



# **Support and funding instruments for innovative Entrepreneurship in the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria**

Output: A.T2.4.1 Research of existing funding instruments

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**EUROPEAN UNION**



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## About S3 Couple Net

### Project summary

#### *Project identification*

Programme priority	Sustainable networks and institutional cooperation
Programme priority specific objective	4a
DTP Project Code and Acronym	S3 Couple Net
Project title	Cross-border network for activating the S3 strategy of the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria
eMS Project Number	ATCZ262
Name of the lead partner organisation	Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, a.s.
Project duration	16 months
Start date	1. 9. 2021
End date	31. 12. 2022

#### *Description of the project*

The South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria have long supported the development of innovative entrepreneurship - whether through various support schemes, the development of a regional innovation ecosystem, cooperation with other institutions in the region or the implementation of measures in accordance with its S3 regional strategy. In both regions, these development documents for the coming period have recently been revised and updated (RIS3 Strategy of the South Bohemian Region 2021-2027 / Strategic economic & research programme for Upper Austria "#upperVISION2030").

It is a strategic approach to the economic development of the region in the field of research and innovation, which is a process of identifying opportunities and positive aspects of the region, which can benefit from specialization in a particular field of science or technology. The concept of smart specialization recommends regions or states to create the content and design of their innovation strategy so as to maximize the impact of regional policy together with other EU policies. It is based on the Commission Communication entitled "The

contribution of regional policy to smart growth in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy" of October 2010, which refers to these strategies as Smart Specialization Strategies. In principle, therefore, these strategies address the needs and innovation potential of both regions concerned (South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria). Attention is paid to the existing infrastructure (R & D & I, production and tertiary spheres), specific trends derived from the economic profile of the region and new technological directions (so-called megatrends), which are again based on innovation profiles of the area, but also on current economic challenges.

Thanks to the harmonized RIS3 methodology, it is possible to effectively analyze both documents, create a cross-border network of key actors and find common needs, complementary capacities, specific measures and activities. A unique opportunity is also the upcoming new programming period, which will be prepared by the preparation of potential projects and cooperation potentials of the network members.

On both sides of the border, this project is approached by partners who are directly responsible for the successful implementation of these regional strategies and at the same time represent entities with a region-wide scope. The main goal of the project is to activate an effective cross-border network of actors based on a detailed comparative analysis of S3 strategies in the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria, which will prepare a set of measures for the development of cooperation in key areas for the regions.

## Partners

<i>Name</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Country</i>
Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, a.s.	Lead partner	Czech Republic, South Bohemia
Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH	Project partner	Austria, Upper Austria

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## 1. Introduction & Methodology

The presented document is part of the task „Network Building“ (T2) of S3CN. The overall goal of the task T2 is to identify key actors that are beyond the frame of the cooperation partners in both regional innovation systems and to build a network including the definition of roles, competencies and activities. On the one hand, it includes the research of existing structures and key actors in both innovation systems, on the other hand the research on existing funding and support programmes/instruments and analysis for their synchronization potential. For results of the analysis of existing structures and key actors in both innovation systems, please see the elaborated “Document on structure and stakeholders of both innovation systems (South Bohemia & Upper Austria).

The presented document at hand shows the output of an evaluation of current funding and support instruments on both sides of the border of the project region Upper Austria and South Bohemian region for “innovative entrepreneurship” with potentials for cross border use. This means the focus was laid on support measures for innovating companies and start-ups.

For the research and analysis, funding programmes and instruments (e.g. innovation vouchers, incubator programmes, start-up competitions, funding of R&D activities and project support, etc.) on both sides of the border with a focus on the thematic fields of the S3 strategies, were considered.

The results of the present analysis of existing regional funding programmes and support instruments aim to identify ways of harnessing the potential of cross-border cooperation within the framework of these programmes in form of a draft for the cross-border synchronization of funding instruments in South Bohemia and Upper Austria. Therefore, a particular focus was given to programmes and support measures that are already open to cross-border cooperation and to identify possibilities to synchronize or coordinate programmes in order to intensify cross-border cooperation of actors from Upper Austria and South Bohemian Region. Hereby the following three principles were applied: 1) No new funding programmes have to be developed, 2) no new legal frameworks have to be developed and 3) no cross regional transfer of funds. For the analysis of the synchronization of programmes and potentials for cross-border use of funding instruments, reference is made here to the additional specific document.

Thus, focus was laid on regional programmes, as more options to influence funding and support programmes exist than on the national level. However, some national programmes, which allow the participation of international partners, were also considered.

Within the next chapters regional support and funding instruments on a regional level are presented for Upper Austria and the South Bohemian Region followed by an overview of the most relevant national programmes. The presentation of the programmes is based on the corresponding programme guidelines or information given on the websites of the programmes or programme executing agencies. Additionally, the Czech lead partner JVTP was consulted to provide detailed information regarding the research and analysis of the Czech funding instruments.

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## 2. Regional funding and support programmes

Regional funding and support programmes for innovative entrepreneurship were successfully identified on both sides of the border. In Upper Austria, there is a comprehensive mix of funding and support programmes to facilitate innovation and R&D activities in companies as well as extensive support for innovative start-ups. On the other side of the border, in the South Bohemian region, focus is laid on support for innovative start-ups, however there are currently no distinctive regional funding programmes for research activities in place.

The following regional programmes in Upper Austria are presented hereafter:

- tech2B incubator programme
- easy2innovate
- TIM - Technology and Innovation Management
- Programme to stimulate the first-time cooperation of Upper Austrian companies with an R&D institution
- Programme to stimulate cooperation for the implementation of cooperative R&D projects or of cooperative organisational projects in Upper Austrian companies
- Expanding Horizon Europe - Stimulation of the submission of Upper Austrian EU funding applications in "Horizon Europe"

For the region of South Bohemia, the following programmes are presented:

- South Bohemian Acceleration Programme
- JIHOCZECH – Regional business idea contest
- JVTP Services - Trend Support
- South Bohemian Business Vouchers

### 2.1. *Regional programmes in Upper Austria*

#### 2.1.1. *tech2B incubator programme*

Tech2b is the incubator in Upper Austria which supports technology- and design-orientated start-ups. As the tech incubator of the province of Upper Austria and the Upper Austrian Universities, tech2b is a subsidiary of Business Upper Austria, providing support for founders of innovative product-based companies. Shareholders of tech2b are Business Upper Austria, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Johannes Kepler University Linz, University of Arts Linz and the Chamber of Commerce Upper Austria (WK OÖ).

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The aim of the programme is to support innovative entrepreneurs on their way to a clear business idea, to aid the founding of a company and to prepare for economic

competition. As Upper Austria places a high value on progress in technology and has a strong industrial base, tech2b focusses specifically on the development of start-ups in the technology sector.

### **Support measures and application process**

Services for start-ups include coaching, mentoring, further education and infrastructure as well as financial funding. These services include in particular:

- Information for technology-oriented start-up companies
- Support for selected start-ups to materialise their ideas through to market as well as during the growth phase (High-tech funds)
- 360° service for start-ups: coaching, mentoring, further education, infrastructure and financial funding
- Mediation between start-ups, well-established companies, business angels and investors
- Support in funding and (structured) financing as well as business model development (technology, team, market, financing, strategy)

Tech2b provides three major programmes: Spin Off Consulting, Start-up Incubation and Open Innovation (matching start-ups with large companies from Upper Austria). The start-up incubation programme includes 3-sub-programmes with distinctive support measures:

- “Spinnen” (developing): Offering a testing ground, potential development and structuring of a start-up idea. This includes Future Skills Workshops & Training, community meetings, peer learning and access to the tech2b network. Furthermore includes 6 months of coaching. Special focus: medical technology, hardware & tourism
- “Gründen” (founding): 6 months support and advice, infrastructure. tech2b consulting and support worth € 6,000, financial support (grants) of € 5,000 (non-repayable), Training and additional qualifications
- “Wachsen” (growing): 40-80 consulting hours with the team of tech2b consultants & 40-80 consulting hours with 1-2 external consultant in a period of 6-12 months. If the company has already received one or more investments, supervision by a Business Development Manager can be funded for up to 12 months to work on central challenges.

Applications for support have to be made directly at tech2b, with decisions made on a case-by-case basis requiring bilateral talks with tech2b. For the incubation programme, a call format is applied.

Web: <https://www.tech2b.at/>

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### **2.1.2. *easy2innovate***

Easy2innovate is a support programme of the regional government of Upper Austria, implemented by Business Upper Austria to promote the competitiveness of SMEs in Upper Austria through research and innovation funding. In particular, the programme promotes cooperation between Upper Austrian SMEs and research institutes and the utilization of the results by supporting the transfer of economically promising results to the market.

Companies that are part of the easy2innovate programme receive comprehensive support from the product idea to the market launch through two interlocking programme segments: "easy2research" for the implementation of R&D projects from SMEs in cooperation with research institutions and "easy2market" for the marketization of the R&D results that were developed through easy2research.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The programme supports small R&D projects regardless of their thematic focus, which are carried out in cooperation between an Upper Austrian SME and a research institution. The project must be in the field of "industrial research" or "experimental development" and aimed at an innovative product and/or process development with significant novelty value and a low development risk. Consultation with Business Upper Austria before application is required. Eligible for support are SMEs located in Upper Austria, or SMEs that operate a site in Upper Austria and are member of the Upper Austrian chamber of commerce or the chamber of architects and engineering consultants. A medium-sized enterprise must not have completed any project with any FFG programmes (FFG is the Austrian Research Promotion Agency) by the time of application. Projects must align with the "#upperVISION2030" strategy and contribute to improving the competitiveness of the Upper Austrian economy.

#### **Support measures and application process**

For the "easy2research" programme segment up to € 25,000 per project are provided for the implementation of the R&D project of an Upper Austrian SME. Financial support is given for R&D projects with a duration of 4 – 12 months, which are carried out in cooperation with one or more R&D institutions aimed at innovative product and/or process developments. Hereby the R&D facility's eligible project-related costs must account for at least 15 %. The available funding accounts for up to 50 % of the project costs. The application process allows for ongoing submissions, however a consultation with Business Upper Austria is required before the application process.

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The goal of the "easy2market" programme component is to bring the results, previously gained through the support from "easy2research", to the market. Hereby, up to € 10,000 euros per project are available for the market launch. Financial support is given for activities related to market entry or market launch of new products based on R&D projects funded by "easy2research". The Completion of the "easy2research" programme must not be more than 3 months before application. The funding covers encompass personnel costs, costs of external service providers & material and equipment. The maximum funding rate is 33 % of eligible costs, while external (consultancy) services can be covered with up to 50 % of the incurred costs.

Web: <https://www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at/95739.html>

### **2.1.3. TIM - Technology and Innovation Management**

TIM – Technology and Innovation Management ("TIM Technologie- und Innovationsmanagement") is a regional technology advice and consultation initiative providing companies with research knowledge, comprehensive information, financing and coaching to foster the development of innovation projects in Upper Austrian companies. The initiative is implemented by Business Upper Austria.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

TIM supports companies free of charge in the development of new or improved products, processes and services. Every year, the team initiates around 150 technology projects with companies from a wide range of industries. In particular, it aims at improving the knowledge and technology transfer between Upper Austrian SMEs and science. To achieve this TIM offers comprehensive, free advice and support for technical development projects of Upper Austrian companies.

#### **Support measures and application process**

Support encompasses free consultancy services for setting up and implementing innovation projects, expert consultancy on patents and IPR. One special focus area is to provide companies an overview of university and non-university research institutions as well as Austrian and international R&D partners, in order to recommend suitable experts and support transfer of know-how from feasibility studies to implementation of projects. The support measures of TIM include the following:

- Technology assessment, patent research and property rights advice
- Identification of suitable R&D partners
- Funded expert consultations by R&D partners
- Advice on regional and national technology funding
- Advice on protection and realization of innovations
- Specialist events on technology issues with R&D experts

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Consultancy services of TIM – Technology and Innovation Management are provided without charge and can be requested at any time via an online form.

Web: <https://www.tim.at/>

#### **2.1.4. Programme to stimulate the first-time cooperation of Upper Austrian companies with an R&D institution**

The objective of this funding programme (in German: "Programm zur Stimulierung der erstmaligen Kooperation von Oö. Unternehmen mit einer F&E-Einrichtung") is the first-time cooperation (consultation/contract research) of Upper Austrian enterprises with an R&D institution. The programme is owned by the Upper Austrian state government and carried out via the TIM – Technology and Innovation Management programme.

##### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The overall objective of the programme is to motivate SMEs through financial support to establish cooperations between SMEs and R&D institutions in order to foster and support knowledge and technology transfer between science and SME, resulting in improved innovation capacity and competitiveness of the Upper Austrian economy.

SMEs located in Upper Austria, or SMEs that operate a site in Upper Austria and are members of the Upper Austrian chamber of commerce or the chamber of architects and engineering consultants are eligible for funding.

##### **Support measures and application process**

Eligible are first-time cooperations in fields of consultations or contractual research of Upper Austrian SMEs with an R&D facility for:

- Preparation of a concept for the realisation of an R&D project with an R&D facility and/or
- Realisation of initial implementation steps of an R&D project with an R&D facility and/or
- Realisation of small R&D projects with an R&D facility.

Financial support covers the costs charged by the R&D organisation, with a maximum of 100 % or € 2,000 in form of a non-refundable grant (De-minimis). Companies which have already cooperated once with an R&D institution are excluded from participation in the programme.

The application process is open for ongoing submissions. A consultation interview with the TIM – Technology and Innovation Management initiative before application is required. Furthermore, the arrangement of the planned R&D project between the funding applicant and the R&D institution must be conducted via the TIM - Technology and Innovation Management initiative.

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Additionally, the R&D project must align with the strategic economic & research programme for Upper Austria "#upperVISION2030".

Web: <https://www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at/247636.htm>

### ***2.1.5. Programme to stimulate cooperation for the implementation of cooperative R&D projects or for cooperative organisational projects in Upper Austrian companies***

The purpose of the programme (in German: "Programm zur Stimulierung von Kooperationen zur Umsetzung von kooperativen Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben bzw. zur Umsetzung von kooperativen Organisationsvorhaben bei den Oö. Unternehmen (SKU)") is to establish cooperations for the implementation of cooperative R&D projects or organisational projects by Upper Austrian companies through financial support. The programme is owned and implemented by the Upper Austrian state government.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The aim of the programme is the initiation and implementation of cooperative research and development projects or the implementation of cooperative organisational projects of Upper Austrian companies in which at least 3 cooperation partners are involved and whose realization has a sustainable positive impact on the competitiveness on the Upper Austrian economy. Eligible are companies of any size (small, medium and large companies) located in Upper Austria, or SMEs that operate a site in Upper Austria and are a member of an Upper Austrian cluster and network initiative.<sup>1</sup> Applicants must also be members of the Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

Partners from other federal provinces of Austria may be considered as project partners under certain circumstances, provided that the other criteria of the programme document are fulfilled. However, they do not receive funding from Upper Austria.

#### **Support measures and application process**

For a project to be eligible for funding, at least three project partners (at least one SME) who fulfill the requirements or at least two project partners and an R&D institution must be involved. Each project partner has to provide evidence of "know-how" for the implementation of the project. Projects in the following areas are preferred: Key Technologies, digital transformation, efficient and sustainable industry and production, systems & technologies with human focus and connected and efficient mobility

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<sup>1</sup> These are: Automotive Cluster, Cleantech Cluster, IT-Cluster, Mechatronics Cluster, Medical Technology Cluster, Building Innovation Cluster, Plastics Cluster, Upper Austrian Food Cluster, Human Capital Management, Verein Netzwerk Logistik,

Projects can be funded with up to 40 % of the eligible costs and may receive € 300,000 in case of participation of an R&D facility. If no R&D organisation is part of the project consortium, funding rate is set at 20 % with a maximum amount of € 150,000. Funding is provided as a non-refundable grant (De-minimis). Eligible costs are personnel costs, costs of external service providers & material and equipment costs.

Applications may be submitted at any time, projects must align with the strategic economic & research programme for Upper Austria "#upperVISION2030".

Web: <https://www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at/211775.htm>

### ***2.1.6. Expanding Horizon Europe – Stimulation of the submission of Upper Austrian EU funding applications in "Horizon Europe"***

Within the Expanding Horizon Europe programme (German: "Stimulierung / Unterstützung der Einreichung von oberösterreichischen EU-Förderungsanträgen auf Basis des EU-Rahmenprogrammes "Horizon Europe" (Expanding Horizon Europe)), the state government of Upper Austria supports the submission of applications of Upper Austrian companies and research institutions for the current EU research and innovation framework programme "Horizon Europe".

#### **Aim and target group of the programme:**

The objective of the funding programme is the (partial) coverage of costs incurred due to the preparation of an EU funding application (proposal) on the basis of the EU Framework Programme "Horizon Europe". Eligible are small, medium and large companies as well as R&D facilities that are located in Upper Austria or operate a site in Upper Austria and submit a project in Horizon Europe in a coordinating role.

#### **Support measures and application process**

The state funding supports coordinators in the preparatory work of writing a proposal for a tangible project in the EU Framework programme Horizon Europe. Via submission, a grant can be claimed for expenses related to the application process, with a maximum amount of € 25,000 funding.

Eligible are projects for which a company or R&D-facility has submitted an EU grant application on the basis of an open call for proposals of the EU framework programme "Horizon Europe". Project coordination (project planning/project implementation) must be based in Upper Austria. Required is also a proposal check, which must be taken prior to submission of the EU funding application at FFG or Business Upper Austria.

Companies are supported with a subsidy of € 10,000. When the defined overall threshold value is reached during the application process, an additional bonus of € 15,000 is granted. R&D can receive € 25,000 only if the proposal reaches the defined overall threshold. For lower-threshold instruments and calls for proposals (EIC Accelerator and Eurostars-3) the funding value is reduced by 50 %.

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The application must be submitted no later than one month after the submission of the EU funding application (proposal).

Web: <https://www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at/119127.htm>

## **2.2. Regional funding programmes in the region South Bohemia**

### **2.2.1. Jihočeský akcelerační programme / South Bohemian Acceleration Programme**

The South Bohemian Acceleration programme (Jihočeský akcelerační programme) is a subsidy scheme providing support to newly emerging innovative enterprises from the South Bohemian Region to cover the starting costs leading to the achievement of the first sales of the company, particularly purchase of investment or non-investment property, purchase of services, personal expenses, overhead costs or VAT expenses. The programme is financed by the Regional Authority of South Bohemia and implemented via the South Bohemian Science and Technology Park (Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, JVTP).

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The aim of the South Bohemian Acceleration programme is the support the acceleration of business activities of new entrepreneurs and startups from the South Bohemian Region and to contribute to the development of the business base in the South Bohemian Region, in order to create a favorable environment for newly emerging companies and startups, to support the competitiveness of emerging companies and to increase their level of added value and innovation potential.

Small and medium-sized enterprises from the South Bohemian Region (required to have at least a branch office in the region) with a company history of less than 3 years are eligible for support. There are no sectoral restrictions other than EU regulations.

#### **Support measures and application process**

The South Bohemian Acceleration programme is a subsidy scheme providing financial support to emerging businesses which may use the money to accelerate their business activities. The maximum amount of the subsidy is 75 % of the eligible expenses and can be up to CZK 150,000. The minimum voucher amount is CZK 50,000.

The application process is via an online form, where applicants have to explain their business idea through brief characteristics of the business activities, project description (incl. activities and milestones), eligible costs, benefits of the project for the applicant and the region. Applicants also have to submit a project time schedule and project budget as well as lean canvas.

The latest call was opened in 2022 with a timeframe for acceptance of applications for the subsidy reaching from 1.6.2022 to 15.10.2022. The total allocation of funds for

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the programme accounted for CZK 800,000. The next call is currently planned for the first quarter of 2023.

Web: <http://www.jvtp.cz/jihocesky-akceleracni-programme>

### **2.2.2. JIHOCZECH – regional business idea contest**

JIHOCZECH is a regional business idea contest in the South Bohemian Region where participants have the opportunity to develop their business ideas with the help of coaches, mentors and other experts over a 6 months period, after which they present at the final event in front of a jury and potential investors. The programme is carried out by the Regional Authority of South Bohemia via the South Bohemian Science and Technology Park (Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, JVTP).

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The programme aims to support new entrepreneurs and new ideas of existing SMEs through a competition, which offers a number of free seminars and individual consultations with the intention to turn ideas into business plans and further support the development into a successful business. The competition is open to people aged 16 and over with new business ideas. Participants must already have established a business in the South Bohemia Region or intend to implement their business idea in the South Bohemia Region (condition is not the assigned ID number). A business idea that has already been implemented may also be entered into the contest, but implementation must have started no earlier than one year before the announcement of the current year of the contest. In order to meet this condition, the contestant must provide an affidavit on the length of the implementation of his/her contest idea. There are no thematic restrictions to the contest and essentially any kind of business idea is eligible.

#### **Support measures and application process**

Support is provided via coaching, mentoring and consulting within various fields such as accounting, financing, IT, legal and tax aspects, business planning through workshops and focus groups as well as individual consultations and public presentation rehearsal. Participants receive 4 – 5 months of coaching, mentoring and education including individual sessions. In a final event of the business idea contest, a jury consisting of representatives of the South Bohemian Region, JVTP, JHK (South Bohemian Chamber of Commerce), Czechinvest and others choose the best three projects and awards them with financial + additional services, which are:

1st place (30,000 CZK): free use of a shared office, meeting rooms or lecture hall in the JVTP premises for a period of 6 months, economic, financial, accounting and business marketing consultancy as well as exposure through advertisements on the regional news portal

2nd place (20,000 CZK): free use of the meeting rooms or lecture hall in the JVTP premises for a period of 6 months, economic, financial, accounting and business

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marketing consultancy as well as exposure through advertisements on the regional news portal

3rd place (10,000 CZK): free use of the meeting rooms or lecture hall in the JVTP premises for a period of 3 months, economic, financial, accounting and business marketing consultancy as well as exposure through advertisements on the regional news portal

Applications for the contest takes place via a simple online form, where applicants state their basic information and submit supportive documents. The application process opens every year in the summer and can be entered until September. Subsequent, the start of the Jihoczech Startup Camp takes place, an intensive two-day event with people from practice where participants focus on a simple definition of the idea, its unique value for the customer, technical possibilities of its solution and gradual steps to its implementation. The Startup Camp is followed by a series of professional seminars with experienced mentors to transform the business idea into a business plan. The competition also includes effective presentation skills training and the finalists present their business ideas to a professional jury, potential partners and investors.

Web: [www.jihoczech.cz](http://www.jihoczech.cz)

### **2.2.3. Služby JVTP – Podpora Trendů / JVTP Services - Trend Support**

The programme "JVTP Services - Supporting Trends" (referred to as PoTr) supports small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed persons with their registered office or business premises in the South Bohemia Region by providing discounted expert consultancy services by external experts. The programme is owned by the Ministry of Trade and Business and carried out via the South Bohemian Science and Technology Park.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The aim of the programme is to intensify the innovative activities of enterprises in the implementation of strategic changes, optimisation of company processes and their gradual digitalization and introduction of Industry 4.0 elements into company practice. Eligible for support are small and medium-sized enterprises from the South Bohemian Region (required to have at least a branch office in the region).

The outputs/results of the services provided shall help the beneficiaries to solve a specific need for further development of their business activities, which they are not able to solve independently using their own capacities, for various reasons (e.g. lack of professional knowledge and skills, insufficient equipment, insufficient experience for new business direction).

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### **Support measures and application process**

The rate of support is a subsidy provided at a maximum of 75 % of the total eligible expenditure for the expert services provided and the support may amount to CZK 50,000 - CZK 250,000. Supported activities and fields of consultation may encompass the following:

- Strategic management and innovation management
- Strategic advice on entering new markets
- Protection and exploitation of intellectual property rights
- Business model validation
- Development of the management of company processes with the aim of optimisation and progressive digital transformation
- Business and marketing strategies
- Consulting on design or construction processes with an emphasis on the introduction of Industry 4.0 elements into company practice

The application process is divided into 2 stages: In stage 1, the applicants fill in an online form published on the opening date for applications, in the second stage, the support provider nominates a consultancy team to carry out a free consultation: Together with the applicant's authorised representatives, a meeting with the maximum duration of 5 hours is held with detailed specifications of the content, scope and outputs of the required expert service. The outcome of the consultation is a specific offer for the discounted expert service, specifying the expert team, the scope of the service in the expected structure, the hourly subsidy of the service, the expected outputs and the budget for the service provided, including the determination of the amount of support.

The programme, which was announced on 1.2.2021 and is currently open until 31.1.2023 (or until the programme allocation is used up) has a budget of CZK 1,275,000. Implementation of projects have to take place until 31.5.2023.

Web: [www.inovoucher.cz/potr](http://www.inovoucher.cz/potr)

#### **2.2.4. Jihočeské podnikatelské vouchery / South Bohemian Business Vouchers**

The South Bohemian Business Vouchers are a simple subsidy scheme providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises from the South Bohemian Region for the purchase of services from knowledge providers from all over the Czech Republic, either from research organisations or South Bohemian creatives. The programme is implemented by the Regional Authority of South Bohemia via South Bohemian Science and Technology Park.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

The aim of the South Bohemian Business Vouchers is primarily to develop the region's business base and increase its innovation potential by setting up mutual

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interdisciplinary cooperation. Businesses may use the voucher to acquire knowledge-based services new to the business to address a specific need related to the development of the applicant's business activities. The following are the categories of supported and non-supported activities.

Small and medium-sized enterprises from the South Bohemian Region (required to have at least a branch office in the region) are eligible for support and there are no sectoral restrictions other than EU regulations.

### **Support measures and application process**

Support measures are twofold: "Innovation vouchers" for the purchase of innovation services from research organisations across the Czech Republic and "Creative vouchers" for the purchase of creative services from creative professionals from the South Bohemia Region. Knowledge-based service providers in the South Bohemia Business Voucher Programme are research organisations in the territory of the Czech Republic. The list of research organisations authorised to provide services in the South Bohemian Business Vouchers programme is managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEST). Additionally, creatives included in the South Bohemian Creative Gallery managed by the Department of Culture and Heritage Care of the South Bohemian Regional Authority are possible service providers.

The amount of the business voucher is a maximum of 75 % of the eligible expenses and can be up to CZK 150,000 (Innovation Voucher) or CZK 75,000 (Creative Voucher). The minimum voucher amount is CZK 50,000 resp. CZK 30,000.

Application is via an online form, where applicants have to formulate their idea and select a knowledge provider. The last call of the programme was opened in 2021 with a budget of CZK 2,000,000. There hasn't been a call in 2022 and currently there are no further calls planned.

Web: [www.inovoucher.cz/vouchery](http://www.inovoucher.cz/vouchery)

## **2.3. Cross regional programmes**

### **2.3.1. Upper Austrian & South Bohemian Region Cross-Border Idea & Start-up Contest**

The cross-border Czech-Austrian competition of business ideas and start-ups, called Crossborder Start-up & Idea Contest, was launched for the first time in 2022. The competition is executed in cooperation with the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria, with the professional support of JVTP Science and Technology Park and the Upper Austrian tech2b incubator.

#### **Aim and target group of the programme**

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Within this contest start-ups and ideas are sought from both Upper Austria and South Bohemian Region that contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and address or use development potentials for communities and regions. The programme offers the opportunity to get support from both by the Upper Austrian and the South Bohemian regional governments for implementing sustainable ideas and topics with high relevance for the future.

Projects have to be implemented in the regions of Upper Austria or South Bohemia and the participants must be located in Upper Austria or the region of South Bohemia (registration of the company's registered office or anticipated place of business in the initial phase of the idea). Admission to the Start-up Contest takes place according to the classification of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The evaluation criteria focus on the influence of the start-up or the idea on the sustainable development of the regions as well as the likelihood of the implementation of the project.

#### **Support measures and application process**

The competition is awarded in two categories: START-UP and IDEA. The category START-UP is awarded to start-ups (max. 5 years) with innovative products or services that have the potential to promote sustainable, regional developments. In the category IDEA, emerging novel business ideas or projects of participants are awarded, which have not yet founded a company but have the potential to establish a company. Moreover, the project with the greatest cross-border impact is awarded (chosen from both categories).

The winners of each category receive € 10,000 to start or accelerate their project as well as an additional 5 hours of coaching (by tech2b or JVTP) to develop a proof of concept in a region or community.

After the initial application via mail and a pitch deck, finalists for the contests are selected, followed by workshops for idea development, coaching and pitch training before the finale in form of the Start-up Contest & final Pitch Event takes place.

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## 3. National programmes

There are several possibilities for international cooperations within national support schemes and research and innovation promotion agencies. This can be the case in bilateral calls, multinational networks, or framework programmes extending over several years that support international cooperation between companies and/or R&D organisations. Several national programmes also permit foreign partners to participate in project consortia. On both sides of the border research promotion agencies in Austria and the Czech Republic support research and university institutes, companies and other organisations in establishing and expanding cooperative relationships with partners from abroad.

### 3.1. *National programmes Austria*

#### 3.1.1. *FFG – General Programme*

The General Programme is perhaps the most important R&D subsidy scheme of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG). The programme follows a bottom-up principle, is open to all branches of industry and research topics and eligible to companies and projects of all sizes.

The General Programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness of companies based in Austria by funding the development of new products, processes and services. It is open to SMEs, large enterprises & start-ups located in Austria, or operating a site in Austria which carry out innovative R&D projects.

The funding of cooperative projects is possible and international partners can take part in two ways:

Consortium in international programmes (eg EUREKA, ERA-NET): The Austrian partners submit a project application at FFG and explain the international cooperation within it. In most cases a funding application is also required at international level.

Funding of third party costs for R&D services of partners to be purchased by Austrian companies

Funding is up to 50 % (for start-ups up to 70 %) of total eligible project costs, while the FFG uses a combination of several financing instruments - such as grants as well as low-interest loans for supporting the projects. Eligible costs encompass all expenses which are incurred directly in relation to the funded research activities. Funding is provided for personnel costs, investments in research infrastructure and other costs (third party services, material costs, travel costs, patent application costs).

The application process is organised as an ongoing submission process and project valuations are conducted by experts of the FFG. Throughout the whole funding duration the project will be monitored to permit the most efficient progress.

Web: <https://www.ffg.at/en/programme/general-programme>

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### **3.1.2. COIN: Cooperation and Innovation Call for "International Innovation Networks"**

COIN – Cooperation and Innovation is a programme implemented by the FFG to encourage technology transfer within entrepreneurial cooperation schemes, thus raising the level of innovation within businesses and strengthening their cooperation capacities. It focuses on output-oriented cooperation projects to develop and improve innovative products and processes.

Coin is intended to contribute to foster Austria's innovation performance by improving and broadening transfer of knowledge into innovations. The COIN "SME Innovation Network" funding focuses on the establishment of innovation networks of several consortium partners, that is between companies (especially SMEs), research and knowledge dissemination institutions and other non-economic institutions, in which innovative products, processes or services are newly developed by means of technology and knowledge transfer.

On the basis of COIN SME Innovation Networks, the FFG also conducts transnational calls for proposals together with other European funding agencies within the framework of IraSME. IraSME promotes the establishment and expansion of transnational business cooperations with a network character, in the framework of which concrete RDI projects are implemented.

Eligible costs are personnel costs and other project-related direct costs, the maximum funding amount for "SME Innovation Network" projects (and thus IRaSME projects in Austria) is € 500,000. For IraSME projects, applicants have to submit of a proposal at the national level to FFG (in addition to the "IraSME Application Form"), minimum is a consortium of 3 companies, with at least 2 SMEs from at least 2 participating countries/regions.

Web: <https://www.ffg.at/programm/coin-cooperation-and-innovation> & <https://www.ira-sme.net/case-studies/austria/>

### **3.1.3. FFG Innovation Voucher**

The Innovation Voucher is a funding instrument of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency FFG designed to help small and medium-sized enterprises in Austria to start ongoing research and innovation activities by supporting cooperation with research institutes.

The scheme is open to SMEs and start-ups and their projects in all technology fields and industries, but also cross-sectional topics. Financial support (funding rate is max. 80 % resp. € 10,000) is given to companies that can use it at research institutions for the implementation of innovation services (potential analysis, preparation of R&D projects, concepts). Eligible costs are research-based idea studies (such as concept development & preliminary and accompanying studies), research for the implementation of innovative ideas, preparatory work for research, development and innovation of a project (including analyses of the completeness of technical solution

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approaches as well as their elaboration), and support during prototype development & concepts for technical innovation management (proof-of-concept).

Web: <https://www.ffg.at/en/en/programme/innovation-voucher>

## **3.2. National programmes Czech Republic**

### **3.2.1. TA CR: DELTA 2 Programme**

Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TA CR) is the main provider of state funding for research and innovation in business in the Czech Republic. The "DELTA 2 support programme for applied research, experimental development and innovation programme" of TA CR aims at bilateral international cooperation in applied research, experimental development and innovation between Czech enterprises and research organisations and their foreign partners.

The programme supports joint projects of Czech enterprises and research organisations and foreign participants with expected (but not implicitly imperative) support of foreign technology and innovation agencies or other similar institutions. Funded projects shall aim at specific outputs in applied research, i.e. lead to the acquisition of new findings and skills for the development of new or substantially improved products, processes or services. However, the programme itself does not have a topical focus but the topics of the joint projects may be determined ad hoc in individual calls for proposals.

The programme focuses on cooperation with partners mainly from outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) resp. on non-EU countries in Asia, South and North America. In the latest 4th call of the programme, foreign partner organisations were from Brazil, China, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Canada, the US, Taiwan and Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Web: <https://www.tacr.cz/en/delta-2-programme/>

#### **3.2.1.1. TA CR: KAPPA Programme**

The "KAPPA funding programme for applied research, experimental development and innovation" of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and which is co-financed by the EEA and Norway Grants is generally aimed at supporting international cooperation between Czech entities and partners from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein in applied research and at supporting the interconnections of research organisations the industrial sphere (mainly with enterprises). The Programme aims at strengthening the development of knowledge based on research by means of international cooperation in the area of applied research.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tacr.cz/en/4th-call-for-proposal/>

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The programme addresses industrial research projects (also involving the necessary activities in oriented basic research), as well as support for projects with a predominance of experimental development. One specific objective is support for projects focused on carbon capture and storage, for which an extra budget for financing projects is allocated (28 % of the Norway Grants). Support is given to joint projects implemented by applicants from the Czech Republic, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Web: <https://www.tacr.cz/en/kappa-programme/>

### **3.2.2. TA CR: ERA-NET Cofunds & European Partnerships**

ERA-NET and European partnerships provide opportunities for funding agencies from individual EU Member States, associated countries and also some non-European countries to launch joint international calls for proposals under various agreed themes. TA CR (as well as the FFG on the Austrian side of the border) supports such ERA-NET calls and participates in open joint calls in fields such as biodiversity and climate, clean energy transition, water pollution, information and communication technologies (ICT), non-agricultural raw materials and innovative materials.

TA CR allocation for individual joint calls varies in size, but often amounts to approximately EUR 1 million, with a maximum funding rate of 70 – 100 % of eligible project costs for the Czech part of the project.

Web: <https://www.tacr.cz/en/era-net-cofunds/>

#### **3.2.2.1. Operational Programme Technologies and Application for Competitiveness (OP TAC) 2021 – 2027**

The operational Programme Technologies and Application for Competitiveness 2021-2027 is the flagship programme of the Czech government for supporting entrepreneurs in the 2021–2027 programming period of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The managing authority of OP TAC is the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic (MIT). The Business and Innovation Agency (API) acts as the intermediate body.

Applicants can use the funds to co-finance business projects in the field of research, development and innovation, digitization and digital infrastructure, business development, smart and sustainable energy, circular economy or clean mobility. Also, OP TAC is the national funding programme available to Czech applicants for participating in IrsSME projects resp. calls with international project partners.

Web: <https://www.agentura-api.org/en/op-tak/>