Regulations governing the funding of projects under the initiative “Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!” (Science Creating Prospects for the Region)

18 December 2020

1  Aim and purpose of funding, legal basis

1.1  Aim and purpose of funding

The Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas (Strukturstärkungsgesetz Kohleregionen, StStG) of 8 August 2020 (Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I p. 1795) entered into force on 14 August 2020. Section 17 no. 29 of the StStG provides for “the establishment of two new institutionally funded large-scale research centres according to Helmholtz or equivalent principles following a competitive procedure, one of them in Saxon Lusatia and the other in the Central German coalfield” (cf. section 2 of the StStG for the definition of the stipulated locations).

The aim of the funding of projects under the initiative “Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!” (Science Creating Prospects for the Region) is to establish two new large-scale research centres with an international profile that will attract scientists from around the world who will conduct excellent research and thus contribute to solving the major challenges facing society. The research centres will contribute to the long-term strengthening of science and innovation in Germany by way of their structural and thematic orientation; they will also contribute significantly to the long-term development of their locations through close links with local higher education institutions and companies. The establishment of the new large-scale research centres is intended to shape the structural transformation of Saxon Lusatia and the Central German Coalfield in a future-oriented way, and in particular to help generate economic growth and the creation of new jobs. A major focus of the new research centres will therefore be on technology transfer and the promotion of innovation in the local region, in Germany and in Europe. For this purpose, new forward-looking models of structural cooperation between science and industry are to be implemented.

In order to achieve this funding aim, the BMBF is funding a) the development and elaboration of proposals for the two new research centres, and b) the preparatory measures needed for their establishment and the development of the scientific activities. The framework for this funding measure is provided by the initiative “Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!”(Science Creating Prospects for the Region) with its invitation to outstanding
scientists from both Germany and abroad to submit innovative ideas for the establishment of the two new research centres. The most promising outline proposals for the establishment of these research centres will be selected in a competitive procedure on the basis of an external scientific evaluation. In particular, the competition will involve the determination of the thematic orientation of the research centres and their location within the two specified regions.

Funding will be provided in two successive phases.

a) Funding phase I – Conceptual phase:

In a first step, excellent scientists will submit innovative ideas for the establishment of the two new research centres in the form of outline proposals. Approximately three of these outline proposals per designated region will be selected for temporary funding of up to EUR 500,000 (for a period of about six months) so that they can be developed into fully assessable proposals. The selection will be made on the basis of the recommendations issued by a "perspectives commission" consisting of high-ranking experts.

b) Funding phase II – Development phase:

In the second phase, the proposals elaborated for the establishment of the two new research centres will be selected on the basis of an external evaluation process. The successful proposals will be granted three years of project funding (with the option of a one-off extension) in order to prepare the establishment of the centres. This funding is intended for the development of the scientific activities and administrative expertise.

The measure will be funded in accordance with the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas (Strukturstärkungsgesetz Kohleregionen, StStG).

The Act provides for a switch to institutional funding upon establishment. A new evaluation is planned after completion of the development phase to support this process. In the long term, if they prove successful in scientific terms, the research centres can expect to receive a currently envisaged annual budget of up to 170 million euros each.

In line with the requirement of the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas (StStG) for the new research centres to be established “according to Helmholtz or equivalent principles”, the aim is that, following establishment, the two new research institutions will receive permanent funding from the Federal Government and the host Land and operate under conditions similar to those of the Helmholtz centres. The funding providers will decide if the aim should be for the proposed centres to become members of existing science
organizations following the selection of the proposals for their establishment and on the basis of their thematic and structural orientation.

1.2 Legal basis

The Federal Government will award grants in accordance with these funding regulations, sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the administrative regulations adopted thereunder as well as the BMBF's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK). There is no legal entitlement to a grant. The granting authority will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

2 Object of funding

Funding will be provided for the new large-scale research centres in order to contribute towards the long-term strengthening of German science and innovation and to the sustainable development of their local regions by way of close links to local universities and companies and a focus on the transfer of research results. The new large-scale research centres will be selected in a competitive process (see sections 7.2 and 7.3 for the different phases and steps of the application procedure).

2.1 Work in the conceptual development phase

Under this call, the BMBF will fund approximately six projects for six months (approx. three per planned research centre) with up to EUR 500,000 for the purpose of elaborating the ideas into assessable proposals (funding phase I – conceptual phase). The conceptual development phase is intended to facilitate networking and coordination and elaboration of a joint scientific strategy. As part of the conceptual development phase, joint scientific and organizational planning is supported in order to provide the basis for the realization of a new large-scale research centre.

The proposal elaborated in funding phase I provides the basis for the development of the new large-scale research centre in each case. Funding can be provided, for example, for

- Measures for the comprehensive strategic analysis of the research field, including national as well as international trends and developments;
- Assessment of existing expertise, analysis of needs;
- Measures to promote exchange and the joint development and coordination of a detailed joint overall proposal for a new large-scale research centre;
- Drawing up of an impact analysis/risk analysis and a risk management plan for the overall proposal;
- Feasibility studies.

The overall proposal produced in the conceptual development phase will describe the necessary research and structural elements as well as the processes which will enable the establishment and development of the centre. The scientific proposal will form the basis of the future centre’s research programme which will contain an appropriate number of thematic research focuses. The overall proposal will include the following aspects, among others:

- Thematic research focuses
- Infrastructures required for a successful implementation of the research programme; use of existing structures where appropriate and possible. The added value and complementarity of proposed new infrastructures in relation to existing infrastructures must be described.
- Detailed information on how cooperation with potential partners will be organized. (The system of governance will then be determined by the funding providers with the involvement of the participants and taking account of the specific conditions such as possible plans for the proposed centre to become a member of an existing research organization.)
- Well-founded financial plan and a milestone plan for the development of the future centre.

A detailed list specifying the length and the required contents of the proposal to be elaborated is given in section 7.3.1.

2.2 Development of the large-scale research centre

In the second funding phase (development phase), research projects for the development of the scientific activities as well as administrative competence-building and innovation-supporting activities will be funded on the basis of the two selected proposals in preparation for the establishment of the two new research centres. As a rule, funding will be provided for three years and can be extended once by up to three more years. In funding phase II, all activities will be funded that are needed for the development of the new large-scale research centre. These will also be based on the selected proposal. Funding can be provided, for example, for

- Development of the research focuses set out in the proposal;
- Development of the organizational structure (including scientific and administrative staff of the new research centre);
- Development of the infrastructure;
- Support needed from experts for the creation of a system of governance;
- Legal advice and other services to support the establishment of the new centre;

The aim of the funding is the establishment of two new research centres as legally independent institutions in Saxon Lusatia and the Central German Coalfield. The aim is for a switch to institutional funding upon the establishment of each centre. The timing of the establishment depends on the chosen system of governance and the progress made in funding phase II.

### 3 Funding recipients

#### 3.1 Funding phase I – Conceptual phase:

The call to submit outline proposals is aimed at internationally reputed scientists who consider themselves appropriately qualified to develop and implement an idea for the establishment of a large-scale research centre in one of the two specified regions. Outline proposals are permitted from scientists who are working abroad at the time of application and who wish to engage in the establishment of the new institutions on a long-term basis in the specified regions.

In the conceptual phase, funding for individual scientists is provided to a higher education institution or a non-university research institution. Scientists from abroad are therefore particularly invited to collaborate with a university or non-university research institution for funding phase I. Applications for funding phase I may be submitted by state-funded and state-recognized higher education institutions and by non-university research institutions. Participation in more than one outline proposal in permitted.

Applicants must have the necessary expertise, capability and reliability to carry out the project. They must also guarantee the proper use of funds. Grant recipients must be able to provide evidence of the appropriate use of funds.

Commercially active institutions and companies are not eligible to apply. If an institution performs commercial as well as non-commercial activities, it is eligible to apply if the non-commercial and the commercial activities and their costs, financing and revenues can be clearly separated from each other so that there can be no risk of cross-subsidization of the commercial activity.
Applicants are permitted to form a collaborative alliance. Legal persons under public or private law (city or local municipalities or commercial companies) may be included as associated partners.

A connection between the applicants and the envisaged location of the centre is not a condition to qualify for funding phase I. If no cooperation with one or more regional higher education institutions and/or non-university research institutions exists in the first funding phase, the applicants will be expected to establish a strategic partnership in the conceptual phase.

3.2 Funding phase II – Development phase:

In the second phase, the best proposals for the establishment of the new research centres will be selected from among the proposals elaborated in funding phase I. These will be granted funding to move ahead with the development of the two new research centres.

Applicants that have gone through the first funding phase are eligible for funding phase II. It is permissible for the scientist responsible for the original outline proposal to change to a different higher education institution or research institution (ideally in the local region). The involvement of further project partners is desirable in funding phase II.

Applications may be submitted by legal persons under public law (city or local municipalities) as well as universities and non-university research institutions.

Further collaboration partners are possible, particularly from industry (as associated partners; see also section 4 Special Prerequisites for Funding). The support of the city or local municipality/ies where the site is proposed will be a precondition in the second funding phase.

3.3 Further preconditions

Funding will only be provided for non-commercial activities of the stated applicants. Concerning the conditions for when state aid is or is not deemed to be involved, and the extent to which funding can be provided without constituting aid, please consult the Framework for State Aid for R&D&I. The results from the funded project may only be used in Germany or the EEA4 and Switzerland.
Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the Länder can only be granted project funding supplementary to their institutional funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs under certain conditions.

4 Special prerequisites for funding

The partners in a collaborative project must set out the terms of cooperation in a written agreement. All collaboration partners, including those which are research institutions within the meaning of Article 2(83) GBER, must ensure that no indirect aid flows to companies under the collaboration. The provisions of Section 2.2 of the Commission communication concerning the Framework for State Aid for R&D&I (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014, p. 1) must be observed. Before a funding decision on a collaborative project is taken, the partners must prove that they have reached a basic consensus on further criteria stipulated by the BMBF (cf. BMBF leaflet No. 0110)².

5 Type, scope and rates of funding

5.1 General prerequisites

Funding will be awarded in the form of non-repayable project grants.

Grants for higher education institutions, research and science institutions and similar establishments that do not fall into the category of economic activities are calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related expenditure (in the case of the Helmholtz centres and Fraunhofer, eligible project-related costs), which can be awarded up to 100% coverage in individual cases, taking legislation on state aid into account.

In the case of non-commercial research projects at higher education institutions and teaching hospitals, a flat-rate grant amounting to 20% of total expenditure will be awarded in addition to the expenditure eligible for funding by the BMBF.

The basis for the eligible expenditure/costs are the BMBF’s regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK).

5.2 Funding phase I – Conceptual phase:

In funding phase I, up to EUR 500,000 will be provided for each selected project for the development of the outlines into fully assessable proposals. This funding phase will have a duration of no more than six months.
5.3 Funding phase II – Development phase

In funding phase II, the organizational structures necessary for the establishment of the new research centre as well as the scientific activities will be fully developed building on the proposals elaborated in the first funding phase. A project period of three years is planned for this purpose. The funding period can be extended once by up to three more years. The funding amount in funding phase II will depend on the project description set out in the proposal. Funding of up to EUR 7 million can be allocated in the first year for each project. The level of funding in the following years can be increased in line with requirements.

6 Other terms and conditions

The Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung an gewerbliche Unternehmen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvochaben (NKBF 2017) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Ausgabenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung zur Projektförderung (NABF) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis) and the Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für den Abruf von Zuwendungen im mittelbaren Abrufverfahren im Geschäftsbereich des BMBF (BNBest-mittelbarer Abruf-BMBF) for the drawdown of funds.

Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung an Gebietskörperschaften und Zusammenschlüsse von Gebietskörperschaften (ANBest-GK) (General Auxiliary Conditions for Grants awarded to Territorial Authorities and Associations of Territorial Authorities), the Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen des BMBF zur Projektförderung auf Ausgabenbasis (BNBest-BMBF 98) (Special Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the BMBF for the Promotion of Projects on Expenditure Basis), and the Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für den Abruf von Zuwendungen im mittelbaren Abrufverfahren im Geschäftsbereich des BMBF (BNBest-mittelbarer Abruf-BMBF) for the drawdown of funds.
For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation (VV) 11a pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to submit the data necessary for the progress review to the BMBF or the institutions charged with such tasks without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of supporting research and any subsequent evaluation; it will be treated confidentially and published in anonymized form, so that it is not possible to trace it back to individual persons or organizations.

Funding recipients are expected to ensure open electronic access if they publish the results of the research project in a scientific journal. This can be done through publication in an electronic journal which is accessible to the public free of charge. If the results are initially published in a way which does not provide the public with free electronic access, the article must be made publicly available free of charge by electronic means, following an embargo period where appropriate (secondary publication). Embargo periods for secondary publication must not exceed 12 months. The BMBF expressly welcomes secondary open access publication of scientific monographs resulting from the project.

The funded projects must declare their willingness to cooperate on supporting, integrative and evaluating measures and to work together with the high-level perspectives commission. In particular, such cooperation includes the public presentation of the outline proposals selected in the first funding phase as well as the elaborated proposals submitted for the second funding phase.

7 Procedure

7.1 Application documents, other documents and use of the electronic application system

The BMBF has not currently entrusted a project management organization with implementing the funding measure. A call for tenders (from interested project management organizations) will be issued shortly after publication of these funding regulations.

The central contact person, in particular for those with an interest in entering an outline proposal, is:

Dr. Friederike Trimborn-Witthaut, Division 423
Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), 53170 Bonn, Germany

Email: WissenSchafftPerspektiven@bmbf.bund.de
Any relevant changes will be announced in the Federal Gazette (*Bundesanzeiger*) or in another suitable form.

Application forms, guidelines, leaflets, information and auxiliary terms and conditions are available online at

[https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare)

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting project outlines and formal applications ([https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline)).

7.2 Funding phase I − Conceptual phase:

The application procedure is in two steps.

7.2.1 Submission and selection of project outlines

At the first step of the application procedure, project outlines must be submitted to the BMBF in written and/or electronic form marked with the reference "Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!" by 30 April 2021 at the latest.

In the case of research collaborations, the project outlines must be submitted in consultation with the proposed collaboration coordinator.

The deadline for submission is not a cut-off deadline, but it may not be possible to consider project outlines which are received after the above date.

The project outlines must include an outline proposal for the new research centre and a project description for the conceptual phase with a plausible financial plan which are self-explanatory and can be evaluated without further research. They should be structured as follows (overall length: up to 20 pages, Arial 11, 1.5 spacing):

1. Cover page with information about the applicant (address, telephone number, email address), name of partners where applicable and indication of preference for one of the two locations designated in the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas (StStG);
2. Proposal for an ambitious research mission for the new research centre which spans the full spectrum of activities from basic scientific research right through to application and addresses major societal challenges;
3. Description of the proposal in terms of its scientific potential, state of the art of the relevant science and technology including the originality of the research approach;

4. Brief description of applicants' relevant previous work in this field;

5. Proposal for possible core resources (incl. human) for the new centre;

6. Proposal for a new way of cooperation between science and industry in the new institution;

7. Technology transfer strategy that outlines, for example, the proposed centre's activities to enhance innovation in the local region;

8. Position of the planned research centre in the national and international science landscape and description of its structural significance for science in Germany;

9. Project description for the conceptual phase;

   a) work plan for the conceptual phase including estimate of costs or expenditure, as well as a realistic plan of required work, time and personnel in person-months;

   b) where applicable, information on cooperation partners and division of tasks;

   c) financial plan: estimated expenditure/costs in tabular form broken down by cooperation partner and individual item.

Applicants are free to add further information which they consider to be significant for the evaluation of their proposal provided that they observe the maximum number of pages specified overall. Annexes that exceed the total maximum number of pages can be included, but it may not be possible to consider them.

Furthermore, the application must include a clear and easily understandable video presentation of the idea (in English or German with a maximum length of three minutes). Where the proposal is selected for funding in the conceptual phase, the video presentation may be used by the funding provider for public relations work etc. in consultation with the applicants.

Submission of the project outline in electronic form should be done using the easy-Online Internet portal. https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/. Please use the assistant provided to select and fill out the relevant forms.

The submitted project proposals will be in competition with each other. A legal claim to funding cannot be derived from the submission of a project outline.

The project outlines received will be checked for completeness of the required documents and compliance with formal criteria. They will then be evaluated in cooperation with a
"perspectives commission" composed of high-ranking external experts. The evaluation is based primarily on the following criteria:

- Scientific excellence and long-term relevance of the research mission for research policy;
- Excellence and expertise of the applicant and any partners involved; relevant previous work of all partners;
- Innovative potential of the proposal for German science and industry, and in particular the potential of the proposal to open up new modes of cooperation between industry and science;
- Potential of the proposal to help towards solving major societal challenges and to achieving German and European technological sovereignty, in other words participating in the shaping of future technologies on a par with the best research centres in the world;
- Future prospects of the new research centre in international competition and national importance of the proposal for research in Germany as a basis for the envisaged provision of institutional funding for the new research centre by the Federal Government;
- Expected contribution to structural transformation in the region;
- Chances of success and prospects for realization.

Suitable project ideas will be selected for funding by the Federal Government and the host Land on the basis of the above criteria and the recommendations of the perspectives commission. The perspectives commission can give scientific and structural recommendations for the further development of the outline proposals. Applicants will be informed in writing of the results of the selection procedure and any recommendations.

The project outlines and any other documents submitted at this stage of the application procedure will not be returned.

7.2.2 Submission of formal funding applications and decision-making procedure

At the second step of the application procedure for funding phase I, the applicants whose project outlines have been successful in the evaluation will be invited to submit formal funding applications for the conceptual phase.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting formal applications (taking into account the requirements set out in the Annex) (https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline).
The formal application must include the following information which is supplementary to the project outline:

- Detailed financial plan of the project in the conceptual phase;
- Detailed project description for the conceptual phase; presentation of reasons for the funding requirement;
- Detailed work plan for the conceptual phase including project-related resource and milestone planning.

Any requirements from the first step of the application procedure must be observed.

In the case of collaborative projects, funding applications must be submitted in consultation with the proposed collaboration coordinator.

It may not be possible to consider applications that are received more than four weeks after an invitation to submit them.

The applications received will be reviewed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Eligibility for funding;
- Necessity and appropriateness of requested funding;
- Plausibility of the explanations regarding the financial plan;
- Quality and meaningfulness of the outline proposal, including in terms of its relevance to the objectives of this funding measure;
- Fulfilment of any requirements resulting from the first step of the application procedure.

A decision on funding will be taken after final consideration on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation.

7.3 Funding phase II – Development phase

7.3.1 Evaluation of the results from funding phase I and selection of proposals

The proposals elaborated in funding phase I will be evaluated by external scientists. The applicants will be required to submit a scientific proposal for the planned research centre covering both scientific and structural aspects that includes a development plan with milestones right through to final completion as well as a concrete project description for the development phase through to the establishment date with a detailed description of the planned tasks up to the date of establishment. This project description is the basis for the
project funding in the first years of the development phase. It is expected that the
development phase will stretch over a period of at least ten years and thus considerably
longer than the period covered by the project description. This should be taken into account
in the development plan containing milestones required in the proposal (cf. No. 6 below).

The scientific proposal for the planned new research centre should be self-explanatory,
conducive to evaluation without further research and structured as follows (overall length: up
to 80 pages, Arial 11, 1.5 spacing):

1. Cover page with information about the applicant (address, telephone number, email
address) and name of partners as well as proposed specific site for the new research centre;

2. A clearly worded summary of the proposal for a new research centre in English and
German (no more than two pages each);

3. Overall strategy for the new research centre;

4. Comprehensive scientific plan for the new research centre:
   a. proposal for a research mission with relevance for major societal challenges;
   b. planned scientific priorities;
   c. planned scientific infrastructures;
   d. position of the planned research centre in the national and international science
   landscape;
   e. description of applicants’ and project partners’ relevant previous work in this field;
   f. proposal for long-term institutional collaboration with one or more local universities
   (including consideration of possibilities for cross-border collaboration);
   g. any further national and international scientific cooperation partners (letters of intent
to be included).

5. Comprehensive technology transfer plan:
   a. planned structures and formats for working together with industry;
   b. planned technology transfer activities of the new research centre along the entire
   value-added chain and potential contribution to German and European technological
   sovereignty;
   c. application potential and market environment of the proposed research focuses;
   d. analysis of the situation regarding economic and scientific competition.
6. Development plan with milestones (from the beginning of the development phase and beyond the date of establishment through to the planned final completion):

a. resource plan, including, if applicable, a proposal for which already available resources (including human) will be transferred to the new research centre in order to ensure rapid development;

b. planned steps and targeted budget for each year (currently envisaged: up to EUR 170 million);

c. Proposal for site and premises development (including confirmation of support by the local municipality/ies) and description of the possible contributions to regional development;

d. proposed organizational structure for the new research centre;

e. strategy for personnel recruitment and development at all levels;

f. strategy for quality assurance and institutional capacity for renewal;

The project description for the three-year development phase up to the planned establishment should contain the following points (supplementary to the above-mentioned proposal; max. 25 additional pages overall, Arial 11, 1.5 spacing):

- Detailed work plan including project-related resources plan and detailed milestone plan for the development phase. This should cover both the planned scientific activities as well as the development of administrative capacities.
- Estimate of costs or expenditure for the development phase; realistic plan of required work, time and personnel in person-months including descriptions of the work packages. In order to avoid critical situations where there is a change of personnel during the project period, the annual personnel requirement of each project partner should normally not be less than 12 person-months;
- Plans for the organizational structure/organizational form and for the management of the development project (not the research centre as an institution);
- Cooperation partners and division of tasks;
- Risk analysis with a description of possible countermeasures.

An English translation of the scientific proposal must be included for the purposes of external evaluation.

The submitted proposals will be in competition with each other. A claim to further funding cannot be derived from the submission of a proposal.
External experts will be involved in evaluating the scientific proposals submitted for the planned new research centres. Evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- Excellence, coherence and innovative strength of the overall institutional strategy;
- Scientific excellence of the research mission; coherence and originality of the proposed research focuses and methods;
- Excellence and expertise of the applicants and partners involved; quality of the relevant previous work of all participants and scientific quality of the research activities that are to be transferred to the new research centre;
- Long-term relevance of the research mission for research policy;
- Potential to help towards solving major societal challenges and to achieving German and European technological sovereignty, in other words participating in the shaping of future technologies on a par with the best research centres in the world;
- Quality of the proposed structures for scientific cooperation, in particular of the proposal for institutional cooperation with one or more local universities;
- Innovative potential for science and industry in Germany, in particular the potential to open up new modes of cooperation between industry and science;
- Quality and originality and its compatibility with the overall strategy;
- Viability, structural added value and degree of maturity of the proposed organizational structure;
- Quality and originality of the proposal for site development as well as its compatibility with the overall proposal;
- Expected long-term contribution to structural transformation in the region;
- Plausibility of the resource and milestone planning for the whole development phase;
- Feasibility and quality of the development plans and of the strategy for personnel recruitment and development;
- Long-term development prospects beyond the period of establishment; competitiveness of the new research centre in international comparison and national importance of the proposal for research in Germany.

Furthermore, the project description for the three-year development phase up to the planned establishment will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Plausibility and appropriateness of the plans and the estimate of costs and expenditure for the three-year development phase;
- Goal-orientedness and chances of realization of the plans for the development phase.

The most suitable proposals will be selected for funding in accordance with the above-mentioned criteria. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection.
7.3.2 Submission of formal funding applications and decision-making procedure

The authors of the positively evaluated proposals will be invited to submit a formal application for funding for the development phase.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting formal applications (taking into account the requirements set out in the Annex) (https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline).

The formal application must include the following information which is supplementary to the proposal:

- Detailed financial plan of the project,
- Detailed utilization plan,
- Presentation of reasons for funding requirement.

Any requirements resulting from the evaluation process must be observed.

In the case of collaborative projects, funding applications must be submitted in consultation with the proposed collaboration coordinator.

The project funding applications received will be reviewed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Eligibility for funding,
- Necessity and appropriateness of the requested funding,
- Plausibility of the explanations regarding the financial plan,
- Plausibility of the explanations regarding the time and milestone plan, quality and meaningfulness of the utilization plan including in terms of its relevance to the objectives of this funding measure,
- Fulfilment of any requirements resulting from the first step of the application procedure and compliance with the recommended financial framework.

After final consideration of the application, a funding decision will be taken jointly by the Federal Government and the host Land on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation.

In addition to considering the funding applications according to the above criteria, the BMBF will examine whether the projects in the development phase will be included in the BMBF’s accompanying controlling of large-scale projects. This may require the submission of further relevant project documents.
Where applicable, a project start report in addition to interim or proof of use reports, as well as regular project status reports and a project conclusion report will be expected from the funding recipient – particularly if the projects in the development phase are included in the BMBF’s accompanying controlling of large-scale projects.

7.4 Provisions to be observed

The approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as the proof and examination of the proper use and, if necessary, the revocation of the award and the reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the related general administrative regulations unless deviation is allowed from the general administrative regulations under the present funding regulations. The German Supreme Audit Institution (Bundesrechnungshof) is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with section 91 of the BHO.

8 Validity

These funding regulations will enter into force on the day following publication in the Federal Gazette (Bundesanzeiger) and remain valid until and including 31 December 2027.

Bonn/Berlin, 18. December 2020

Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Dr. Friederike Trimborn-Witthaut

1 BMBF = Federal Ministry of Education and Research

2 R&D&I = research, development and innovation


4 EEA = European Economic Area