

How can you apply for bilateral funding or network management?

Step 1: Find the right partner

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

Step 2: Plan your project

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

Step 3: Submit proposals

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

Bilateral funding agreements

Argentina (ANPCyT)	Japan (NEDO)
Brazil (MDIC)	Singapore (Enterprise)
Canada (NRC)	South Korea (KIAT)
Catalonia/Spain (ACCIO)	Sweden (Vinnova)
Finland (Business Finland)	Taiwan (ITRI)
France (BPI FRANCE)	Vietnam (MOST)

→ www.zim.de/international

Multilateral funding network

→ www.ira-sme.net | www.eureka.dlr.de

Contact to the responsible project management agency

International Coordination & joint R&D cooperation projects

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International Cooperation Projects & Networks in ZIM

*Funding for transnational joint R&D
cooperation projects & network management*



How can international partners cooperate?

In general, it is always possible to include foreign partners in ZIM cooperation projects and networks. However, the ZIM-programme only provides financial support for the German partners involved. Foreign partners have to secure their own funding.

To encourage partnerships between German and foreign companies as well as optionally research and technology organizations (RTOs), the BMWi and several ministries and funding organizations from other countries have launched a number of bi- and multilateral funding agreements to support joint R&D projects.

These funding agreements provide financial support for joint R&D projects from the governments and national programmes involved. The cooperation projects should focus on the development of new and innovative technical products, technology-based services, or processes with strong market potential. German companies benefit from a 10% increase in funding (up to a maximum of 55%).

The BMWi has also launched a pilot project to internationalize cooperation networks within ZIM which runs until the end of 2019.

Funding is provided for managing the network (management and organization services). Management services are intended to aid the conceptual preparation and implementation of R&D cooperation projects within the network, the coordination of R&D activities and the consolidation of the network. In international networks the services are intended to help support international activities as well. German partners benefit from improved funding conditions (increased funding rates and runtime).

What should foreign partners keep in mind?

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

What should ZIM joint R&D cooperation projects involve?

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

What should ZIM international cooperation networks involve?

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

How is the German funding structured?

Funding source

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

Funding rates for cooperation projects

- up to 55% of the maximum eligible project costs (€380,000 per company)
- 100% of the maximum eligible project costs (€190,000 per research institute)

Funding rates for international cooperation networks:

- 95% of the costs in Phase 1 running up to 18 months (€ 190.000 per network)
- 80% – 40% of the costs in Phase 2 running up to 3 years (€ 260.000 per network)

Eligibility criteria:

- up to 499 employees and
- less than €50 million in annual turnover or a balance sheet of no more than €43 million
- cooperation projects: at least one SME in each country
- international cooperation network: one German network manager with a mandate by 4 German partners as well as 3 international partners

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

→ www.zim.de/international