OPEN CALL TO RECEIVE CASCADE FUNDING FOR

NETWORKING AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Guide for Applicants

Co-Funded by the
European Union

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1. Introduction

This Open Call to receive cascade funding for networking and marketing activities 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.

The RESIST ("REsilience through Sustainable processes and production for the European automotive InduSTry") Eurocluster aims to help SMEs, VSBs and start-ups from the Mobility, Transport and 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; 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, 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 – OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH - The Upper Austrian Economic development agency (TMG/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, so they can participate in international networking and marketing activities organised inside the European Union. To do this, the RESIST Eurocluster will provide cascade fundings, also known as Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), an instrument used by the European Commission to distribute public funds and generate opportunities for companies in the adoption or development of digital technologies.

With this support, the RESIST initiative aims to foster the creation of long-term business and innovation partnerships between SMEs, VSBs and start-ups and other European entities working in the MTA ecosystem or in related manufacturing industries, so we can strengthen European value chains and increase their resilience to future challenges. Moreover, networking activities help spread the knowledge and benefits of solutions for a more digital and sustainable production among companies across Europe, raising awareness about the need to embrace the twin transition and enabling the contact with relevant experts that can support them in the process.

Within the framework of this Open Call, up to a maximum of 45 FSTP schemes (15 for networking and 30 for marketing activities) will be provided, with a total budget of €15,000 for all schemes. The financial support for networking activities will be up to €500 per person and the financial support for marketing activities will be up to €250 per person (one person maximum per applicant per service). Companies could receive funding for both services, although for this aim, they should submit independent applications.

3. Eligible activities and expected impact

RESIST will provide financial support to SMEs, VSBs and start-ups from the MTA ecosystem so they can participate in networking and marketing activities organised in EU countries (in a region other that that of the applicant), being eligible the following actions:

- The attendance to exhibitions (booth costs not included)

- The attendance to conferences and forums

- The participation in matchmaking events

- The participation in meetings with potential customers or suppliers

This FSTP scheme can be used to finance the participation in networking and marketing activities taking place in EU countries. Applications can be presented to finance the participation in upcoming activities. No retroactivity of costs is accepted, meaning that a grant cannot be used to cover costs of an action/activities that took place before the date of submission of the proposal.

Beneficiaries should use the Networking and Marketing FSTP maximum 6 months after they obtain it.

A Networking and Marketing FSTP can be used only for one activity (one exhibition, one conference…) so the duration of the activities to be supported by the open call cannot exceed one week (5 days).

Note that internal events organised in the framework of the RESIST Eurocluster initiative will be out of the scope of this cascade funding.

The financed networking activities should facilitate the participation of applicants in different kind of events, so they can enter new markets, discover technological solutions for their needs, exchange best practices and experiences, identify potential partners, as well as meet new customers or suppliers. The participation in these activities will allow applicants to obtain valuable information for their green and digital transition, together with greater visibility in the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem, contributing to improve and extend their business and collaboration opportunities and increase their level of resilience.

4. Applicants, admissibility, and eligibility criteria

WHO CAN APPLY:

The beneficiaries of this Open Call are European SMEs, start-ups, VSB and/or mid-cap companies from the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem.

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: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361.

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

    - Ownership structure:

    > - Types of enterprise taken into consideration in calculating staff numbers and financial amount, including any partnership or linkage. The current limit shown in Recommendation 96/280/EC, of a 25% holding below which an enterprise is considered autonomous.

    > - Types of enterprises (autonomous, partner, linked) correspond to relationships that enterprises could have with one another, and which may impact on the overall headcount and financial criteria of an enterprise.

- Be headquartered in one of the EU Member States or in SMP/COSME countries.
- Be part of the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem
- Has not been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.
- Has no convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices.
- 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;
- Has 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.

5. Financial support and funding conditions

The funding conditions of the Open Call to participate in networking and marketing activities are detailed in the following table:

Financial support to Networking and Marketing activities	
Total budget available	€ 15,000
Estimated number of awarded FSTP	Up to a maximum of **45 FSTP schemes** will be provided, distributed as follows: - Up to 30 schemes for marketing activities (including exhibitions, forums and conferences) - Up to 15 schemes for networking activities (including matchmaking events, as well as meetings with potential suppliers or customers)
Maximum funding per person	- Marketing activities ≤ **250 €/person** - Networking activities ≤ **500 €/person**
Maximum number of beneficiaries by applicant and activity	**One person**

Payments	To receive the full payment, awarded applicants will be required to present their real costs, a report of the activity, as well as acknowledging on social media the EU funding awarded, including the #RESISTeurocluster and mentioning EISMEA and DG GROW links or hashtags. The obligations of EU visibility are detailed in chapter 9. Payment will not be provided until the consortium members verify that all these requirements have been fulfilled. Once everything is approved, the funds will be issued by the Eurocluster project coordinator within 30 calendar days.
Period of funding of activities	Activities carried out in the period from the opening date of the Open Call and no later than its closing date may be funded
Opening date of the Open Call	**4th May 2023; 12:00 CET** The Open Call will always be available in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), Funding & Tenders Portal and Enterprise Europe Network, as well as in the other communication channels of RESIST
Closing date of the Open Call	**20th December 2024; 12:00 CET** Or until the available funds of € 15,000 is spent (whichever occurs first)

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.

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 project 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. The RESIST Eurocluster expects to finance around 45 applications to participate in networking and marketing activities. However, this figure could be lower, if the evaluators consider the applications received don't reach the minimum quality or are incoherent with the project requirements.

6. Eligible costs

Successful proposals shall receive the requested financial contribution (in euros) based on the real costs of the action, with a limit of €500 per journey, in the case of networking activities, and €250 in the case of marketing activities.

Financial support is limited to one person per applicant and per activity. This means that the same applicant cannot receive financial support more than once in this Open Call.

All costs occurring from the opening date of this Open Call until 20th December 2024 are eligible. As long as the expenses are duly justified and as long as they applied before the activity has taken place within the period of the call.

ELIGIBLE COSTS:

- Registration fees.

- Transportation costs (air, train, bus tickets, etc.).

- Accommodation costs.

All eligible costs shall meet the following criteria:

- Be actually incurred by the participant (no estimated/imputed/budgeted costs).

- Be incurred during the open call period.

- Be identifiable, verifiable, and recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the applicable accounting standards and usual cost accounting practices.

- Comply with the applicable national laws on taxes and be reasonable and justified and comply with the principle of sound financial management (regarding economy and efficiency).

7. Application and evaluation procedure

HOW TO APPLY:

The financing access procedure is completely free and is based on a single-stage application. The formal application will be made through the Form available at the **Clusters submission platform,** a dedicated website designed by IDiA to make easier for applicants to find and apply to the different RESIST Open calls, as well as to those launched by other Eurocluster initiatives which have already agreed on the use of this portal. All the relevant information of the Open Call will be published on this page, including the Guide for Applicants.

The link to the submission platform is the following: Submission platform.

In addition, all the RESIST Open calls will also be announced 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.

- 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.

- 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

Application procedure summary	
Type of application	Single-stage application
How to apply	Submission via the Application Form available on Clusters submission platform

Documents to be submitted:	Full application package consisting of:
	
	- **Application form** (including company data, activity they want to participate in, relevance of the event, etc.)
	- **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.
	- **Commitment declaration**
	- **Ethics assessment:**
	
	   - Avoid any conflict of interest and comply with the principles of transparency, nondiscrimination, equal treatment, sound financial management, proportionality and competition rules (see annex 2)
	
	   - 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.

	▪ **Financial declaration** All these templates will be available at the **Clusters submission platform.** Applications that do not provide ALL the requested documents will not be considered.
Applicant requesting funding	All applicants requesting funding must provide a statement of commitment duly signed by the legal representative of the organisation. The template will be provided by the RESIST consortium.
Language	English is the official language of all RESIST open calls. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated.

If the application is approved, the beneficiary must submit to the RESIST consortium the invoices/receipts/proofs of expenditure detailed in section 6, within 30 days from the celebration of the activity

The beneficiaries must also present a report of the activity and acknowledge the EU funding support on social networks.

Payment will not be provided until the consortium members verify that all these requirements have been fulfilled.

Once the candidates have submitted their applications, the evaluation process will start with the following stages:

1. The RESIST evaluation committee, made of 3 partners, will check eligibility and admissibility criteria.

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

3. Those applications that have been positively valued in the step 2, **receiving a score over 14/20**, will be presented in the framework of the RESIST monthly consortium meetings (or the Steering Committee meeting if it is the case), for the final decision of awarded candidates. The maximum number of applications to be selected per monthly consortium is 3. In case of ex-aequo between proposals, the consortium will finance the first application received, and the second will be re-evaluated during the next consortium meeting.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Proposals will be evaluated based on four main evaluation criteria:

Criteria	Points
1. Motivation and coherence Justification of why the proposal submitted for funding can help the applicant to increase their business and collaboration opportunities as well as improve their position in the market.	**0-5**
2. Alignment with RESIST project objectives RESIST project aims to support SMEs, VSBs and start-ups from the Mobility, Transport and Automotive ecosystem to advance in their digital and green transformation, as well as to increase their level of resilience.	**0-5**
3. Impact Description of how the networking/marketing activity will have impact on the applicant.	**0-5**
4. Target countries Justification of why the EU Member States or SMP/COSME countries in which the marketing event is organised or in which the networking activity is focused are important for the applicant or will contribute to improve its business.	**0-5**

The criteria will be scored from 0 to 5, where each score means:

- **(0) Not addressed**: The application doesn't address the criteria or can't be evaluated due to the lack of information.
- **(1) Very poor:** The criteria are not properly addresses, as there are inconsistencies or uncompleted information.
- **(2) Poor:** Even though the application addresses the criteria, there are significant weaknesses or inconsistencies in the information provided.
- **(3) Enough:** The application addresses the criteria even though it could be improved significantly.
- **(4) Very good:** The application addresses the criteria very well even though there are slight improvements that could be made.
- **(5) Excellent:** The application addresses all the relevant aspects of the criteria. Any deficiency is minor.

8. Timeline

Opening date	4th May 2023; 12:00 CET
Proposal submission deadline	20th December 2024; 12:00 CET Or until the budget of €15,000 is spent

Regular awarding procedure:

There will be 20 cut-off dates for the evaluation of proposals. The 20th of each month (from May 2023 to December 2024) will be the cut-off date for the evaluation of the corresponding month. This means that if an applicant submits their application after the cut-off date, their application will be evaluated for the second cut-off date. Subsequently, after the evaluations, the RESIST consortium will decide the successful applications during the monthly consortium meeting.

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.

9. Responsibilities

Reporting

To receive the cascade funding, the awarded applicant should complete and present a report to the RESIST consortium. The report template will be given by the RESIST consortium to the awarded SMEs. This report and any other related/attached documents will be submitted in English. The report must include:

- Summary of results of the granted activity.
- Comparison of what was planned in the proposal with achieved results/ objectives.
- Impact of the networking/marketing activity for the beneficiary.

Date of submission of the report:

The report should be submitted within 1 month after the celebration of the marketing or networking event.

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 EC 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
- Networking/Marketing activity and its purpose
- 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 EC 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 (Twitter, LinkedIn) 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 logo:

This activity has received funding from the European Union's Single Market Programme, via the Open Call (…)

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

10. Contact

For any enquires regarding this RESIST Open Call, please contact:

Resilience through sustainable processes and production

info@resisteurocluster.eu | 🐦 🔗 | Find us on the ECCP