

The AiF Projekt GmbH in Berlin is the Project Agency for ZIM Cooperation Projects. This is the biggest and most popular module of the programme promoting R&D cooperation projects of companies, or companies and research organisations. In 2017 about 8,300 R&D projects were funded with a funding volume of about 363 million euros.

International Commitment

R&D plays a vital role in developing new international markets for SMEs. That is why the AiF is committed to several international activities as the representative of German SME interests in international research. Furthermore, the AiF subsidiaries coordinate the initiatives CORNET and IraSME to encourage and promote international research projects.

Excellent Return on Investment

Public funding of R&D activities is a very good investment in the international competitiveness of Germany. Every funding euro is multiply complimented by industrial R&D expenses. Hence, the AiF is a competent and committed partner to both public funding agencies and innovative companies in order to strengthen the German economy.

AiF – Key data

- **Name:** AiF – German Federation of Industrial Research Associations
- **Foundation:** 1954
- **Objective and Mission:** Leading national organisation for applied research and development for SMEs
- **Legal status:** Non-profit association
- **Members:** Network of 100 industrial research associations from all branches of the economy, serving approx. 50,000 SMEs
- **Executive committee:**
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Research for SMEs – AiF at a glance





Supporting Research and Development in SMEs

Entrepreneurial innovation is Germany's most valuable resource. The AiF is the leading national organisation promoting applied research and development benefitting Germany's small and medium-sized businesses. It builds up alliances together with partners from industry, science and government in order to turn ideas into successful products, processes or services in the market. As an industry-driven organisation, the AiF aims at initiating applied research and development (R&D) for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as qualifying the new generation of academics in innovative fields and organising the distribution of scientific knowledge.

Industry-driven innovation network

100 industrial research associations with approx. 50,000 businesses, mostly SMEs, as members, 1,200 associated research institutes and the AiF's subsidiaries in Cologne and Berlin contribute to the AiF innovation network. The AiF manages public programmes of the German federal government to strengthen SME competitiveness. The AiF thus connects enterprises, research and government as well as providing a meeting ground for representatives of business and research.

In 2017, the AiF has disbursed about 535 million euros of public funding, in particular on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. Since its foundation in 1954, the AiF has disbursed more than 11.5 billion euros in funding for more than 230,000 research projects for SMEs.

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. The support programmes which the AiF manages all aim at strengthening company'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 companies. They help SMEs successfully tackle technological challenges and support cooperation with other companies and with research organisations.

Industrial Collective Research

The AiF's core activity is so called Industrial Collective Research. Collective research is a mechanism enabling businesses to solve shared problems through shared projects. This kind of pre-competitive research closes the gap between basic research and industrial application. The results are available for everyone interested and the basis for individual adaptations within enterprises. In 2017 about 1,500 projects were funded with over 170 million euros.

The AiF and its research associations provide comprehensive service support in R&D matters, helping SMEs to meet the challenges of technological change. Each research association of the AiF represents a certain business sector, mostly SMEs, from specific branches of the economy or fields of technology. By joining a research association and taking an active part in its committees etc., SMEs directly influence the association's research agenda and priorities. Industrial Collective Research gives SMEs access to a continuous stream of new knowledge which can be used to develop their own products, processes and services as well as giving them the opportunity to build up their individual innovation networks.

R&D Needs of Individual Businesses

To respond to individual R&D needs the AiF takes part in the management of the Central Innovation Programme SME (ZIM) for the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. ZIM is a country-wide support measure open to all technologies and sectors. It is geared to SMEs and collaborating research organisations closely aligned with businesses. The aim of the programme is to provide sustainable support to the innovative capabilities and competitiveness of companies.

ZIM comprises different support measures: Cooperation Projects, Cooperation Networks and Single Projects.