university-based business startups Two-phased funding	<a href="http://www.exist.de">www.exist.de</a>
<b>WIPANO</b>	Funding for patents For universities, SMEs and inventors	<a href="http://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de">www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de</a>
<b>go-Inno / go-digital</b>	No topic restrictions Financial vouchers for innovation activities for SMEs, consulting by authorized consulting firms	<a href="http://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de">www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de</a>

Programm	Zielrichtung / Deadline	Website
<b>Funding by the State of North-Rhine Westphalia</b>		
Competition to access driving markets (Leitmarktwettbewerbe) North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW)	Thematic, specific calls for proposals  No current announcements	<a href="http://leitmarktagentur.nrw.de">http://leitmarktagentur.nrw.de</a>
Innovative mid-sized enterprises (Mittelstand. innovativ!) Financial vouchers for innovation/digitization	No technology restrictions SME funding for external consulting, research and development services Rolling submissions	<a href="http://www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/mittelstand-innovativ/innovations-gutscheine">www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/mittelstand-innovativ/innovations-gutscheine</a>
Innovative mid-sized enterprises (Mittelstand. innovativ!) Innovation and Digitization Assistant	No technology restrictions Funding for SMEs	<a href="http://www.ptj.de/innovationsassistent">www.ptj.de/innovationsassistent</a>
NRW.BANK.Innovative Enterprises (NRW.BANK.Innovative Unternehmen) NRW.BANK.Digitization and Innovation (NRW.BANK Digitalisierung und Innovation)	No technology restrictions Funding for SMEs Rolling submissions, preceding the beginning of individual programs	<a href="http://www.nrwbank.de/de/themen/innovation/index.html">www.nrwbank.de/de/themen/innovation/index.html</a>

## 4. EU funding programs

### 4.1 HORIZONT 2020

HORIZON 2020 is the biggest EU research and innovation program in history with nearly 80 billion EUR of funding distributed over seven years (2014–2020) to promote excellent innovation projects in international consortia. While the setup of the program is multi-layered, the common ground is to generate knowledge through high-level international research combined with mandatory commercialization of project results. Eligible projects range from basic research to the development of products, processes or services with business and commercialization plans. The latter is one of the most relevant novelties of this framework, making it attractive to mid-sized enterprises.

The program focuses on three main areas and encompasses several funding tools.

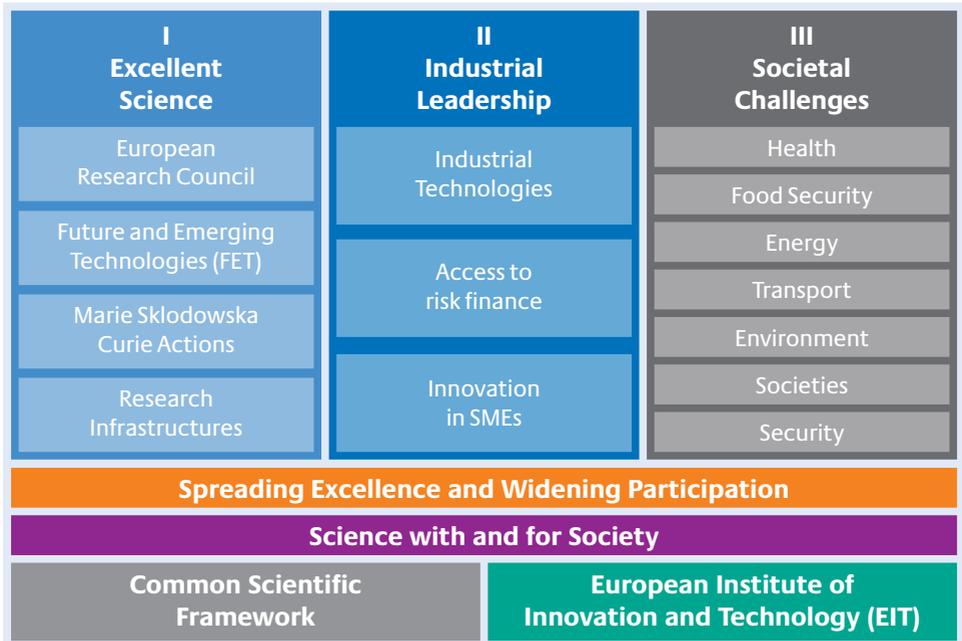


Figure 1: The three HORIZON 2020 focus areas

The focus area „Excellent Science“ aims to fund open-topic, preferably basic research-oriented projects in different funding streams, mostly addressing universities and research institutes. Some niche programs specifically target SMEs, with small cooperation projects that, for example, support personnel exchange between industry and research.

The focus area „Industrial Leadership“ emphasizes the financing of predominantly industry-driven research and innovation projects. Risk capital is deployed in selected key technology areas, such as Biotechnology or IT, with the objective to stimulate private investment in applied sciences.

„Societal Challenges“ is the third focus area and addresses major concerns including challenges of demographic change, environmental degradation, resource efficiency and transport.

In HORIZON 2020, collaborative research projects are predominantly implemented with support through two funding instruments:

- Research and Innovation Action; RIA (100 % of the directly fundable costs, plus 25 % of a lump sum for overhead of SMEs)
- Innovation Action; IA (70 % of the directly fundable costs, plus 25 % of a lump sum for overhead of SMEs)

Additional funding tools include, for example, the Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions (PPI). Flanking programs exist for specific topics geared to build a political-scientific platform, including coordination activities without any research or development component.

All grant lines follow the objective of the respective call for proposals, which must be very narrowly interpreted by the consortia. In these so-called top-down areas, consortia have no freedom to suggest their topics. They are expected to address the questions outlined on roughly one page of the tender description. In a competitive process, the most promising projects are selected for funding according to defined evaluation criteria. The size of the project is defined by the specifications and the indicated budget frame of the respective call for proposals. Consortia must consist at a minimum of three independent participants from at least three different EU Member States or states associated with HORIZON 2020, though in practice they are typically larger.

Life Science projects are principally eligible for funding in all three HORIZON 2020 focus areas, but primarily in parts II „Industrial Leadership“ and III „Societal Challenges“.

However, funding of Life Science research projects (e.g., programs without technology restrictions targeted to the promotion of junior researchers in focus area I) or participation of Life Science research groups is often possible in other programs as well.

### **Procedure/Deadlines:**

HORIZON 2020 is limited to the period from 2014–2020. Applicants can participate through a formal claim responding to the periodical, mostly annual, calls for proposals. More details are provided in the respective calls.

(Information and submission of claims takes place electronically through an online portal at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/index.html>).

Various calls for proposals will be published in 2019 and 2020. A comprehensive overview is available on the website of the National Liaison Office for Life Sciences (Nationale Kontaktstelle Lebenswissenschaften).

### **Publicly available information and national advisory services:**

National Liaison Office for Life Sciences (Nationale Kontaktstelle Lebenswissenschaften)  
[www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de](http://www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de)

Specialized liaison offices for other subject areas  
[www.horizont2020.de/beratung-nks.htm](http://www.horizont2020.de/beratung-nks.htm)

Initial information to participate in HORIZON 2020

Phone: +49-228 3821-2020

E-Mail: [h2020@dlr.de](mailto:h2020@dlr.de)

[www.horizont2020.de](http://www.horizont2020.de)

<https://ec.europa.eu/programs/horizon2020/en?>

Topic-agnostic initial advice offered by NRW.Europa

Phone: +49-208 30004 2020

E-Mail: [info@nrweuropa.de](mailto:info@nrweuropa.de)

[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)

### **Sidenote:**

#### **HORIZONT Europa**

Horizon Europe is the next 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.

The suggested structure for Horizon Europe consists of three pillars:

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

#### **More Information:**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/designing-next-research-and-innovation-framework-program/what-shapes-next-framework-program\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/designing-next-research-and-innovation-framework-program/what-shapes-next-framework-program_en)

## 4.2 EIC Accelerator Pilot

Since 2014, the former „SME Instrument“ and now EIC Accelerator Pilot has offered financial support to innovative, aspiring SMEs and scale-up enterprises striving to build a business in Europe and worldwide. The Accelerator pilot enables these SMEs to take specific innovations to the market launch and beyond. This funding tool is topic-agnostic, and funding decisions are usually made fast. As of October 9, 2019, blended financing (i.e., grants combined with equity investment) are also part of the Accelerator.

### A funding tool exclusively for SMEs

The EIC Accelerator Pilot acts on the European level and exclusively targets SMEs with growth potential, i.e., promising development projects with high market potential and innovation level and a European or even global commercialization strategy. The program is open to any topic and supports both technological and non-technological innovations, including for example, projects from the social or the service sectors.

Eligible for this program are single, profit-oriented enterprises meeting the EU SME criteria and located in an EU Member State or a country associated with the HORIZON 2020 program. Research institutions, universities or larger companies can act as subcontractors to the SME.

### Funding for market launch and beyond

The EIC Accelerator Pilot supports SMEs on the way to market launch and beyond.

- Implementation from concept to marketable product or service – and, in case of equity investment, to market launch
- „Business Acceleration Services“ to support commercialization both during and after the project period

### The EIC Accelerator Pilot

During the Accelerator project period – usually one to two years – awardees should perform innovation work and finalize the development of the product or service. Typical activities include demonstrations, tests, production of a prototype, pilot studies, scale-up, miniaturization or design all the way through to market.

Two funding options are offered:

- purely grant-based financing of 0.5 to 2.5 million EUR
- blended financing (grant in combination with equity investment) available also for subsequent marketing activities

Blended financing is available since October 9, 2019. It combines a non-refundable grant of 0.5 to 2.5 million EUR with an equity investment of up to 15 million EUR. The funding rate is set to 70%.

Funding is available for up to 12 days of coaching and mentoring.

### **Business Acceleration Services**

In addition to the coaching and mentoring programs, Accelerator participants can take advantage of business acceleration services, i.e., measures to promote market entry. These services include training; facilitated access to investors, other EIC participants and larger companies; participation in international trade fairs; assistance in applying for EU financing tools (InnovFin) and access to private investors.

### **Evaluation criteria**

During the assessment process, applications are evaluated for their innovation level („Excellence“), marketability/risk and market potential („Impact“) and implementation quality („Implementation“). Impact, the additional value for Europe and the unique selling point (USP) are the most highly ranked criteria. In addition, the implementation capacity and development potential of the SME as well as its commercialization strategy are considered.

### **Calls for proposal in 2018–2020**

Applicants can submit their proposal to the EIC Accelerator Pilot at any time before the respective cut-off date (typically four times a year). Applications should be submitted online and can be revised at any time until the cut-off date. Calls for proposal are published online on the EU funding and tenders portal (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>)

### **Publicly available information and national advisory services**

National Liaison Office for SMEs

Project Management Organization at the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt, DLR Projektträger) [www.nks-kmu.de](http://www.nks-kmu.de)

Topic-agnostic initial advice offered by NRW.Europa

Phone: +49-208 30004 2020

E-Mail: [info@nrweuropa.de](mailto:info@nrweuropa.de)  
[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)

### 4.3 Fast Track to Innovation (FTI)

Fast Track to Innovation is a topic-agnostic funding scheme with only one call for proposals, named after the HORIZON 2020 objective „Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies“. Applications can be submitted at any time. FTI aims to nurture groundbreaking technological or service-related innovations with an interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral approach to accelerate realization of market-ready products, procedures, services and business models. The program has a bottom-up design and is open to all types of participants and innovations. Analogous to the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6, applicants must ensure that their technology has been „demonstrated under relevant conditions“ with a working demonstration unit in place. In addition, the market potential of the project idea is evaluated, and whether a market launch can reasonably be achieved within three years after the start of the project. Applications should be filed via the EU participant portal.

Target groups include:

- companies, in particular SMEs
- universities
- research institutes

#### **Funding:**

Applications can be submitted at any time. Project plans are evaluated after three defined cut-off dates per year. Consortia must consist of at least three and at most five partners in order to be eligible. Grants are limited to 3 million EUR. The funding rate is 70% of eligible costs, plus a 25% lump sum for overhead costs. The program predominantly targets SMEs.

#### **Information and advice:**

National Liaison Office for SMEs (Nationale Kontaktstelle KMU)

[www.nks-kmu.de](http://www.nks-kmu.de)

All HORIZON 2020 tenders and calls for proposals can be found on the Funding & Tenders Portal

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

## 4.4 ERA-NET – European Research Area

The ERA-NET program supports and coordinates collaborations between national and regional research funding organizations and program agencies (e.g., German Research Foundation [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG]). ERA-NET aims to overcome the fragmentation within the European research area through a better coordination and harmonization of national programs. Whenever possible, projects should be executed within trans-national consortia. Content, focus areas and participating countries vary among the national ERA-NET funding lines but are aligned at the European level. Beyond promoting harmonization, ERA-NET increases the common budget shared by the individual countries. ERA-NET offers programs for various technology areas, several of which are related to the general Life Sciences sector. EUROSTARS is an essential building block of ERA-NET and is therefore presented separately (see chapter 4.6). A complete overview can be found at [www.era-learn.eu](http://www.era-learn.eu), which lists suitable programs in Germany and other EU Member States. In all cases, we recommend contacting the respective funding organizations before filing an application.

## 4.5 IMI – Innovative Medicines Initiative 2

### Goal:

The Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 (IMI2) is a public-private partnership (PPP) of the EU on the one side, represented by the European Commission, and the (bio)pharmaceutical industry on the other side, represented by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries Associations (EFPIA). IMI2 is the successor of the IMI1 program established within the 7th EU research framework.

IMI2's paramount goal is to accelerate the development of safe and effective pharmaceuticals, but also to address societal challenges of the European healthcare system. These include, for example, an aging population and the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance. The European Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) presents a comprehensive strategy for the identified core research areas and a detailed roadmap for its implementation. Additionally, IMI2 aims to extend research efforts to all areas of bioscience and public health innovation. Therefore, the initiative strives to integrate a broad spectrum of partners, in-

cluding larger companies, from diverse fields (e.g., biomedical imaging techniques, medical IT, diagnostics and veterinary medicine).

**Target group:**

IMI2 targets small and medium-sized enterprises (according to the EU criteria), private and public research institutes, universities, patient organizations and other non-profit organizations located in EU Member States or countries associated with the research framework program.

**Funding:**

Consortia must consist of representatives from at least three independent institutions (public, private, profit or non-profit) located in at least three different Member States or associated countries.

**Procedure/deadlines:**

Application procedures and funding requirements differ from HORIZON 2020.

For more information about the procedure and the call for proposals, visit

[www.imi.europa.eu](http://www.imi.europa.eu)

**Information and advice:**

National Liaison Office for Life Sciences (Nationale Kontaktstelle Lebenswissenschaften)

Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1

53227 Bonn

[www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de](http://www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de)

## 4.6 EUROSTARS

### Goal:

Eurostars ist ein gemeinsames Förderprogramm des EUREKA-Verbunds und der Europäischen Kommission. Ziel von Eurostars ist es, kleine und mittelständische Unternehmen (KMU) verstärkt für eine europäische Zusammenarbeit in Forschungs- und Entwicklungsprojekten zu motivieren. Dabei funktioniert Eurostars nach dem gleichen Prinzip wie die übergeordnete Initiative EUREKA: Eurostars-Projekte sind vorwettbewerbliche technologie- und themenoffen und dienen zivilen Zwecken. Sie zielen auf die Entwicklung eines innovativen Produktes, Verfahrens oder einer Dienstleistung. Nach dem sogenannten „Bottom-up-Prinzip“ können die Projektinhalte von den teilnehmenden Partnern frei bestimmt werden.

### Target group:

EUROSTARS targets research-driven SMEs, i.e., SMEs, as defined by EU criteria, that invest at least 10% of their annual turnover in research and development (R&D) or allocate at least 10% of their personnel to R&D projects.

In addition, the following partners are invited to join EUROSTARS:

- SMEs that are not research-driven
- research institutes
- large companies (without funding)

National program specialties exist in some countries and are listed here: [www.eurostars-eureka.eu](http://www.eurostars-eureka.eu).

### Funding:

Applicants can obtain financial support if they pass the financial viability check performed by their national program organization. Funding is administered by national authorities and is only available to participants from the respective country.

In Germany, EUROSTARS funding is offered in the form of a non-refundable grant limited to 500,000 EUR per project. The maximum funding rate for SMEs is 50%, while German universities and other research institutes can receive up to 100% of project-related expenses if they partner with a German SME.

Consortia must consist of at least two SMEs from two countries, with a research-driven SME in the lead. More than 50% of the project budget must be allocated to an SME actively performing research. Funding requirements for partners from other countries may vary.

**Procedure:**

Applications should be submitted directly with the national funding organization. The filed project proposals are evaluated by a joint, international scientific assessment team.

**Deadlines:**

Applications can be submitted at any time. In general, projects are evaluated twice per year. Further information can be found here: <http://eurostars.dlr.de>.

**Funding organization:**

German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V., DLR)

EUREKA/COST Office

Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1

53227 Bonn

E-Mail: [eureka@dlr.de](mailto:eureka@dlr.de)

## **Sidenote:**

### **EIT HEALTH**

EIT Health is a consortium of over 140 partners from leading businesses, research centres and universities from across 15 EU countries. EIT Health was designated as an EIT Innovation Community by the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) on 09 December 2014. The network is dedicated to promoting solutions that enable European citizens to live longer and healthier lives.

Together with the BIO Cluster management NRW GmbH, BIO.NRW is a founding member and associated partner of EIT Health. With a budget of over 2 billion EUR for project funding, the consortium is one of the largest healthcare initiatives (public-private partnerships) worldwide to promote this sector in the EU.

More than 130 partners from pharma, medical engineering, scientific institutions and universities – including renowned German organizations – contribute to the network's expertise.

„We focus on the establishment of new enterprises in the forward-looking healthcare area to bring the results of scientific excellence to market. We at BIO.NRW are happy to contribute our expertise in the consortium,” says Dr. Bernward Garthoff, a founding member of the EIT Health consortium on behalf of BIO.NRW.

**Further information can be obtained from:**

[www.eithealth.eu](http://www.eithealth.eu)

## Sidenote:

### EIT HEALTH INVESTORS NETWORK

The goal of the EIT Health Investors Network is to have EIT Health consortium partners and private investors interactively engage with the founding and development of startups and SMEs through financing and co-investments. The Business Angels Network BIO.NRW, initiated in 2010 and now a well-established network of experienced and successful institutional and private investors plus federal development banks, served as a blueprint for the consortium (see chapter 7). Under the auspices of EIT Health, the circle of private investors supporting the co-financing and development of startups has expanded and is now coordinated by Angels Santé.

BIO.NRW and the BIO Cluster management NRW GmbH have initiated startups4.eu, an online platform to facilitate exchange and communication between founders and investors. But [www.startups4.eu](http://www.startups4.eu) is just the first step in the matchmaking process, inviting investors to examine information provided by founders and enterprises (including optional video footage). In a second step, the BIO Cluster management NRW GmbH holds a face-to-face, confidential onsite meeting – the BIO.NRW Business Angels Circle in Düsseldorf (see chapter 7). EIT Health co-organizes the Business Angel Congress once a year, at the same location.

**Further information can be obtained from:**

[www.startups4.eu](http://www.startups4.eu)

### **Sidenote:**

#### **CROSS4HEALTH**

Cross4Health is a HORIZON 2020 project with a budget of 5 million EUR. The program promotes collaboration and knowledge transfer between SMEs in the Aerospace, Energy, ICT and Biotechnology sectors geared at new medical technologies. Funded projects should lead to innovative solutions that enhance patient-centered personalized care. The program pursues a cascade funding approach, providing smaller grants within the frame of individual calls for proposals. This funding method aims to simplify administrative procedures, creating a lean, SME-friendly application scheme. In NRW, the ZENIT GmbH is a partner of Cross4Health.

#### **Contact information:**

ZENIT GmbH

Juan Carmona-Schneider

Phone: +49-208 - 3000454

E-Mail: [jc@zenit.de](mailto:jc@zenit.de)

[www.cross4health.eu](http://www.cross4health.eu)

## 4.7 Innovative Public Procurement

Within the HORIZON 2020 research framework, the EU Commission has a dedicated budget for projects dealing with the Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions. This specialized tool is relevant also for the Life Sciences sector and for hospitals. One example is the THALEA project with the participation of the University Clinic Aachen ([www.thalea-pcp.eu](http://www.thalea-pcp.eu)).

### Contact:

KO-INNO EU-Kontaktstelle Innovative Beschaffung

ZENIT GmbH

E-Mail: [koinno@zenit.de](mailto:koinno@zenit.de)

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/public-procurement-innovative-solutions>

## 5. National funding programs

### 5.1 High-tech Strategy 2025

The German Federal Government launched the High-tech Strategy 2025 program to define strategic objectives for funding programs and initiatives. The Life Sciences sector is a part of this new strategy to promote research and innovation.

#### Further information:

[www.hightech-strategie.de](http://www.hightech-strategie.de)

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

#### Funding:

The High-tech Strategy 2025 supports enterprises indirectly through federal research and innovation policies. Various measures are part of this strategy. For example, commercialization activities are supported by the Founders Campaign (Gründungsoffensive), GO-BIO ([www.go-bio.de](http://www.go-bio.de)) and Innovative SMEs (KMU-innovativ). Specific calls for proposals are published in various programs by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Eligible topics follow the objectives of the framework, such as industrial Biotechnology, CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, drug development, medical digitization, etc.

#### Procedure:

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

#### Deadlines:

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

#### Funding organization:

Funding organizations vary depending on the federal ministry responsible for the respective program. A few examples are:

Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ), for programs issued by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, (BMBF)

[www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/gesundheitsforschung/](http://www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/gesundheitsforschung/)

VDI/VDE (for programs issued by the Federal Ministry for Health, BMG)

[www.forschung-bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/](http://www.forschung-bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/)

## 5.2 Funding programs provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

### 5.2.1 Innovative SMEs (KMU-innovativ)

KMU-innovativ is a funding program organized within the framework of the High-tech Strategy 2025. It aims to promote scientific excellence in SMEs through a simplified application and grant process for SME funding. KMU-innovativ programs exist for various technological areas with a significant impact on the future of Germany:

- Electronics and autonomous driving
- Research for civil security
- Medical technology
- Information and communication technologies
- Material sciences
- Human-technology interaction
- Photonics and quantum technologies
- Production technology
- Resource efficiency and climate protection

According to the funding organization (Project Management Organization Jülich [Projektträger Jülich, PtJ]), funding guidelines for the technological area „Biotechnology - BioChances“ are currently under revision. Updated information is available directly from the PtJ. ([www.ptj.de/kmu-innovativ/biochance](http://www.ptj.de/kmu-innovativ/biochance)).

The pilot project „Innovative SMEs - entry-level module“ (KMU-innovativ: Einstiegsmodul) was funded by the BMBF to promote preliminary projects and feasibility studies with the potential to lead to ambitious SME research and development endeavors. The project is limited to three cut-off dates, and there is currently no information about whether it will continue to exist.

#### Goals:

KMU-innovativ aims to minimize the risk for innovative R&D projects, to promote collaboration of SMEs with larger companies and research institutes and to accelerate technology transfer.

#### Target group:

All small and medium-sized enterprises meeting the EU criteria are eligible.

### **Funding:**

High-risk, industrial research and pre-market development projects that are application-oriented and can be directly mapped to the Biotechnology field are eligible for funding, in particular:

- innovative and scientifically ambitious, individual SME projects
- projects pursued by a network of SMEs and universities or research institutes
- projects pursued by a network of several SMEs
- strategic alliances between SMEs and larger enterprises

Funding is provided in the form of non-refundable grants. In the commercial industry, up to 50% of eligible costs can be covered, while 50% equity must be provided by the SME. For research institutes, up to 100% of project-related expenses can be granted. SMEs meeting the EU criteria receive a bonus.

KMU-innovativ offers a simplified credit check to facilitate the participation of small, research-oriented enterprises in the startup phase. Within the individual technology fields, there are only minimal restrictions on project topics.

### **Procedure:**

Two-step application process

### **Deadlines:**

Project drafts can be submitted at any time. Project proposals are usually assessed twice a year, on 15 April and 15 October.

### **Funding organizations:**

For more information about the program and to access the application portal, visit [www.kmu-innovativ.de](http://www.kmu-innovativ.de)

Responsible funding organizations vary by topic. An overview is available here: [www.foerderinfo.bund.de/de/kmu-innovativ-1717.php](http://www.foerderinfo.bund.de/de/kmu-innovativ-1717.php)

## 5.2.2 GO-Bio

### **Goal:**

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) supports Life Sciences research teams ready to found a startup company. GO-Bio enables teams to pursue new Life Sciences research approaches and to convert them into commercial products. The BMBF aims to facilitate science-based founding activities and promote new employment opportunities.

### **Funding:**

Award winners receive funding to work on Life Sciences and related projects with their own research team. Research projects should have high commercial potential or be a clinical innovation that can be used commercially.

### **Target group:**

Eligible for GO-Bio are research teams prepared and willing to found a startup company.

### **Procedure/Deadlines:**

Selection rounds take place every 18 to 24 months on average. The last and eighth selection round was closed in the spring of 2018, and the next dates have not yet been set.

### **Information:**

[www.go-bio.de](http://www.go-bio.de)

## 5.3 Funding programs provided by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi)

### 5.3.1 ZIM - Central Innovation Program for Medium-sized Enterprises (Zentrales Innovationsprogramm Mittelstand)

#### Funding for individual companies and cooperation projects

##### Goal:

ZIM is a nationwide, technology- and sector-agnostic funding program for SMEs and their collaboration partners at industry-related research institutes. ZIM is supported by the BMWi and aims to promote new technologies by:

- minimizing the technical and economic risks associated with R&D activities in technology-based projects
- encouraging medium-sized enterprises to increase their efforts on market-oriented research, development and technological innovation
- fostering collaboration among companies and research institutes, expanding technology transfer and increasing engagement with R&D cooperations and participation in innovative networks
- accelerating the translation of R&D results into innovations with a high market impact
- improving the management of innovations, collaborations and networking in medium-sized enterprises

##### Target group:

- SMEs according to EU criteria
- Companies (including associated or partner enterprises) with less than 500 employees and an annual turnover of less than 50 million EUR
- non-profit research organizations and universities, public or private, as cooperation partners

##### Funding:

ZIM provides financial support for R&D activities on innovative products, procedures or technical services without restrictions in specific technologies or sectors. Individual projects as well as cooperation projects among several companies or between companies

and research institutes and universities are eligible to apply. Cooperative networks are subject to other funding conditions and are not described here.

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

<b>Funding for enterprises</b>	<b>max. 380.000 €</b>
<b>Research institutes</b>	<b>max. 190.000 €</b>
<b>Market launch services (SMEs only)</b>	<b>max. 50.000 €</b>

In cooperation projects, financial support for the entire project is limited to a maximum of 2,000,000 EUR.

Project periods may not exceed three years. Cooperation and individual projects can receive additional funding for consulting services that support the SME innovation, are directly related to the concept and timing of the R&D project and can be obtained from qualified external suppliers based on economic criteria.

### ZIM funding rates

<b>Company size</b>	<b>Individual projects</b>	<b>Collaboration projects</b>	<b>Collaboration projects with partners from other countries</b>
Small enterprises in the new federal German states	<b>45%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>55%</b>
Small enterprises in the old federal German states	<b>40%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>55%</b>
Medium-sized enterprises	<b>35%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Companies with up to 500 employees	<b>25%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>40%</b>

### **Procedure:**

Applications must be submitted to the responsible funding organization before the start of the project. Proposals are evaluated based on the quality and completeness of documentation, on funding priority and on competitive assessment..

### **Deadlines:**

Proposals are accepted at any time during the entire program period, until the end of 2019. Applicants may start the project at their own risk as soon as the funding organization has confirmed receipt of their application. A possible prolongation of the ZIM program will be decided in 2019.

### **Contact:**

[www.zim.de](http://www.zim.de)

### **ZIM International und IraSME**

At regular intervals, ZIM opens rolling calls for proposals to fund bilateral SME projects with various countries (currently more than 20 countries and regions). The German project partner receives funding by ZIM while the international partner is supported by a national funding program in the respective country. To date, calls for proposals have been set up by Spain, South Korea, Israel, Finland, Canada, Argentina, France, Japan, Austria, Flanders, Wallonia, Czech Republic, Russia, Catalonia and others. Some calls are organized within the IraSME framework [www.ira-sme.net](http://www.ira-sme.net).

An overview of current international calls for proposals can be found here: [www.zim.de/ZIM/Redaktion/DE/Dossiers/international-laender-uebersicht.html](http://www.zim.de/ZIM/Redaktion/DE/Dossiers/international-laender-uebersicht.html)

## 5.3.2 EXIST

### Goal:

The EXIST funding program ([www.exist.de](http://www.exist.de)) aims to create a better climate for business startups, foster entrepreneurship at universities and non-university research institutes and increase the number of technology-oriented and science-based companies in Germany.

EXIST consists of three pillars, two of which are of interest to the Biotechnology sector. One, the EXIST Startup Grant (Gründerstipendium) supports students, graduates and scientists in the preparation of innovative, technology-oriented and science-based business plans.

The other, the EXIST Research Transfer (Forschungstransfer), supports both the development work required to demonstrate the technical feasibility of research-based ideas, and the actual preparation of the business startup.

### Target group:

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

### Funding:

The EXIST Startup Grant (Gründerstipendium [www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Gruenderstipendium/inhalt.html](http://www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Gruenderstipendium/inhalt.html)) promotes innovative, technology-based business ideas and innovative services based on scientific findings. Grants are provided in different formats, for example, to secure living expenses, to purchase goods up to 10,000 EUR or for consulting services up to 5,000 EUR. The maximum funding period is one year. The business cannot be officially founded at the start of the funding period.

The EXIST Research Transfer (Forschungstransfer [www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Forschungstransfer/inhalt.html](http://www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Forschungstransfer/inhalt.html)) program has two phases. The first phase promotes further development of research results with the potential to become the basis of a business startup. Awardees should confirm the technical feasibility of the idea and prepare the business startup. In phase I, labor costs for up to four employees and material costs of up to 250,000 EUR are covered for a period of 18 months (or up to 36 months, decided on a case-by-case basis). In the second phase, the participants should commence business

activities and secure external follow-up funding. In this phase, a non-refundable grant of up to 180,000 EUR can be provided, limited to 75% of specific project costs.

#### **Procedure:**

The BMWi has commissioned the Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ) as a funding organization. Project proposals and applications must be submitted to the PtJ through the university or non-university research institute.

#### **Deadlines:**

Proposals for the EXIST Startup Grant (Gründerstipendium) may be submitted at any time. Cut-off dates for the EXIST Research Transfer (Forschungstransfer) program are published here: ([www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Forschungstransfer/inhalt.html](http://www.exist.de/DE/Programm/Exist-Forschungstransfer/inhalt.html)).

#### **Projektträger:**

Projektträger Jülich (PtJ)  
Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH  
Außenstelle Berlin  
Zimmerstraße 26-27  
10969 Berlin  
Phone: +49-30-20199-411  
E-Mail: [ptj-exist-gruenderstipendium@fz-juelich.de](mailto:ptj-exist-gruenderstipendium@fz-juelich.de)

### 5.3.3 WIPANO

#### Focus: Securing intellectual property rights for companies

##### Goal:

WIPANO funds the registration and commercialization of patents. The program targets SMEs interested in registering patents for their R&D results, either for the first time or for the first time in five years. Funding should enable SMEs to develop a strategic understanding of the patent system and create awareness for the benefits of intellectual property.

##### Target group:

WIPANO targets SMEs in the industrial business area and independent entrepreneurs in the scientific/industrial sector.

##### Funding:

Funding is available throughout the entire process of filing a patent application, from idea assessment to commercialization of the invention. Applicants are entitled to use service packages provided by qualified external providers at the SME's discretion. In addition, the grant covers the formal charges connected with the patent application.

The funding provided by WIPANO covers up to 50% of eligible costs limited to 33,150 EUR, so that up to 16,575 EUR can be granted.

##### Procedure:

Applications are submitted through the electronic form system „easy-Online“ (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/>). Visit the area „Companies“ on the WIPANO section of the BMWi webpage for more information ([www.wipano.de](http://www.wipano.de)).

##### Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted at any time.

##### Projektträger:

Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ)

Research Center (Forschungszentrum) Jülich GmbH

E-Mail: [wipano-ptj@fz-juelich.de](mailto:wipano-ptj@fz-juelich.de)

[www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de](http://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de)

### 5.3.4 BMWi-Innovation vouchers (go-Inno / go-digital)

#### Goal:

Financial vouchers for innovation activities are provided to promote the innovative power and competitiveness of small enterprises (go-Inno) and the digitization of SMEs (go-digital). Note that this overview describes the go-Inno program only. Information about go-digital can be found at [www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de/INNO/Navigation/DE/go-digital/go-digital.html](http://www.innovation-beratung-foerderung.de/INNO/Navigation/DE/go-digital/go-digital.html)

#### Target group:

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

#### Funding:

The go-Inno program provides funding for:

- preparing and executing technical and technological innovation projects (new products or processes)
- creating internal infrastructures for the successful implementation of innovation projects
- minimizing the technical and economic risks associated with product and process innovations
- reducing transaction costs for technology cooperation

Go-Inno covers 50% of the cost for consulting services on innovation topics by an authorized consulting agency. Small enterprises must contribute equity to a maximum of rates for 50 days. The total funding (as it relates to 50% of the cost) is limited to 27,500 EUR and covers three service steps: potential assessment, implementation concept and project management.

#### Deadlines:

Applications can be submitted at any time.

#### Funding organization:

Project Management Organization at the German Aerospace Center (Projekträger im Deutschen Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e. V., DLR).

[www.bmwi-innovationsgutscheine.de](http://www.bmwi-innovationsgutscheine.de)

## 6. Programs provided by the State of NRW

### 6.1 NRW / EU program for Growth and Employment (Wachstum und Beschäftigung, EFRE) 2014–2020

#### Goal:

The operational program (OP) EFRE.NRW 2014–2020 Growth and Employment (Wachstum und Beschäftigung) has a total budget volume of 2.4 billion EUR. One of the four focus areas is allocated to promote research, technological development and innovation. The program receives 1.2 billion EUR from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). An equal amount is provided as a national co-financing by the State of NRW, the Federal Government, the local community, university or private institution, depending on the individual funding priority. OP EFRE.NRW is the most important economic and structural policy instrument of the federal state to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the next years. Eight state ministries are involved in its implementation.

#### Funding/Procedure:

The NRW State Government selects high-quality, innovative funding projects in a competitive, two-phase procedure.

#### Deadlines:

Calls for proposals on various topics are open, with different requirements announced in the respective calls. The program ends in 2020, so applicants should make sure to contact the funding organization before filing a project proposal. The next deadlines for the EFRE Startup TRANSFER.NRW competition, for example, are on 31 October, 2019 and 30 April, 2020.

#### Contact:

The Driving Market Agency NRW (Leitmarkt.Agentur.NRW), a cooperative effort of the Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ) and ETN (Energy, Technology, Sustainability / Energie, Technologie, Nachhaltigkeit) at the Research Center Jülich GmbH, assists potential participants, accepts project plans and publishes relevant information on their website:

<http://leitmarktagentur.nrw.de>

## 6.2 Innovative SMEs (Mittelstand Innovativ!) – Financial vouchers for innovation and digitization activities

### Goal:

The NRW State Ministry for Economy, Innovation, Digitization and Energy (MWIDE) set up a funding program specifically for innovative mid-sized companies. The umbrella organization „Innovative SMEs“ (Mittelstand.innovativ!) comprises the funding lines „Innovation and Digitization Assistant“ (Innovations- und Digitalisierungsassistent[in]) and “Financial Vouchers for Innovation and Digitization” (Innovations- und Digitalisierungsgutschein).

The primary goal of financial vouchers for innovation activities is to support the research and development of new products and services from all fields and at all stages of the value chain. Projects working on significant quality improvements of existing products and services are also eligible for funding. Additionally, vouchers can be used to work on projects with labor-related and organizational objectives.

The Federal State of NRW provides financial vouchers for digitization activities to further the innovative capacity and growth of NRW companies in digitization and IT security. The program targets small and medium-sized enterprises in industry, as well as in the skilled crafts, trade and service sectors.

Participating SMEs are currently permitted to engage research institutions, universities or companies across Europe for the development work.

### Target group:

SMEs according to EU criteria and headquartered in NRW are eligible to apply.

### Funding:

50% of the cost for external analysis and consulting services, including development and implementation measures, are reimbursed. Smaller enterprises can receive an 80% refund. The value of each voucher ranges from 10,000 to 15,000 EUR. Companies can combine their vouchers for cumulative use on more extensive research projects.

Financial vouchers for innovation „type B“ can be redeemed for external scientific and technological consulting before starting the development of innovative products, servi-

ces or processes. For example, they can be used for technology or market research, feasibility studies, material or production studies (max. 10,000 EUR).

Financial vouchers for innovation „type R&D“ (F+E) can be applied toward external application-oriented research and development activities aligned to finalize innovative products, procedures and services for market or production launch. For example, vouchers can be used for design, production of prototypes, construction services, service engineering, quality assurance measures, system or process optimization (max. 15,000 EUR).

Financial vouchers for digitization „type A“ can be redeemed to analyze the status quo of digitization („digitization check“) or to determine the level of security of a company’s IT system. Grants are provided for the execution of SWOT analyses and the associated potential assessment and proposal for improvement (max. 10,000 EUR).

Financial vouchers for digitization „type B“ can be used to enable or implement commissions to address already proposed improvements or those identified in the digitization check, supporting the implementation of innovative digitization solutions (max. 15,000 EUR).

**Termine:**

Currently there is no submission of applications possible. A restart is planned at the beginning of 2020.

**Funding organization:**

Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ)

[www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/mittelstand-innovativ/innovationsgutscheine](http://www.ptj.de/projektfoerderung/mittelstand-innovativ/innovationsgutscheine)

## 6.3 Innovative SMEs (Mittelstand Innovativ!) – Innovation and Digitization Assistant

### Goal:

The NRW State Ministry for Economy, Innovation, Digitization and Energy (MWIDE) set up a funding program specifically for innovative mid-sized companies. The umbrella organization „Innovative SMEs“ (Mittelstand.innovativ!) comprises the funding lines „Innovation and Digitization Assistant“ (Innovations- und Digitalisierungsassistent[in]) and “Financial Vouchers for Innovation and Digitization” (Innovations- und Digitalisierungsgutschein).

Innovation Assistants should provide knowledge and technology transfer in all fields to increase the competitiveness of the company. This includes the generation of new technical findings, the development and improvement of products and production procedures, the development and improvement of business, commercialization and sales infrastructures, as well as social innovations (process and service innovations).

The funding tool „Digitization Assistant“ is a building block prioritizing the conceptualization of new digital business models, the digitization of processes, products and services, and well as IT security. The stronger emphasis on the current funding needs in the digitization and IT security fields leads to a more effective and recognized Assistant model.

### Target group:

Companies headquartered in NRW with up to 50 employees, of which not more than five are academics, are eligible to apply.

### Funding:

The prerequisite for funding is to hire an academic in the role of Digitization Assistant for at least 24 months. Companies not employing any academics yet can obtain an annual grant of up to 22,500 EUR. Companies employing a maximum of five academics can receive up to 15,000 EUR per year. Additional regulations are listed in the terms and conditions of the funding program.

Funding is granted as a *de minimis* aid for up to two years. Applications are evaluated on a first-come-first-serve basis according to date of receipt. Delays can occur if the budget for the respective year has been used up.

**Deadline:**

Currently there is no submission of applications possible. A restart is planned at the beginning of 2020.

**Funding organization:**

Project Management Organization Jülich (Projektträger Jülich, PtJ)

[www.ptj.de/innovationsassistent](http://www.ptj.de/innovationsassistent)

## 6.4 NRW.BANK.Innovative Enterprises (Innovative Unternehmen)

### Goal:

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

### Targetgroup:

The target group for this program are industrial companies and entrepreneurs that are either:

- small or mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) or
- mid-sized enterprises (Small MidCaps)

### Funding:

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

- Type of funding: Installment loan
- Financing rate: up to 100% of eligible costs
- Minimum credit amount: 100,000 EUR
- Maximum amount: 7,500,000 EUR
- Financing term for operating materials: 3 or 5 years
- Financing term for investment activities: 5, 7 or 10 years
- Interest rate: fixed over the entire financing term
- Redemption rate: constant, every three months
- Disbursement rate: 100%

### Procedure:

Applications should be filed using the appropriate forms at a credit institute of the applicant's choice (principal bank). The principal bank forwards the request – if required, via a centralized institution – to the NRW.BANK. Investments must be made within the State of NRW.

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

### **Funding organization:**

NRW.BANK

Service Center

Phone: +49-211 91741-4800

E-Mail: [info@nrwbank.de](mailto:info@nrwbank.de)  
[www.nrwbank.de](http://www.nrwbank.de)

The NRW.Innovative Enterprises (NRW.Innovative Unternehmen) program is described here as an example of innovation funding. Additional programs can be found at [www.nrwbank.de](http://www.nrwbank.de). Support and coaching are available at:

### **Funding consulting for Rhineland and Westphalia (Förderberatung Rheinland und Westfalen)**

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 supplied, for example, by the State of NRW, the KfW Bank Group and the Agricultural Annuity Bank (Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank). Funded enterprises receive independent and free-of-charge consulting for their financing projects at, for example, the NRW.BANK Funding Consultation Days.

### **Financial Guide**

The Financial Guidance (Finanzierungsbegleitung) team supports SMEs from NRW with more extensive and long-term consulting needs (for example, growth plans, securing liquidity or succession plans) and founders from NRW with innovative and sophisticated project plans. Public funding is available from the State of NRW, the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union. The team offers individual, neutral, and independent 1:1 consultancy to help companies optimize their financing structure.

Phone: +49-211 91741-4700

E-Mail: [finanzierungsbegleitung@nrwbank.de](mailto:finanzierungsbegleitung@nrwbank.de)  
[www.nrwbank.de/finanzierungsbegleitung](http://www.nrwbank.de/finanzierungsbegleitung)

## 7. Business Angels Netzwerk BIO.NRW

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

The network supports creative Life Science spin-off companies and promising young enterprises, but also international Biotech/Life Science companies interested in locating their business to NRW. In addition to startup funding, the BIO.NRW Business Angels support follow-up financing of established companies, enabling them to reach the next development stage. With their know-how, their network of contacts and their capital, Business Angels are essential for the successful start of a business.

### Circles:

Circles of private investors, fund representatives and business angels with a relevant background interested in investing in young Biotechnology/Life Science enterprises are part of the BIO.NRW Business Angel Network.

Both founders and young entrepreneurs can pitch their ideas to a circle of selected private, venture capital and corporate venture investors and development banks to secure funding. The BIO.NRW Business Angel Circles are strictly confidential and held roughly every two months. More than 120 startups, founders and SMEs have used the opportunity to present and discuss their business models in a professional and intimate environment.

Participation in the circles is by invitation only, following a selection process.

### Requests should be directed to:

Dr. Bernward Garthoff

Tel.: +49-211 385 469 9200

E-Mail: [bio.nrw@bio.nrw.de](mailto:bio.nrw@bio.nrw.de)

[www.bio.nrw.de](http://www.bio.nrw.de)

## 8. Public financial support for export activities

Companies in Germany and in NRW can benefit from a broad range of financial support to build and expand their export activities. The main goal of these programs is to strengthen the international competitiveness of mid-sized enterprises and to secure employment in Germany.

The Federal Government uses investment guarantees to mitigate the political risk of direct investments 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 several variants of export credit guarantees. The German Government has commissioned the Euler Hermes Corporation (Euler Hermes Aktiengesellschaft) and PricewaterhouseCoopers GmbH (PwC) as mandataries to execute and process these funding activities.

The KfW Bank Group offers various funding programs to mid-sized companies for activities abroad. These include the KfW Entrepreneur Loan (Unternehmerkredit) and the KfW Program for Renewable Energies (Erneuerbare Energien), Efficient Energy (Energieeffizienz) and Environment (Umwelt).

The Federal State of NRW provides an indemnity bond to support foreign operations with an impact on the national economy. The NRW Development Bank (NRW.BANK) offers the programs NRW.BANK Foreign Credit (Auslandskredit) and NRW.BANK Export (Auslandsexport) as specific financial aid to promote foreign operations of NRW companies.

Finally, the NRW.International GmbH operates on behalf of the State Government of NRW to support the activities of SMEs in relevant growing markets by organizing joint exhibition booths, funding of small groups as well as delegation and company trips.

### Contact:

NRW.BANK EU and Foreign Trade Promotion Department (EU- und Außenwirtschaftsförderung der NRW.BANK)

Phone: +49-211 91741 4000

E-Mail: [ausland@nrwbank.de](mailto:ausland@nrwbank.de)

## 9. NRW.Europa – Enterprise Europe Network

The ZENIT GmbH, NRW.International and the NRW.BANK jointly offer the NRW.Europa program to provide the best possible support for cross-border business in Europe. NRW.Europa provides comprehensive consulting services for international growth and innovation projects and facilitates the search for national and international business partners and the use of funding programs.

The offering targets companies, industry- and research-related institutions and universities in NRW, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

NRW.Europa is part of the Enterprise Europe Network (<http://een.ec.europa.eu/>), created by the EU Commission at the beginning of 2008. Today, the network is represented in almost 50 countries, offering comprehensive service for all EU-related inquiries under one roof.

The Enterprise Europe Network services are particularly helpful for the implementation of innovation projects:

- use of financing and funding tools for innovation and investment projects
- search for European partners for technology transfer, research projects and sales
- support of international growth projects
- innovation-related services and innovation management

The EU and Foreign Trade Promotion Department at NRW.BANK provides information and consulting on public financial aid and funding tools offered by the NRW.BANK, the NRW State Government, the Federal Government and the European Union to support international growth activities of SMEs in NRW.

In addition, the NRW.BANK provides information on:

- national investment funding programs, co-financed by the European Structural Fund
- incentives for investments in the European internal market
- funding products and programs offered by state banks in Europe

**NRW.Europa offers a free evaluation service for project proposals and applications.**

The ZENIT GmbH represents the Federal State of NRW within the network in the sector groups Health and Biochemical Technologies (BioChemTech)..

**Kontakt:**

NRW.Europa Funding Hotline (Förderhotline)

ZENIT GmbH

Phone: +49-208 30004-2020

NRW.Europa Hotline

NRW.BANK EU and Foreign Trade Promotion Department (EU- und Außenwirtschaftsförderung)

Phone: +49-211 91741-4000

E-Mail: [info@nrweuropa.de](mailto:info@nrweuropa.de)

[www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu](http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu)

[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)



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BIO Clustermanagement NRW GmbH  
Merowingerplatz 1  
40225 Düsseldorf, Germany

phone: +49 (0) 211 942 150 49  
mail: [info@bioclustermanagement.de](mailto:info@bioclustermanagement.de)  
web: [www.bioclustermanagement.de](http://www.bioclustermanagement.de)

## Contact

### BIO.NRW

Phone: 0211 385469-9200

E-Mail: [bio.nrw@bio.nrw.de](mailto:bio.nrw@bio.nrw.de)  
[www.bio.nrw.de](http://www.bio.nrw.de)

### NRW.Europa

ZENIT GmbH

Phone: 0208 30004-2020

E-Mail: [info@nrweuropa.de](mailto:info@nrweuropa.de)  
[www.nrweuropa.de](http://www.nrweuropa.de)

Das Manuskript entstand in Kooperation von der ZENIT GmbH / NRW.Europa ([www.zenit.de](http://www.zenit.de))  
mit BIO.NRW The Home of Biotech ([www.bio.nrw.de](http://www.bio.nrw.de)).

NRW.EUROPA wird gefördert durch die Europäische Kommission, das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen und die NRW.BANK



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