



The AiF – Embracing Universities of Applied Sciences

Germany's Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) undertake applied research and teaching which is well attuned to the needs of SMEs. Further increasing these universities' research activities would therefore produce substantial benefits for SMEs. Working with SMEs is equally attractive for

the universities, since it gives them insight into practical problems in the marketplace. The Research at Universities of Applied Sciences programme is thus a "win-win" for both sides. The AiF manages the programme on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, providing financial support for knowledge and technology transfer to SMEs as well as improving practical training for students and research personnel in the universities.

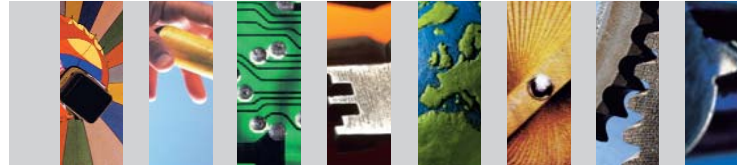
The AiF – Extending Internationally

As the manager, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, of the *intec.net* programme, the AiF operates an R&D cooperation service for SMEs with partner organizations in central and eastern Europe, China and India. The AiF has set up a network of 15 offices in the target regions to help German firms find partners and to assist them in their cooperation projects, and provides firms with a broad range of information and advice about transnational research cooperation. For further information see www.intec-online.net.



adequate level of SME participation in the research programmes of the European Union (EU), and is also coordinating an EU-funded ERA-NET, CORNET, which is developing long-term strategies for collective research in Europe including the launching of transnational pilot projects. CORNET involves technology programme management organizations and government ministries from 17 European countries and regions. For further information see www.cornet-erat.net.

The AiF is active in several international organizations as the representative of German SME interests in European research. The AiF endeavours to obtain an



The AiF – Key Data

Name:

AiF
German Federation of Industrial Research Associations

Foundation:

1954

Objective and Mission:

Leading national organization for the support of applied research and development for SMEs

Legal status:

Non-profit association

Members:

103 industrial research associations from all branches of the economy and many areas of technology, serving some 50,000 SMEs

President:

Dr. Thomas Graebener

Chief Executive:

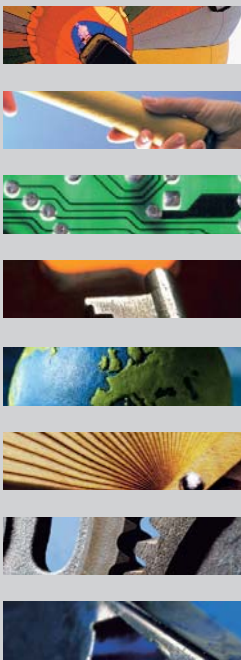
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Research Support for SMEs The AiF in Brief



An Industry-driven Innovation Network

Over 100 industrial research associations with some 50,000 firms, mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as members, together with 700 associated research institutes and the AiF's offices in Cologne and Berlin, make up the industry-driven AiF innovation network. Through this network the AiF supports applied research and development (R&D) for SMEs. The AiF manages public programmes to strengthen SME competitiveness for the German federal government. The AiF thus connects enterprises, research and government and provides a meeting ground for several hundred representatives of business and research.

The AiF disburses more than 250 million euros of public funding each year, in particular on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Since its foundation in 1954 the AiF has disbursed more than 6 billion euros in funding for over 150,000 research projects for SMEs.



A Centre of Excellence in R&D Support for SMEs

The AiF's activities as a centre of excellence in R&D support span the whole innovation chain, ranging sector-wide, responsive to the needs of individual firms, embracing universities of applied sciences, and extending internation-

ally. The support programmes which the AiF manages all aim at strengthening firm's innovation capacity through R&D – from pre-competitive research to the benefit of whole branches of the economy to the practical implementation of research results in individual firms. They help SMEs successfully tackle technological challenges and support cooperation with other firms and with research institutes. The research associations and the AiF's offices provide firms with practically oriented innovation consultancy.

The AiF – Ranging Sector-wide

The research associations of the AiF group firms, mostly SMEs, from specific branches of the economy or fields of technology and so provide a framework for conducting pre-competitive industrial collective research projects. The coverage is broad, from "a" for asphalt to "y" for yeast industry. Collective research is a mechanism through which firms solve shared problems through shared projects, the research being performed by contracted university institutes and other research institutions. This is an especially efficient arrangement because a shared, pre-competitive research need is aggregated and the research risk then shared. Industrial collective research also provides practical training for students.



The research associations of the AiF provide comprehensive service support in R&D matters, helping SMEs meet the challenges of technological change. By joining a research association and taking an active part in its committees etc., SMEs directly influence the association's research agenda and priorities. The active involvement of industry also facilitates the early transfer of research results to firms. Industrial collective research gives SMEs access to a continuous stream of new knowledge with which to develop their products, processes and services as well as tackle issues relating to quality, environmental protection and technical norms and standards. The results of industrial collective research projects are freely available to all firms.

The success of this system of industrial collective research funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology stems from industry's role in the selection and quality control of project ideas. This process involves some 170 unpaid AiF experts from industry and research. Industry funds the infrastructure which underpins this system of publicly funded collective research.

The ZUTECH programme is a trans-sectoral complement to the collective research programme. ZUTECH gives particular support to interdisciplinary projects.



The AiF – Responsive to the Needs of Individual Firms

The firm-specific support programmes of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology are designed to meet the specific R&D needs of individual firms. They aim to help SMEs overcome innovation barriers. Acting as the ministry's project manager, the AiF advises firms and processes their applications for research funding.

The PRO INNO II programme aims at boosting SMEs' long-term innovativeness and competitiveness. It supports research cooperation to raise firms' innovative capacity. Support can be given from first idea right through to prototype, and the programme is particularly targeted at projects with a high technical or financial risk. Firms may cooperate with other firms or with research organisations. Research organisations may apply for a grant themselves or work as an SME sub-contractor. The programme also provides support to firms undertaking their first research project, or first research project in five years, as well as covering costs for exchange-personnel to undertake research work.

The NEMO programme supports network-building among innovative firms and research institutions in the new German federal states. These networks are especially intended to help small and young firms to perform complex R&D and to rapidly convert research results into new products, processes or services. Networking is also aimed at helping them obtain larger orders and jointly offer broader system solutions.