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Supporting recovery and business transformation of lighting & furniture SMEs
for the Europe Industry of Tomorrow

SILEO

2° OPEN CALL FOR BUSINESS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

V01



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1. What is the SILEO project?

SILEO - *Supporting recovery and business transformation of lighting & furniture SMEs for the Europe Industry of Tomorrow* - is a project co-financed by the Single Market Programme (SMP/COSME Pillar) of the European Union. **SILEO supports European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) of lighting and furniture ecosystems** to fully recover from the effects of the COVID-19 crisis and build resilience for the future. The project proposes a direct financial funding scheme through financial support to third parties (FSTP) - cascade funding, joint talent placement services and internationalization actions to accelerate the recovery, support SMEs in becoming more resilient to future shocks, better prepared for disruptions in supply and value chains, greener in business operations and stronger connected to technology ecosystems through strategic collaboration.

Which organisations take part in the SILEO project?

The Consortium is composed of **seven key clusters** from Austria, France, Italy, Romania and Spain, representing jointly more than 3,000 SMEs in the lighting and furniture sectors.

Project Coordinator	1. ELCA – European Lighting Cluster Alliance (Italy)
Project Partners	2. Cluster Lumière (France) 3. CICAT Lighting Cluster (Spain) 4. Rete di Imprese Luce in Veneto (Italy) 5. Business Upper Austria - OÖ. Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH (BIZUP) - BIC Building Innovation Cluster (Austria) 6. TFC Transylvanian Furniture Cluster (Romania) 7. Cluster Legno, Arredo e Sistema Casa FVG (Italy)

What does Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) mean?

Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) - cascade funding – refers to a European Commission funding mechanism, where a co-funded European project provides financial support to external entities (such as start-ups, scale-ups, SMEs) that are not directly involved in the project, in the uptake or development of digital innovation. Financial support to third parties can be of two natures: grants or prizes.

The SILEO Consortium envisaged **5 typologies of Financial Support to Third Parties** to be activated through open calls during the project course and directly addressed to SMEs working in the lighting and furniture ecosystems in Europe:

1. **Business Digital Transformation Projects**
2. **Advanced Technology Uptake Projects**
3. **Hack Day travel vouchers**
4. **Travel Placement Projects**
5. **Best Company Story-telling Video Contest**

2. Why should I apply for SILEO Open Call for Business Digital Transformation Projects?

- ✓ You will receive financial support from the SILEO Consortium (lump sum **up to 5.000,00 EUR**).

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- ✓ You will **improve key business processes** in your company through a partnership with selected technology provider(s) and/or digitalisation expert(s), thanks to which you will become more competitive.
- ✓ Business Digital Transformation Project represents a unique opportunity to **improve SMEs' business in accessing services** such as:
 - General expert consultancy on company digitalisation processes;
 - Specific expert consultancy on identified advanced technology(ies) and/or digitalisation process(es) to concretely explore its potential uptake at the company level, its implementation procedure into the firm operations and scale of investment;
 - General expert consultancy for business transformation and market analysis.

4. Who can apply?

We are looking for project applications submitted by a **single SME** (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise) legally registered - including start-ups registered for at least 6 months from the date of submission of application - **operating in the lighting and furniture industry and located in the European Union Member States (EU27) or countries associated to the Single Market Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature** ([List of Participating Countries in the Single Market Programme](#)).

→ *See Guide for Applicants chapter 2.*

Are Ukrainian SMEs eligible?

Yes, Ukrainian SMEs are eligible, together with EU-27 and EFTA countries. Ukraine participates in the SMP Programme (*agreement signed in February 2023 — entry into force retroactive on 01 January 2021*).

Are Albania, Georgia and Armenia eligible counties? As they confirmed interest to join SMP, but there is no information about signing an agreement.

Eligible non-EU countries are only third countries associated with the Single Market Programme (SMP) or third countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an SMP association agreement, as long as this association agreement enters into force before the grant signature.

In this context, "*ongoing negotiations*" means that negotiations for an association with the SMP have been formally initiated by both sides (the non-EU country and the European Commission) and a first negotiating meeting was held (virtually or physically).

Applicants from non-EU countries with ongoing negotiations may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before the grant signature (with retroactive effect if provided in the agreement).

At this moment (24/10/2023), Albania, Georgia and Armenia expressed an interest in joining the SMP programme and already had a first negotiating meeting and are therefore now considered under "ongoing negotiations". Therefore, SMEs from Albania, Georgia and Armenia can be considered eligible provided that the "SMP Association Agreement" between the EU and Albania, or Georgia or Armenia will enter into force before the grant signature.

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What is a Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME)?

An SME will be considered as such if it complies with the European Commission's Recommendation 2003/361/EC. In summary, the criteria defining an SME are:

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

Note that the figures of partners and linked enterprises should also be considered as stated in the SME user guide.

- **SME definition:** https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en.
- **SME user guide:** <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/79c0ce87-f4dc-11e6-8a35-01aa75ed71a1>
- **SME self-assessment questionnaire:** https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/smeq.do;SME_SESSION_ID=1sN-sNtcy7xcbNo00A83lgtG34f2ngaWbepvXWPuV41icaCTTOW9!881054478?execution=e1s1

What are the target industrial sectors of the applicant SMEs?

The target applicants of the SILEO Open Call are SMEs active in the lighting and furniture manufacturing key industries:

- **Lighting industry:** the lighting industry covers a complex range of products and services for the manufacturing of luminaires, lamps and related components. It includes various industrial segments divided per lighting type (LEDs, CFLs, etc.), application (general lighting, automotive lighting, backlighting, emergency lighting, others), electronics and other components (lighting controls, etc.).
- **Furniture Industry:** the furniture industry covers various products and services markets segmented by material (wood, metal, plastic, and other), and by application (home furniture, office furniture, hospitality furniture, upholstered furniture, and others).

5. Where should I apply? What documents should I fill out?

Lighting and furniture SME applicants have to fill out the application in the **SILEO Submission Platform**: https://clustersubmissionplatform.eu/eurocluster_post/sileo-business-digital-transformation-2nd-open-call/

The application procedure consists of two parts, with the first part completed online on the SILEO Submission Platform and the second part involving the uploading of specific documents in PDF format.

As applicants, you shall register yourself on the platform, by creating a profile and then you will be able to prepare the application online.

1. SME applicant administrative data

SME applicants start the application process by accessing the SILEO Submission Platform and entering their administrative data.

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- 2. BUSINESS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT:** to be completed by filling in the ***Business Digital Transformation Project - technical part (Word template)*** and uploading it to the SILEO submission platform. The template is available on the SILEO Submission platform.

SME applicants are required to upload the document in PDF format, which contains:

- A. Business Digital Transformation Project information
 - B. Project Relevance
 - C. Project Implementation
 - D. Project Impact
- 3. DECLARATION OF HONOUR:** In the last sections, SME applicants are required to upload the Declaration of Honour (in PDF format) and other documents (optional).

→ See *Guide for Applicants chapter 3.*

What is a Declaration of Honour (DoH)?

A Declaration of Honour is a document to ensure that all beneficiaries under the SILEO Open Calls comply with the rules and are not in a situation that would exclude them from receiving financial support to third parties provided by SILEO Consortium.

The legal representative of the applicant SME has to duly sign it (handwriting or digital), and bearing the date of the signature.

Then, the signed DoH must be uploaded during the application process at STEP 3. REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CALL

6. What should I do before applying?

It's crucial for European SMEs from the lighting and furniture sector who are interested in applying for the Business Digital Transformation Projects to thoroughly review the SILEO guidelines and eligibility criteria. Here are the key steps they should follow:

a) Read the SILEO Guide for Applicants

Carefully read the SILEO Guide for Applicants. These guidelines contain detailed information about the application process, eligibility requirements, project objectives, evaluation criteria, and deadlines.

b) Check the Eligibility Criteria

Pay close attention to the eligibility criteria specified in the guidelines. These criteria will outline who is eligible to apply (type and size of the business, geographical location, and specific sector requirements). Ensure that your business in the lighting and furniture sector aligns with the defined requirements.

4. Prepare SILEO application materials

Once you confirm your eligibility, begin preparing the required application materials. This includes completing the *Word template* with information on your Business Digital Transformation Project, its relevance, activities, impact and the requested lump sum.

Moreover, download the Declaration of Honour and duly sign it.

5. Submit your application within the deadline

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Follow the instructions in the guidelines for submitting your application on the SILEO Submission Platform. This involves completing an online application form and uploading the documents in PDF format.

If there are any doubts or questions regarding the guidelines or the application process, don't hesitate to contact the SILEO project partners - contact points for country of reference.

7. How to submit a project proposal on the SILEO Application Portal?

1. Log in to the SILEO Application Portal:

https://clustersubmissionplatform.eu/eurocluster_post/sileo-business-digital-transformation-2nd-open-call/

2. Read the description of the Call, where you can also download the following documents:

- a. Guide for Applicants
- b. SILEO Business Digital Transformation Project – technical part
- c. Application Form_sample
- d. Declaration of Honour
- e. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

3. Start the application process. Remember that all the fields marked* are mandatory for submission. You will find 3 STEPs:

- a. *STEP 1 – SME Applicant administrative data* (to be completed online by filling in the sections)
- b. *STEP 2 – Business Digital Transformation Project* (to be completed by uploading the Business Digital Transformation application form – technical part in PDF format)
- c. *STEP 3 – Requirements to participate in this Call* (to be completed by uploading the duly signed Declaration of Honour in PDF format)

4. Submit your project proposal! Please remember that the application can be submitted only if all required fields are filled out. If your proposal has been successfully sent, you will receive a confirmation email from @Cluster Submission Platform.

5. Wait for our feedback!

Can I submit two project ideas?

No. For the SILEO Open Call for Talent Placement Projects, an SME can submit one project idea. If more than one proposal submitted by the same applicant is identified, only the last proposal, which has been submitted, will be evaluated.

What happens if I do not submit my application within the deadline?

We do not accept applications after the deadline. We strongly encourage you not to wait until the last minute to submit your proposal. Failure to meet the submission deadline for any reason, including extenuating circumstances, will result in the rejection of the proposal.

Remember: the deadline to submit the Business Digital Transformation Project is on 25 March 2024 at 17:00 CET.

8. Can I apply if I have received FSTP grants from other projects before?

Yes, it is possible to apply. The only point that you should pay attention to if you are selected (funded) for multiple EU projects is the double funding rule. That means that you have to be able to confirm that funding

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received from one EU project will not cover the same costs/tasks, which were already funded by other EU projects. Please note that SMEs engaged in other EU-funded support programmes will have to prove that they have enough resources to be able to implement and complete the SILEO Business Digital Transformation Project (in case of being selected).

9. Where can I find the SILEO Pool of Technology Uptake Facilitators, the list of validated expert organisations?

You can find the official list online on the [SILEO Submission Platform](#). *The document is published online and regularly updated.*

How can an expert organisation apply to join the SILEO Pool of Technology Uptake Facilitators?

1. Fill in the **Expression of Interest**: <https://elcacluster.eu/our-projects/sileo/#ExpressionOfInterest>
2. Send it to the email address of one of the SILEO partners – contact points for the specific country of reference
3. Wait for our confirmation email!
4. Share the news!

For more information: <https://clustercollaboration.eu/content/2deg-call-expression-interest-sileo-pool-technology-uptake-facilitators>

Is it possible for SMEs to decide with whom (which experts) to cooperate for the project implementation?

Yes, SMEs can choose the expert(s) by themselves. The only requirement is that experts (technology facilitators and/or digitalisation experts) must be selected from the list of validated expert organisations (**SILEO Pool of Technology Uptake Facilitators**).

If the expert is not validated as is not on the list of the SILEO Pool, he/she must submit the **Express of Interest** (EoI) Form completed to the SILEO Partner of reference for the country of origin (of the applicant and provider). **The EoI form of a new provider must be submitted by email before the deadline on 08.03.2024 at 16:00 CET** (two weeks before the 2° Call for Business Digital Transformation Projects closure).

In the case the technology provider does not submit the EoI form by the above date and, therefore, is not included in the SILEO Pool, the applicant SME will still have the opportunity to select another validated technology provider from the official list published by the SILEO project.

The **SILEO Pool of Technology Uptake Facilitators** contains organisations validated by the SILEO Consortium. You can choose only the experts included in the list.

Filling out the Application form, you must indicate the name(s) of the selected expert(s) and explain the choice in relation to your project goals (**Project Implementation**).

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Can I work with an expert that I already know from past cooperation?

Yes, as long as this expert is validated by the SILEO partners as a technology facilitator or digitalisation expert. If the expert has been validated, you can find her/him in the **SILEO Pool of Technology Uptake Facilitators**.

10. How many projects will be selected under the 2nd Open Call for Business Digital Transformation Projects?

Twenty-seven (27) projects/SMEs will receive financial support from the SILEO Consortium to access and implement expert consultancies with the selected technology provider(s) and digitalisation expert(s). However, the final number of projects selected will depend on the overall quality of the submitted proposals and the available budget.

11. What are the selection procedures?

Applications will be evaluated by 7 internal reviewers from the SILEO Open Calls Quality Board (consisting of representatives of SILEO partners) plus external evaluators. Each proposal will go through to:

1. **Eligibility check** (based on the criteria identified in the section 4.1 of the Guide for Applicants)

The results of the eligibility check will be communicated to all applicants via email, both those who will pass and those who will fail. Only applications that pass the eligibility check will proceed to the:

2. **Quality evaluation** (based on the criteria identified in the section 4.2 of the Guide for Applicants)

After the quality evaluation, evaluated proposals will be ranked according to the final score. The final score of one project proposal will be calculated as an arithmetic average of the individual assessments provided by SILEO evaluators. Only proposals that reach the individual thresholds of each criterion and overall threshold of 15 points will be considered for funding. The results of the quality evaluation process will be communicated to all applicants (qualified for this 2nd evaluation step) through an email including the respective evaluation report summary.

→ Detail description in the Guide for Applicants, *section 4. Evaluation criteria*.

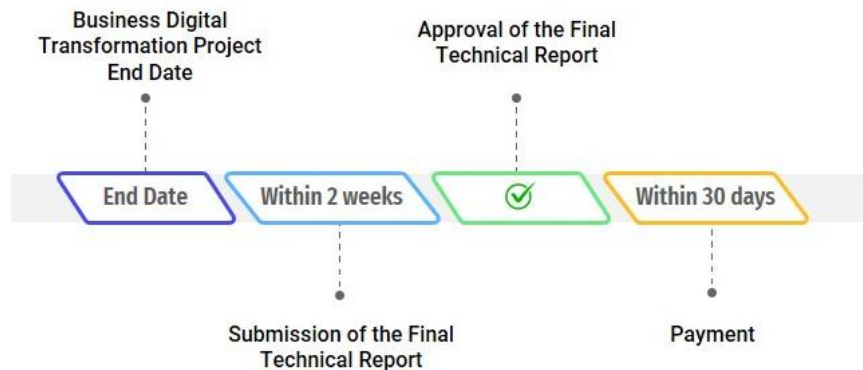
12. What are the payment conditions? Should I complete some report?

Awarded SMEs will be reimbursed within 30 days after the approval of the SILEO Final Technical Report.

The **SILEO Final Technical Report** is the report where SME Beneficiary must track the activities done in line with the proposal collaboration programme submitted in the application process.

It will be submitted within 14 days of the project end date via email to the SILEO Coordinator (ELCA European Lighting Cluster Alliance) and the SILEO Partner(s) of Reference, as scheduled in the SGA.

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→ See Guide for Applicants Chapter 7 (Reporting) and 8 (Payment).

What is a lump sum?

According to European provisions, the lump sum is a simplified method of settling expenses in projects financed by European programmes. It means that you are not required to present strictly defined accounting documents to prove the cost incurred (e.g. invoices), but you are obliged to demonstrate the implementation of the project. Simply speaking, it means that we will assess your progress and the quality of your work, during the Reports, not your accountancy. The lump sum does not release you from the obligation to collect documentation to confirm the costs under fiscal regulation.

13. How to write a proposal that convinces evaluators?

Make sure you do not leave any information out of your proposal. Be specific and provide precise answers to the questions in the application form. You can find all the information you need in the Guide for Applicants.

14. What type of support is available for preparing the proposal?

The “SILEO Guide for Applicants” is the main reference document. It provides detailed information about the requirements of the evaluation and selection process. If you encounter any technical problems while filling in the application form, contact the SILEO partners of reference based on your country/region (see table below). We will do our best to help you.

SILEO SME HELPDESK			
Country	SILEO Partner of reference	Representatives	E-mail
EU & SMP Associated countries	ELCA European Lighting Cluster Alliance	Marta Krakowiak	marta.krakowiak@elcacluster.eu
FRANCE	Cluster Lumière	Mary Hadidi	m.hadidi@cluster-lumiere.com
SPAIN	CICAT Lighting Cluster	Andrea Padré	apadre@secartys.org

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ITALY	Rete di Imprese Luce in veneto	Antonella Venza	antonella.venza@luceinveneto.com
AUSTRIA	Business Upper Austria - OÖ. Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH (BIZUP) - Building Innovation Cluster (BIC)	Isabella Mantello	isabella.mantello@biz-up.at
ROMANIA	TFC Transylvanian Furniture Cluster	Andreea Toma	andreea.toma@hygia.ro
ITALY	Cluster Legno, Arredo e Sistema Casa FVG	Caterina Pezzicar	caterina.pezzicar@clusterarredo.com

15. What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest may occur, if there are capital or personal connections between two or more entities (Applicant, Consortium partner or any person involved in the selection process), in particular, it should be understood as:

- Any ownership relations - ownership of shares, financial links and economic connections – like joint venture, holding, joint participation, silent partner. As an economic connection, we can understand exclusive licenses, and sale agreements if they concern products or solutions covered by your application etc.;
- Family and personal relationships, in particular: marriage, kinship, a relationship of affinity to the second degree in a straight line or lateral line, adoption, custody or guardianship or actual life and other close personal ties binding the Applicant and Consortium partner or any person involved in the selection process (it refers also to employees, shareholders, members of the management body, members of the board, managers, subcontractors etc.).
- The existence of material, especially financial relationships (such as the receipt by a person involved in the selection process from Applicant any significant gifts, donations, future contracts or employment, etc.);
- Relationships based on employment, cooperation or existing civil contract between the Consortium partners and people involved in the Applicant's structure, including managerial or supervisory functions, position in managing or supervising bodies.
- Remaining in a legal or factual relationship that may give rise to justified doubts as to the impartiality of the people involved in the selection process (expert/evaluator/employee/member of the management bodies of any of the Consortium partners etc.).

Remember that the concept of conflict of interest should be understood widely, so if you have any doubts about the conflict of interest please consult with our team. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

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16. Application Form: Project Implementation. What should be written in the field “C2. Project Team”?

<p>C2. Project Team</p> <p><i>Please describe shortly the internal staff of the SME applicant that will be involved in the project, their expertise, position and how they will work with the technology provider selected. Max. 1,500 characters incl. spaces.</i></p> <p><i>*QUALITY EVALUATION – IMPLEMENTATION (Sub-criteria 2.2): Team (0-5 points).</i></p>

In this section, SME applicants should briefly describe the organisation of the team, who will be involved in the implementation of the project and will collaborate with the selected technology provider(s). It’s important to note that even if you don’t include internal costs for your staff in the total funding requested (lump sum), their roles, expertise and position in the company should be outlined. Please remember that you have max. 1.500 characters incl. spaces.

17. Application Form: Project Implementation. What should be written in the field “C3. Project Resources”?

<p>C3. Project Resources</p> <p><i>Please provide a brief description of the project budget (total lump sum requested to implement the planned activities) and the division between the lump sum for the technology provider and, if any, for the internal team of the SME applicant.</i></p> <p><i><u>At least 75% of the requested lump sum must be dedicated to subcontracting with the technology provider.</u></i></p> <p><i>*QUALITY EVALUATION – IMPLEMENTATION (Sub-criteria 2.3): Resources (0-5 points).</i></p>						
<p>Brief description:</p>						
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Total budget for the technology provider(s):</td> <td>XXX EUR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total budget for the internal team (staff):</td> <td>XXX EUR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total funding requested</td> <td>XXX EUR</td> </tr> </table>	Total budget for the technology provider(s):	XXX EUR	Total budget for the internal team (staff):	XXX EUR	Total funding requested	XXX EUR
Total budget for the technology provider(s):	XXX EUR					
Total budget for the internal team (staff):	XXX EUR					
Total funding requested	XXX EUR					

In this section, SME Applicant must indicate the total amount allocated for the technology provider(s) regarding their consultancy services, and, if it foreseen, the total amount for staff costs (costs dedicated to the internal team of the SME applicant involved in the project implementation) or other expenses (such as travel costs) that you consider necessary for implementing the planned activities. Please remember that at least 75% of the requested lump sum must be dedicated to subcontracting with the technology provider.

Then, you must indicate the total funding requested in the specific field. Please note that the maximum amount per project must not exceed 5.000 EUR (lump sum).