

**Application guidelines for the programme
Transfer.Science to Spin-off
(Transfer.S2S)**



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Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this translation. Nevertheless, the Christian Doppler Forschungsgesellschaft cannot assume responsibility for any errors that may inadvertently have occurred. In the event of any discrepancy, the German version is to be taken as valid. TRANSLATED 27.08.2024



Foreword

The Christian Doppler Forschungsgesellschaft (CDG) is regarded in Austria as a pioneer for successful cooperation between science and business and promotes application-oriented basic research in CD Laboratories and JR Centres. Based on a recommendation from the Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology and Innovation, the CDG received funding from the "Fonds Zukunft Österreich" (FZÖ) to further develop its successful funding model. This (pilot) call for proposals is intended to add a further funding line to the existing model with the aim of bringing basic research to application.

Abstract

The "Transfer.S2S" programme promotes application-oriented basic research by scientists who have ideas to turn their basic research into innovative products or services. Projects with a duration of up to three years with an interim evaluation before the end of the second year are 100% funded. During the first two years, the development of a commercialisation strategy is mandatory. The funding programme offers accompanying business mentoring and scientific mentoring for this purpose. An evaluation with a "stop-or-go" decision is carried out before the end of the second year. In the event of an extension, the research can be adapted to requirements arising from the commercialisation strategy in the third year if necessary.

After the end of the Transfer.S2S programme funding, existing funding instruments (e.g. from Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) or aws) can be applied for further development or commercialisation (e.g. for a spin-off).



1. Programme objective

The research funding programmes of the Christian Doppler Forschungsgesellschaft support cooperation between science and business. In the CD Laboratories and JR Centres, scientists at universities, universities of applied sciences and non-university research institutions work in close cooperation with companies, which cover around 50% of the research costs.

Despite almost continuous growth in the number of research units funded by the CDG, the overall picture for Austria shows that the proportion of companies cooperating with universities or non-university research institutions has been declining since 2016¹. As countermeasures, the federal government has set itself the goal of increasing the number of R&D-active companies by 20% and increasing the number of economically successful academic spin-offs by 100% in its RTI Strategy 2030².

In order to achieve these goals, the CDG is expanding its existing funding programmes to include the "Transfer.Science to Spin-off" (Transfer.S2S) pilot programme funded by the FZÖ. The CDG aims to carry out further calls for proposals depending on the allocation of funds from the FZÖ.

Transfer.S2S supports the transfer of basic knowledge to innovative commercial applications. The central question comes from scientists who derive ideas for future applications from their high-quality basic research. The scientists are supported in carrying out the necessary basic or near-basic research work with an application perspective over a maximum period of three years. An essential component of the funding programme is the development of a commercialisation strategy in order to be able to transfer the basic research results achieved into an application following the Transfer.S2S funding. Ideally, the Transfer.S2S programme creates the basis for later commercialisation of the research results (e.g. by founding a start-up, licensing patents, etc.).

The funded projects focus on application-oriented basic research with the aim that the results of this research will form the basis for future innovation in the economy. The expected research results should offer the prospect of economic and social benefits. Nevertheless, the projects must be high-risk in terms of their output. High-risk ideas with a high potential for significant innovation are the focus of the programme.

¹ RFTE. (2023). Bericht zur wissenschaftlichen und technologischen Leistungsfähigkeit Österreichs 2023. Wien: Rat für Forschung und Technologieentwicklung.

² FTI-Strategie 2030. Strategie der Bundesregierung für Forschung, Technologie und Innovation. Wien, 2020



2. Funding applicants

Eligible applicants are

- Universities according to UG,
- Universities of applied sciences according to FHStG,
- Private universities in accordance with PrivHG and
- Central research institutions according to FoFinaG.

They appoint the intended principal investigator (applicant) to carry out the project. The application is the responsibility of the intended principal investigator, i.e. the applicant. He/she is the main source of the scientific ideas of the application. The principal investigator must be employed at the research institution at the time the project begins and have a doctorate or comparable scientific qualification (evidenced by publications). The research institution provides the necessary infrastructure. Personnel costs for the principal investigator are eligible for funding if the principal investigator does not have a permanent employment contract or a career position or professorship at the university/university of applied sciences. The application must be signed by the rectorate/management of the research institution. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted by a research organisation.

3. Volume and duration of the projects

- Total volume of the call: EUR 6,5 million
- Project duration: max. 3 years
- Funding rate: 100 %
- Max. costs per project: EUR 750.000

4. Submission

The application documents must be sent completely and in electronic form as pdf files to transfer.s2s@cdg.ac.at by 20 December 2024. The following documents must be submitted:

- Application form signed by the principal investigator and the rectorate/management of the research institution (with an RTR-verifiable electronic signature or as a clearly legible scan).
- Scientific application (see point 5., submission of one document, not several individual documents)



5. Requirements for the scientific application

The application must be written in English and has a maximum of 20 pages including all parts of the application. There are no specifications regarding font size or line spacing, but good readability is a prerequisite. The application should present the project briefly and concisely so that experts can assess the scientific quality and potential for commercialisation. The evaluation criteria are listed under point 7.

The application consists of:

- Cover sheet with details of
 - Applicant university/university of applied sciences/research institution
 - Project management
 - If applicable: Co-authors of the research proposal
 - Name of the project
 - Place and date
- Table of contents
- Abbreviations
- Brief description of the idea
(0,5 pages)
- If applicable: specification of the contribution of the respective co-authors to the research proposal
- State of knowledge, own preliminary work in the field
(2 pages)
- Problems, solutions, hypotheses, goals
(2 pages)
- Planned work incl. brief description of methods
(3 pages)
- Expected innovation and expected benefits as well as ideas for subsequent commercialisation
(1 page)
- Rough concept for dealing with IPR (in coordination with the university/university of applied sciences/research institution)
(0,5 pages)
- Presentation of risks
(0,5 pages)
- Brief description of the project management
 - Curriculum vitae
 - Details of the most important publications
 - Why can this particular person solve the problem?
(2 pages)
- If applicable: information on co-operations
- Brief description or profile of the employees
(0,5 pages)
- Information on existing infrastructure



(0,5 pages)

- Cost plan as per template with description of other costs
(1 page)
- References

The page numbers given for the individual points are to be understood as a guideline; the maximum number of pages of 20 must not be exceeded. The scientific application must be submitted as a pdf file (one document, not several individual documents with the exception of the application form, which is submitted as a separate pdf file).

6. Eligible costs

- Eligible costs are all expenses or expenditure attributable to the research project that are incurred directly, actually and in addition (to conventional operating expenses) for the duration of the funded research activities. Costs for basic infrastructure of the research institution are not eligible for funding.
- If the principal investigator does not have a permanent employment contract or a career position or professorship at the university/university of applied sciences, personnel costs for the principal investigator are eligible for funding (personnel costs for postdocs or senior postdocs see point 6.1.).
- Personnel costs can be claimed in accordance with the CDG's scheme of personnel costs or, if applicable, in accordance with the collective agreement (see point 6.1.).
- Other costs can be subsidised up to a maximum of 20% of the personnel costs (see point 6.2).

Funding will only be provided for costs that correspond to the eligible costs of this call for proposals after invoicing (annually) and verification by the CDG (annually on the basis of the reports on expenditure of funds submitted, e.g. payroll account and invoice to the CDG, receipts, etc.).

6.1. The CDG's scheme of personnel costs

The CDG's scheme of personnel costs is based on the personnel cost rates of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) 2024, taking into account the provisions of the collective contract for Austrian universities. Table 1 shows the CDG's scheme of personnel costs.

Please note here:

- Remuneration including all incidental wage costs, taxes and other remuneration components are paid by the university/university of applied sciences/research institution. The personnel cost rates listed in Table 1 therefore include the employer's share and the employee's share.
- Personnel cost rates higher than those listed are not eligible for funding unless a collective agreement provides for a higher rate.
- Additional voluntary salary components are not eligible for subsidisation.



- The pension provisions correspond to those in the collective contract for Austrian universities, which envisages a back-payment after two years. The corresponding reserves are eligible for funding. However, no other reserves or savings may be recognised.
- It is recommended to include a valorisation of personnel costs in the multi-year plan. According to its economic forecast from December 2023, the Austrian National Bank expects inflation of 4,0%, 3,0% and 2,5% for the years 2024 to 2026.

Table 1: Personnel cost rates of CDG 2024 (incl. employer's share)

Personnel	Max. Cost rate/year	h/w	Remark
Senior Postdoc	EUR 92.150	40	Categorisation as a Senior Postdoc can only take place after at least three years of Postdoc research activity at a university/university of applied sciences/research institution. Max. one Senior Postdoc per application).
Postdoc	EUR 84.030	40	Classification as a Postdoc can only take place after completion of the doctoral programme.
Graduate student	EUR 63.360	40	Specification for graduates of a medical degree programme according to the new curriculum: Dr.med. corresponds to a diploma degree, only after completion of the PhD programme is the salary for postdocs permissible.
Diploma student, master student, student helper	EUR 23.060	20	The employment of diploma students and master students is permitted for a maximum of 20 hours per week.
technician		40	Technical assistants, whose time is charged for as required.
BMA ³	EUR 56.420		
CTA ⁴	EUR 47.400		
MTF ⁵	EUR 52.540		
TF ⁶	EUR 43.550		

6.2. Other costs

Other costs can be subsidised up to a maximum of 20% of the personnel costs. The following other costs are eligible for funding:

³ Biomedical analyst

⁴ Chemical-technical assistant

⁵ Medical technical assistant

⁶ Technical assistant, mechanic, laboratory technician, programmer



6.2.1. Material costs

- Low-value assets (GWG, i.e. equipment up to an acquisition value of EUR 1.000 excl. VAT)
- Materials and consumables

6.2.2. Fixed assets/inventory

Fixed assets/inventory can be purchased up to a maximum of EUR 15.000 within the first 18 months. The date of acquisition is the date of commissioning of the respective equipment. Fixed assets are inventoried by the university/university of applied sciences/research institution. The procurement regulations of the federal government and the internal guidelines of the university/university of applied sciences/research institution must be complied with.

The following costs in connection with fixed assets are eligible:

- Acquisition costs for inventory as defined by the Business Enterprise Code, i.e. equipment and software licences with an acquisition value of EUR 1.000 or more excluding VAT (including costs for transport, installation and necessary adaptations).
- The share of costs attributable to the project for the acquisition or adaptation of special infrastructure directly related to the project (e.g. installation of air conditioning, conversion of rooms for the installation of equipment).

6.2.3. Costs for third-party services

- Purchase of research and consulting services
- Sample preparation, external measurements and material testing
- Specialised IT services
- Pro rata costs for the utilisation of special infrastructure, such as (shared) use of central scientific (large-scale) equipment (e.g. measuring and testing facilities, electron microscopes, computing time on large computer systems, use of clean rooms, etc.)

The federal procurement regulations must be complied with when awarding contracts. Corresponding documentation must be enclosed with the documents relating to the award of the contract.

6.2.4. Travel costs

Travel costs of persons directly involved in the research work of the project are eligible for funding in accordance with the travel fee regulations applicable at the university/university of applied sciences/research institution or, subsidiarily, the federal travel fee regulations.

6.2.5. Additional costs

Publication costs, scientific literature and journals, access to online media, etc.

7. Evaluation and decision on the applications

- Applications are formally checked by the CDG Secretariat.
- Formally correct applications are reviewed by external international experts. Up to two reviews per application are obtained. The CDG can carry out a preliminary review of applications and reject applications without an external review if the minimum criteria are not met.

Criteria for evaluation are:

- Is the research project at a high level?
- Have clear goals been defined?
- Is the theoretical background adequately presented?
- Is the proposed methodology promising?
- Is the project innovative?
- Does the idea of realisation towards application seem sensible and plausible?
- Does the project have potential for later commercialisation?
- Does the principal investigator have sufficient expertise?
- Based on the reviews, hearings are carried out in front of a specially appointed jury (consisting of members of the boards of the CDG and, if necessary, other experts). Applications whose reviews are not sufficiently positive will not be invited to the hearing and will be rejected.
- For the hearing, each principal investigator has a maximum of ten minutes to present the project and ten minutes for discussion.
- In addition to the reviews, the following questions will be considered at the hearings and incorporated into the jury's decision:
 - Are the expected research results essential for the subsequent proposed application?
 - Does the project have potential for later commercialisation?
 - What risks could arise for commercialisation?
 - What impact will the project have on Austria as a business location if it is successful?
- After the hearings, the jury makes recommendations as to which applications should be funded or rejected and, if necessary, ranks the applications to be funded. If there are insufficient funds to fund all applications that have been favourably assessed, the CDG Executive Board makes a decision based on this ranking.
- The CDG Executive Board is expected to make the final decisions in June 2025, or September 2025 at the latest.
- Approved projects must start by 1 October 2025 at the latest.



8. Mentoring Programme

The project includes business mentoring for the project teams to develop the commercialisation strategy and scientific mentoring.

The scientific mentors are members of the Association's organs and provide support in scientific matters and in adapting the research plan with regard to the commercialisation strategy.

Business mentoring is provided by Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft mbH (aws) and supports the project teams in developing their entrepreneurial skills and in developing a commercialisation strategy. It is intended to prepare the scientists for entrepreneurial practice.

9. Creation of a commercialisation strategy and evaluation

An evaluation of the project takes place before the end of the second research year. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the progress of the research and the commercialisation strategy for the subsequent exploitation of the results.

The research plans for the final year are coordinated with the academic mentors, taking into account the commercialisation strategy. An interim report containing the results of the research work, the commercialisation strategy and the agreed research plan will be submitted to the CDG before the end of the second research year. Based on this, an evaluation event will be organised, probably in the form of a pitch. The evaluation forms the basis for the decision as to whether the funding will be extended (stop-or-go decision). Details of the evaluation will be finalised and communicated to the principal investigators in good time.

10. Final report

At the end of the project, a final report is to be prepared in which the research results and the updated commercialisation strategy are presented.

11. Legislation and standards

Once a funding decision has been made in favour of the applicant, a funding contract must be signed by the applicant, who thereby becomes the funding recipient. The funding contract contains, among other things, further points on the proper use of funds, reporting obligations, repayment conditions and data protection provisions.

If funding is granted, applicants are obliged to comply with the legal and safety regulations applicable to the project (e.g. Disability Discrimination Act, Federal Act on the Equal Treatment of Women and Men in Work) and to obtain all necessary authorisations (e.g. from the ethics commission). Necessary authorisations must be obtained before the start of the project. The Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (OeAWI) must be complied with.



12. Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the call for applications, please contact Jörg Schneckner (+43 1 5042205-30, joerg.schneckner@cdg.ac.at).