



OPEN CALL TO RECEIVE CASCADE FUNDING FOR

# COACHING AND MENTORING SERVICES (CMS)

# **Guide for Applicants**



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# Table of acronyms and abbreviations

MTA	Mobility, Transport, Automotive
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
VSB	Very-Small Business
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
CMS	Coaching and Mentoring Services
Eol	Expression of Interest

## 1. Introduction

This Open Call to receive cascade funding for Coaching and Mentoring Services is one of the actions planned within the RESIST project, an initiative co-financed by the Single Market Programme (SMP COSME), through the "Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe's recovery" call of the European Commission.

RESIST ("REsilience through Sustainable processes and production for the European automotive InduSTry") Eurocluster aims to help SMEs, very small businesses (VSB) and start-ups from the Mobility Transport Automotive ecosystem (MTA) in their green and digital transformation process, as well as to increase their level of resilience in the face of upcoming challenges. To do this, the project expects to mobilise more than 1 million euros in cascade funding through different calls related to five specific areas: networking; innovation; adaptation of processes and technologies with the coaching and mentoring services Call; training; and internationalisation. Additionally, the beneficiaries will be able to access an exhaustive report on future challenges, know the benefits of greening and digitising production, analyse opportunities in international markets, as well as meet potential partners from other ecosystems.

To channel the interest in the RESIST initiative and give a personalised support to SMEs, VSBs and start-ups from the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem, a One-stop-shop service is available since December 2022 <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RESISTone-stop-shop">https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RESISTone-stop-shop</a>, where companies can select the areas of support and activities that better fit their strategic priorities, being informed about the opportunities available all along the project.

RESIST is one of the initiatives supported by the European Commission to assist in the implementation of the updated industrial strategy through the launch of more than 30 joint strategic cluster initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) intersectoral, interdisciplinary and trans-European for the recovery of Europe. The European Commission has only approved two Eurocluster initiatives focused on the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem, the RESIST and E-BOOST projects, which are already in contact to collaborate and take advantage of synergies. The MTA ecosystem covers the production of motor vehicles, ships, and trains, as well as the manufacture of components, repair and maintenance activities or the freight transport. According to data from the European Commission, this ecosystem includes



more than 1.5 million companies in which 11 million people work directly. It represents 7.1% of the added value of the EU, reaching a turnover of 3 trillion euros.

The RESIST initiative, that started in September 2022, is a 3-year project promoted by a consortium made up of 5 European clusters from Spain, France, the Czech Republic and Austria: Cluster Pôle Véhicule du Futur - PVF (FR); CEAGA - Galician Automotive Cluster (ES); AUTOKLASTR (CZ); Cluster IDiA - Asociacion Investigacion, Desarrollo E Innovacion En Aragon (ES); and Business Upper Austria - The Upper Austrian government's location agency (Biz-Up)(AT).

# 2. Objective and scope

The objective of this call is to provide financial support to European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), start-ups and very-small businesses (VSBs) – hereafter referred to as "applicants" – working in the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem established in EU Member States and SMP/COSME countries (<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\_smp\_en.pdf">https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\_smp\_en.pdf</a>)

The companies shall be enabled to recognise their potentials and to implement necessary measures for leveraging opportunities in digitalisation, green economy, and sustainability.

For this purpose, a pool of experts in the field of digitalisation and green engineering has been established. This pool of experts includes experts in digitalisation and green engineering who accompany applicants by coaching and mentoring them. This enables Partners to implement the coaching and mentoring services (CMS) by supporting companies in the strategic design and implementation of new and innovative digital and green approaches, technologies, business models, and ensuring a successful implementation. The pool of experts is expected to grow steadily during the project lifetime.

The applicant SME, start-ups, VSB may contact one or more experts either from the list available on the submission platform: <a href="https://clustersubmissionplatform.eu/service-providers-resist/">https://clustersubmissionplatform.eu/service-providers-resist/</a> and the ECCP or propose an expert outside the list and invite them to submit an offer for the respective coaching and mentoring service, and finally selects one expert. If the selected expert is not an expert listed in the pool, he can join the pool of experts to expand the range of offered services to SMEs in the Mobility-Transport-Automotive within the RESIST project.

Experts interested in joining the pool of experts have the option to apply for the <u>Open Call for expression of interest for service providers</u> either before or after the contract is signed. Experts can apply throughout the duration of the RESIST project until 10/10/2024 00:00. This step is not obligatory but provides an opportunity for experts to express their interest in participating. Participating in a pool of experts offers the expert two key advantages:

Collaboration and knowledge exchange: By being part of the pool, the expert can collaborate with other skilled professionals, fostering a learning environment and leading to the development of new ideas and approaches.



Increased visibility and opportunities: Joining the pool exposes the expert to a larger audience of potential beneficiaries, creating more opportunities to work on projects or provide services to a diverse range of clients.

The applicants receive financial support in the form of grants through reimbursement of actual cost for the CMS from the consortium. This support is named FSTP = financial support to third parties.

# 3. Financial support

Two types of financial support are offered in the frame of this Call about coaching and mentoring services (CMS):

- a. **Assessment financial support**, for assessing the current status regarding green/digital maturity of the SME, start-ups, VSB and giving advice for improvements.
- b. **Feasibility financial support**, for implementing a detailed analysis that considers all the critical aspects of a proposed improvement plan, innovation project or similar, in order to determine whether this is likely to succeed.

### Assessment financial support

The Assessment financial support consists of a one-time support per applicant in the form of specific high-level expert consulting on a specific topic related to the applicant's digital and/or green transformation. The financial support covers up to 5 sessions with experts and the expected outcome is a documented report prepared by the applicant, supported by the expert, describing the maturity status and possible improvements. Assessment services funded under the FSTP must be conducted within three months from the date of award of the grant.

Eligible applicants receive a financial support of maximum €4,000 or 75% of the expert's bill for an assessment service, whichever is lower.

The RESIST consortium offers in total 25 financial support assessment services.

### Feasibility financial support

Feasibility financial support provides support for theoretical, lab-environment study on feasibility of implementation of a new technology, new materials, or a new approach related to the applicant's services, products, manufacturing processes, or business models towards digital and sustainable transition. Market studies for international markets or new markets for applicants are also covered by the Feasibility financial supports. The outcome of this financial support can be, e.g., practical roadmaps, feasibility studies with technical specifications, new digitalised business models, other plans and arrangements for green/digital transformation, or market studies.

The Feasibility service, funded under the FSTP, must be conducted within six months from the date of award of the grant.

The implementation of the Assessment service or feasibility service, respectively, can start immediately after the bi-lateral contract is signed by all parties (see section 6 application



procedure).

Eligible applicants receive a financial support of maximum €7,500 or 75% of the expert's bill for Feasibility services, whichever is lower.

The RESIST consortium offers in total 12 financial support for feasibility services.

The assessment/feasibility services can be conducted in any language the applicant and the expert agree on. The funded activities must be documented by the beneficiary, supported by the expert, in form of an English publishable report (2-4 pages) that is one mandatory condition for the payment of the financial support.

The RESIST Eurocluster expects to finance around 37 CMS (25 assessment services and 12 feasibility services).

However, this figure could be lower, if the evaluators consider the applications received do not reach the minimum quality or are incoherent with the project requirements.

### **IMPORTANT:**

Applicants have the possibility of participating in all Open Calls to be launched within the framework of the RESIST initiative, but the maximum amount to be granted per applicant in the framework of the RESIST project shall not exceed €60,000.00 in total even in the case of multiple granted financial support scheme types to the applicant during the lifetime of the project.

This applies for all the calls (and their respective cut-off dates) in case an applicant would apply to the subsequent calls as well. It is the responsibility of the applicant to check that the requested funding sums do not exceed this limit by replying to the declaration for the open call for SMEs to receive FSTP for the Open Call Coaching and mentoring services Moreover, the RESIST consortium will also check for every application all funding sources, budget etc... to ensure that no double funding occurs and that the total funding remains under €60,000.The RESIST Consortium may request documentation or proof of funding from the applicant.

According to the EU public spending rules, no cost of the same activity can be financed twice from the EU budget. It is not allowed in any case.

The applicant cannot apply for and/or receive funding outside of RESIST for a similar service that could lead to a potential double funding of the same action. The RESIST Consortium may carry out the necessary control actions with other SMP Eurocluster Consortia and other EU-funded projects to verify that there is no double funding ongoing.

# 4. Applicants, admissibility, and eligibility criteria

The beneficiaries of this Open Call are European SMEs, start-ups, Very Small Businesses from the Mobility, Transport, Automotive ecosystem established in EU Member States and SMP/COSME countries (<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\_smp\_en.pdf">https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\_smp\_en.pdf</a>)

An SME will be considered as such if it complies with the European Commission's



Recommendation 2003/361/EC. As a summary, the criteria defining an SME are:

- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250;
- Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million.

For detailed information, check the EU recommendation: <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361">https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361</a>.

 The SME self-assessment questionnaire can be accessed in the following link: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/smeq.do;SME\_SESSION\_ID=1sN-sNtcy7xcbNoO0A83lgtG34f2ngqWbepvXWPuV41icaCTTOW9!881054478?execution=e1s1">https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/smeq.do;SME\_SESSION\_ID=1sN-sNtcy7xcbNoO0A83lgtG34f2ngqWbepvXWPuV41icaCTTOW9!881054478?execution=e1s1</a>

All applicants must fulfil the eligibility criteria set here below:

- Be headquartered in one of the EU Member States or in SMP countries.
- Be part of the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem.
- Have no convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices.
- Have undergone the resilience check scheme provided by the RESIST Eurocluster that will allow them to audit their market situation, production and processes towards potential risks and future challenges, as well as set-up an action plan for mitigating the main risks. This document is available on the submission platform to download once the applicant has registered.
- The applicant must have the financial capacity to carry out the actions described in their proposals and to properly manage the financial support granted to them.

Each applicant must be in alignment with the following situations:

- Is no bankrupt or being wound up, is not having affairs administrated by the courts, has not entered into an arrangement with creditors, has not suspended business activities, is not the subject of proceedings concerning those matters or is not in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- Is in compliance with its obligation relating to the payment of social security contributions and the payment of taxes, in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established:
- Is not subject to a conflict of interest in connection with the grant.

### Ethic assessment:

- Avoid any conflict of interest and comply with the principles of transparency, nondiscrimination, equal treatment, sound financial management, proportionality and competition rules.
- Allow for all communications to be made in English.
- Ensure that the part of the activities that is subject to the place of performance obligation is performed in the eligible countries or target countries set out in the call conditions.



- Respect the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) guarantees that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with particular reference to confidentiality, personal identity and the right to data protection.

# 5. Timeline

Opening date	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2023; 12:00 CEST
Proposal submission deadline Oru	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2024; 12:00 CET until the budget of €190,000 is spent whatever occurs first

# 6. Application procedure

Application procedure		
Type of application	Single-stage application	
How to apply	The formal application will be made through the Form available on the <u>Submission platform</u> . All the relevant information of the Open Call will be published on the submission platform, including the Guide for Applicants.	
	The link to the Open Call is the following: <u>Coaching and mentoring services FSTP</u> .	
	Note that the financing access procedure is completely free.	
Documents to be submitted at the application stage	Full application package consisting of:	
	1- Application form: basic information to be filled in on the online submission platform (company data, type of coaching, etc.)	
	2- Commitment declaration: The commitment declaration ensures the truthfulness of information provided in the application, stating that there is no double funding for the same service, and the privacy policy will be adhered to. It also confirms that the applicant falls under the correct category of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).	
	3- The RESIST Resilience check: mandatory to access all RESIST Open Calls. All applicants must complete this document to assess their status and level of resilience to crises.	



	4- Expression of Interest (EoI): It is a document describing the scope of the applied CMS Service, the motivation for the application, and the selected expert. The Expression of Interest must be duly signed by the legal representative of the organisation, confirming the applicant's commitment to implementing the service offered in this call.
	5- Scan of the experts' offer: The applicant submits the expert's offer for the intended CMS service on the sub- mission platform together with the Expression of Interest.
	All these templates will be available on the <b>submission platform</b> . Applications that do not provide ALL the requested documents will not be considered.
List of experts	List of experts:
	For both financial support types, the applicant must select either an expert from the list available on the submission platform and the ECCP or propose an expert outside the list.
	The list provided by the RESIST partners contains the information about the contact (name, country, e-mail, phone number etc), the company and the type of service it offers.
	Applicants should thoroughly review the provided list of experts, considering their areas of expertise, qualifications, experience, and any additional criteria relevant to their specific coaching and mentoring needs.
	Before proposing an expert outside the provided list, applicants should ensure that they gather information about the proposed expert, including their name, qualifications, area of expertise, and a brief rationale for selecting them. Highlight their relevant experience and how their involvement would benefit the applicant's company.
	Once a company has identified an expert, they should reach out to the expert directly to express their interest in obtaining coaching and mentoring services.
	The chosen expert and the company should schedule an initial consultation to discuss the company's CMS requirements in more detail before applying (through phone, video call, or inperson, depending on the availability and preference of both parties).
Documents to be submitted after the application has been approved	Bi-lateral contract:  This document constitutes the model contract between Pôle Véhicule du Futur (as coordinator of the RESIST consortium), and the beneficiary. As soon as the applicant has been notified.



	by e-mail about their approval, the selected applicant and the RESIST project consortium represented by the lead partner PVF sign a bi-lateral contract. The applicant cannot receive funding if it has not signed the contract.
Documents to be submitted once the activity has taken place	Report about the implemented CMS (from the beneficiary): a report describing the implemented activities and the main outcome of the CMS service.
	<ul> <li>Invoices: Invoice of the expert and applicant's payment notification, and invoice of the applicant towards PVF (provided by the applicant)</li> </ul>
	Those documents must be sent to the following e-mail: <a href="mailto:georg.alber@biz-up.at">georg.alber@biz-up.at</a> within one month after the completion of the activity.
Language	English is the official language of all RESIST Open Calls. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated.
Communication	All RESIST Open Calls will also be published in the following websites:  Funding & Tenders portal (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding- tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home)  This portal is the entry point for participants and experts in funding programmes and tenders managed by the European Commission and other EU bodies. It provides for the electronic management of EU programmes and tenders and facilitates the related interactions with the EU Institutions.
	<ul> <li>Enterprise Europe Network site         (https://een.ec.europa.eu/)         It is the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with international ambitions.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>European Cluster Collaboration Platform         (https://clustercollaboration.eu/open-calls)         It is the European online hub for industry clusters and it has a special section called "Funding" to announce the available Open calls</li> </ul>



### 7. Evaluation of the award criteria:

### **Stages**

Once the applicants have submitted their applications the **Open Call evaluation process** is structured as follows:

### 1) Eligibility and admissibility Check.

The RESIST evaluation committee, made of 3 partners, will check eligibility and admissibility criteria (as mentioned in chapter 4: **Applicants, admissibility, and eligibility criteria**).

### 2) Award procedure (against the defined evaluation criteria).

If successful, this committee will review the content of the proposal (quality check).

Only companies that meet the above listed requirements will be evaluated, i.e. companies that do not fulfil the requirements will not be considered.

Companies will be evaluated according to the selection criteria in the table below:

Selection Criteria	Score
Relevance of the application in light of the RESIST objectives:	
- The applicant clearly outlines how the assessment/feasibility service helps with the transformation of the applicant company towards greener and/or more digital products, business models or production processes:	10
Workforce:	
The evaluation will assess whether the applicant has a workforce with sufficient capacity. The evaluation will determine if the workforce is capable to handle the expected workload in course of implementing the assessment/feasibility service with an expert.	5
Resilience:	
<ul> <li>The applicant demonstrates a clear concept for the assessment/feasibility service.</li> <li>The applicant demonstrates how the assessment/feasibility service enhances the applicant's ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges, market dynamics, and ensures business continuity and long-term stability.</li> </ul>	10
Impact:  Description of how the CMS activity will have impact on the applicant:	5



Clarity and specificity of the impact objectives described by the applicant.

The objectives should be measurable and relevant to the needs and challenges of the applicant.

TOTAL: 30

Applications **receiving a score over 15/30** will be considered to be awarded. The maximum number of applications to be selected per cut-off is 8.

There will be 6 cut-off dates for the submission of proposals:

- the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 12:00 CET
- the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2023 12:00 CET
- the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 12:00 CET
- the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 12:00 CET
- the 8th of September 2024 12:00 CET
- the 1st of November 2024 12:00 CET

This means that if an applicant submits their application after the cut-off date, their application will be evaluated for the following cut-off date.

The applications will be assessed by the RESIST consortium from the date of the cut-off until the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month of the cut-off.

After the evaluations, the RESIST consortium will decide the successful applications and applicants will be notified after the cut-offs funding decisions (between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the end of the month). They will receive feedback on the evaluation of their proposal (both selected and non-selected applicants) on the application platform and by e-mail including a description of the third-party actions, the date of the award, duration, and final recipient legal names and countries. Please also kindly note that The RESIST consortium will publish the outcome of the Open call, including a description of the actions, the date of the award, duration, and final recipient legal names and countries. This publication will be made through the ECCP profile. In addition, information on the awarded proposals will be communicated through the RESIST communication channels.

Selected companies will be informed by the contact person of the RESIST partner organisation in the respective country/region:

- Pôle Véhicule du Futur for (East part of) France
- Business Upper Austria for (Upper) Austria
- Autoklastr for Moravian-Silesian Region / Czech Republic
- CEAGA for Galicia / Spain
- IDiA for Aragon / Spain

Applicants from countries outside the partner countries will be contacted by Biz-up.



In case of ex-aequo between proposals, priority will be given to highest scores for the criterion: "Innovation". If applicants receive the same score for this criterion, priority will be given to the "Alignment with RESIST project objectives".

### Redress procedure

Applicants can contest the decision within 30 days after the evaluation Committee decision by means of the e-mail: <a href="mailto:georg.alber@biz-up.at">georg.alber@biz-up.at</a>.

The evaluation committee should reply by e-mail within 30 days after the applicant's contestation.

# 8. Payment scheme

As soon as the service is accomplished and the assessment/feasibility service report has been submitted by the beneficiary to the project consortium, the beneficiary provides the confirmation of payment of the experts' invoice. Following the expert's invoice, the beneficiary has to lay an invoice according to the grant awarded (max. 75% or €4,000/7,500), addressed to PVF. RESIST partners will not pay the expert's invoice but the beneficiary's invoice.

Upon approval of the final report the RESIST coordinator PVF will pay the beneficiary FSTP by transfering the grant awarded within 30 days. Any amount exceeding the grant awarded will need to be covered by the applicant.

Any payment will be made in EURO.

Expenditure incurred are eligible from the signature of the contract among parties until 3 or 6 months depending on the type of financial support.

**No retroactivity of costs is accepted**, a grant cannot be used to cover costs of an action/activities that took place before the date of submission of the proposal.

Costs incurred for the implementation of the Assessment service /feasibility service must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objectives of the service and its expected results, in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Assessment services financial support:**

- Selected applicants receive a financial support of maximum €4,000 or 75% of the expert's invoice for CMS Assessment services, whichever is lower.
- In case that the expert's bill is higher than the maximum financial support (i.e. €4,000 = 75%) the applicant pays the exceeding amount.

### Feasibility financial support:

- The selected applicant receives a financial support of maximum of €7,500 or 75% of the expert's invoice for CMS Feasibility services, whichever is lower.
- In case that the expert's bill is higher than the maximum financial support (i.e. €7,500 = 75%) the applicant pays the exceeding amount.



# 9. Additional obligations

### **Conflict of interest**

The beneficiary must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the funded action is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

### Confidentiality

Personal data will be processed in compliance with applicable EU and national law on data protection.

The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) guarantees that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with particular reference to confidentiality, personal identity and the right to data protection. By applying, the applicant agrees on the storage and use of its personal data for the execution of the RESIST objectives and work plan.

The European Commission and the RESIST consortium will be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever media, the following information:

- Name of the beneficiary.
- Contact address of the beneficiary.
- Amount of the financial contribution.
- Geographic location of the proposed activity.
- Any publishable material to inform about the outcomes of this RESIST Open Call. The
  beneficiary will ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been
  obtained and that the publication of the information by the European Commission and
  RESIST does not infringe any rights of third parties.

### Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

Each beneficiary must make at **least 1 public communication** (e.g., on social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram...) mentioning the RESIST initiative through the hashtag #RESISTeurocluster, as well as the EISMEA and DG GROW links or hashtags.

Beneficiaries must acknowledge the EU support, displaying the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (also include the disclaimer) as indicated below. As well must credit the RESIST project through proper citation and visibility of the RESIST and EUROCLUSTERS logo:







This activity has received funding from the European Union's Single Market Programme, via the Open Call Coaching and Mentoring Services (CMS) FSTP within the framework of the "Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe's recovery" via an Open Call issued and executed under project RESIST (Grant Agreement No 101074204)"

The EU emblem as well as the full RESIST logo will be provided by the RESIST consortium.

### Information

The beneficiaries must provide — during the action or afterwards— any information requested in order to verify eligibility of the costs or contributions declared, proper implementation of the action and compliance with the other obligations under the Agreement.

The information provided must be accurate, precise and complete.

### Record keeping

The beneficiaries must keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action.

In addition, the beneficiaries must keep the following to justify the amounts declared.

(a) Adequate records and supporting documents to prove the costs declared (such as contracts, invoices and accounting records)

The records and supporting documents must be made available upon request.

RESIST Partners must ensure that their contractual obligations from the Grant Agreement mentioned above also apply to the third parties receiving the support under their calls.