



Pilot activity final report

Template for project partners

Activity 3.1, pilot actions implementation and monitoring.

Project identification

Project	Danube Digital transformation Network of Active SMEs training and knowledge transfer centres (Danube DNA)
Programme	Interreg Danube Region Programme 2021–2027
Activity	3.1 Pilot actions implementation and monitoring
Activity Leader	SERDA, Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency
Lead Partner	University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences

Reporting partner

Project partner	SERDA, Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency
Country	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Pilot coordinator (name, email)	Asmir Kosovac, asmir@serda.ba
Pilot activity title	AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher
Digital solution validated	AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher (Joint Digital Solution x 3)
Pilot implementation period	April - June 2026
Date of submission	30.06.2026

Participating SME(s)

For the size breakdown, enter the number of SMEs in each category. A blank counts as zero, and micro, small and medium should add up to the total.

Number of participating SMEs	3
Of which micro	1
Of which small	0
Of which medium	2
Sector(s)	Information and Communication; Machinery and Equipment; Metal Manufacturing

1. Description of the implemented solution

Describe the digital solution validated and which of the six jointly developed solutions it corresponds to. Outline the SME context, the scope of the pilot, and how the solution was deployed in the real SME environment.

During the implementation phase, the originally planned pilot activity was revised following implementation challenges related to SME engagement and overall deployment feasibility. In agreement with the project partnership, SERDA subsequently validated the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher, ensuring successful implementation of one of the jointly developed Danube DNA digital solutions.

The pilot activity focused on validating the **AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher**, one of the jointly developed digital solutions within the Danube DNA project, developed by Pomurje Technology Park. The solution is designed to simplify the identification of relevant funding opportunities through AI-supported matching, intelligent search, automated aggregation of funding calls from multiple trusted sources, and advanced filtering functionalities. Its primary objective is to reduce the time and effort required for SMEs to identify funding opportunities aligned with their business activities, innovation priorities and investment plans.

The pilot was implemented in three SMEs from Bosnia and Herzegovina representing different sectors: software and artificial intelligence, industrial automation and vocational training, and metal manufacturing. This diversity enabled validation of the solution under different business conditions and confirmed its applicability across companies with different innovation priorities, levels of digital maturity and funding needs.

During the implementation, participating SMEs tested the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher through the B2GreenHub platform by exploring funding opportunities relevant to their strategic objectives. In addition, SMEs were introduced to the AI Proposal Assistant, which complemented the funding identification process by supporting the preparation of future project concepts. SERDA coordinated the overall pilot implementation by selecting participating SMEs, providing onboarding support, facilitating the use of the platform, monitoring pilot progress and collecting feedback for evaluation purposes. The pilot was implemented in accordance with the objectives of Activity 3.1, contributing to the validation of the joint digital solution and the collection of lessons learned for Deliverable D.3.1.1.

2. Results achieved

Complete each field below. Keep this narrative; report numeric indicators in the KPI table in Section 3 rather than repeating them here.

Expected result	<i>The pilot activity aimed to validate the practical applicability of the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher in real SME environments and assess its effectiveness in supporting the identification of relevant funding opportunities. The expected results included reducing the time and effort required to search for funding calls, improving SMEs' awareness of available EU and other funding programmes, strengthening their capacity to identify opportunities aligned with their business priorities, and evaluating the usability and transferability of the solution across different sectors. In addition, the pilot aimed to introduce participating SMEs to the AI Proposal Assistant as a complementary tool supporting the preparation of future project concepts. These objectives are fully aligned with Activity 3.1, which envisages the validation of jointly developed digital solutions and the collection of lessons learned for wider deployment across the Danube Region. What the pilot set out to achieve against its objectives.</i>
Achieved result	<i>The pilot activities were successfully implemented with three SMEs operating in different sectors, demonstrating that the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher is a practical and effective tool for identifying relevant funding opportunities. All participating companies successfully tested the platform and confirmed its usability in supporting strategic planning for innovation, digitalisation and business development.</i>

	The pilot demonstrated that AI-supported funding matching substantially simplified the initial search process by providing structured and targeted funding opportunities based on company profiles and development priorities. Participating SMEs reported improved understanding of available funding programmes, increased confidence in exploring funding opportunities, and enhanced readiness for future project development. The complementary use of the AI Proposal Assistant further supported companies in transforming identified opportunities into structured project concepts. The pilot also demonstrated that AI-supported funding discovery can be successfully applied across SMEs operating in different industrial sectors and with different levels of previous experience in project development. The pilot also contributed valuable implementation experience for the preparation of Deliverable D.3.1.1 – Pilot Actions Implementation Lessons Learned, supporting the assessment of transferability and future deployment of AI-powered funding support solutions across the Danube Region.
Evidence supporting the achievement	Evidence supporting the successful implementation includes completed pilot activity documentation for all participating SMEs, success stories prepared for the B2GreenHub platform, completed SME feedback questionnaires, pilot monitoring documentation, and reports generated during the implementation process. Additional evidence is provided through user feedback confirming successful testing of the platform, identification of relevant funding opportunities, and positive evaluation of the solution's usability and practical value
Benefits for the participating SME(s)	The participating SMEs improved their ability to identify relevant funding opportunities in a faster and more structured manner, reducing the effort required for initial funding searches. The pilot increased awareness of available EU and other funding programmes, strengthened internal capacities for project planning and proposal preparation, and introduced AI-supported tools that can continue to support future innovation and investment activities. The solution also encouraged a more strategic approach to funding identification by aligning business priorities with relevant funding opportunities.

3. KPI values

Report the key performance indicators for your pilot. Add rows as needed. Complete the achievement rate where applicable ($\text{achieved} / \text{target} \times 100$); leave it blank for binary or qualitative indicators. Ensure values are consistent with the narrative above and supported by source of verification.

Indicator (KPI)	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Achievement rate (%)	Source of verification	Comment
SMEs participating in the pilot	0	3	3	100%	Pilot documentation; SME reports	Target fully achieved
SMEs successfully completing pilot activities	0	3	3	100%	Pilot reports; Monitoring Toolkit	All SMEs completed the pilot
SMEs registered and using the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher	0	3	3	100%	B2GreenHub platform; Pilot documentation	All participating SMEs tested the solution
SMEs identifying relevant funding opportunities	0	3	3	100%	Success stories; SME feedback	All SMEs identified funding opportunities relevant to their business priorities

Indicator (KPI)	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Achievement rate (%)	Source of verification	Comment
SMEs reporting improved awareness of funding opportunities	n/a	Positive	Positive	n/a	SME feedback questionnaires	Positive feedback received from participating SMEs
SMEs expressing willingness to continue using the solution	0	3	3	100%	SME feedback questionnaires	All SMEs indicated interest in future use
SMEs recommending the solution to other SMEs	0	3	3	100%	SME feedback questionnaires	Recommendation confirmed through feedback

4. SME feedback

Summarise the feedback provided by the participating SME(s), based on the responses submitted through the mandatory SME survey completed by the participating SME(s). Continuation and sustainability aspects are covered in Section 7.

Main strengths identified by SMEs	<i>The participating SMEs highlighted that the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher significantly simplified the process of identifying relevant funding opportunities. The main strengths recognised by users included a user-friendly interface, faster and more structured access to funding calls, AI-supported matching of opportunities based on company profiles, and improved awareness of available EU and other funding programmes. SMEs also appreciated the solution's potential to support strategic planning and future project development while reducing the time and effort required for manual funding searches.</i>
Main weaknesses identified by SMEs	<i>The participating SMEs did not identify any major functional weaknesses of the solution during the pilot implementation. However, they noted that the effectiveness of the platform depends on the regular updating of funding opportunities and the continuous expansion of the funding database. Some SMEs also pointed out that AI-generated recommendations should be complemented by expert review when preparing actual project applications, particularly for more complex funding programmes.</i>
Suggestions for improvement	<i>The participating SMEs suggested further expanding the database of funding opportunities by including additional national, regional and international funding programmes. They also recommended continuous improvement of the AI matching algorithm to provide even more accurate and personalised recommendations based on company profiles and project ideas. Additional suggestions included more advanced filtering options, regular updates of funding information, and the continued integration of complementary AI tools that support project proposal development. SMEs also recognised the value of maintaining user guidance and technical support to facilitate wider adoption of the solution. SMEs also suggested providing clearer explanations of why specific funding calls are recommended by the AI matching algorithm, thereby increasing transparency and user confidence.</i>
Would the SME(s) recommend the solution to another SME?	Yes
Reason for the answer above	<i>The participating SMEs agreed that the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher represents a practical and valuable tool for companies seeking funding opportunities to support innovation, digitalisation</i>

	and business growth. They highlighted that the solution simplifies the initial identification of relevant funding calls, reduces the time required for manual searches and provides structured recommendations aligned with company profiles and development priorities. SMEs also recognised that the solution is particularly beneficial for companies with limited experience in monitoring funding programmes. While expert support remains important when preparing actual project applications, the pilot confirmed that the solution can significantly improve the efficiency of the funding discovery process and therefore has strong potential for wider adoption among SMEs across different sectors.
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5. Challenges during implementation

List the main challenges encountered across the pilot phases (preparation, tender, contracting, implementation and monitoring). For Impact select Low, Medium or High; for Resolved enter Yes or No. Add rows as needed.

Challenge	Impact (Low / Medium / High)	Mitigation measure	Resolved (Yes / No)
Limited feasibility of the originally planned WeldWise pilot implementation due to technical, financial and organisational constraints.	High	Following consultations within the project partnership, SERDA assessed alternative implementation options and, in agreement with the Lead Partner and the solution owners, replaced the originally planned WeldWise pilot with the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher. This ensured successful validation of a jointly developed digital solution and full contribution to the objectives of Activity 3.1.	Yes
Different levels of experience among participating SMEs in identifying and evaluating EU funding opportunities.	Medium	SERDA provided onboarding support, practical guidance and assistance throughout the pilot implementation, helping participating SMEs understand the platform functionalities, navigate funding opportunities and effectively use the AI-supported matching process.	Yes
Limited pilot implementation period for testing the solution in real business conditions.	Medium	Pilot activities were carefully planned and coordinated with participating SMEs to ensure that all essential testing, feedback collection and reporting activities were completed within the available timeframe.	Yes

6. Lessons learned

Provide up to three prioritised lessons from your pilot, using the structure below. A lesson is more than a challenge: it states what you would keep or change, and whether it transfers to other partners. Complete Lesson 1 as a minimum; Lessons 2 and 3 are optional.

Lesson 1 (required)

Lesson title	Flexibility in pilot implementation enables successful delivery despite unforeseen implementation constraints.
Thematic area	Partnership and coordination

Priority	High
Situation	The pilot implementation initially focused on validating the WeldWise solution. During the preparation phase, several implementation challenges emerged, including limited SME interest in the originally planned application, financial constraints related to advance payments, and overall implementation feasibility. These circumstances required reassessment of the planned pilot approach in close cooperation with project partners.
What happened	Following consultations within the partnership, it was agreed that SERDA would implement the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher instead of the originally planned solution. This decision enabled the successful validation of another jointly developed Danube DNA digital solution, ensured active participation of three SMEs and allowed the project objectives under Activity 3.1 to be achieved within the available implementation period.
What worked or what you would do differently	Maintaining close communication with project partners and demonstrating flexibility in adapting the pilot scope proved essential for successful implementation. For future pilot actions, financial feasibility, procurement requirements and SME commitment should be assessed at an earlier stage to minimise implementation risks and reduce the need for significant adjustments during project execution.
Transferability	High – Transferable. This lesson is relevant for all organisations implementing pilot activities involving SMEs, particularly within transnational projects where technical, financial or organisational conditions may change during implementation. Early risk assessment combined with flexible partnership coordination can significantly increase the likelihood of successful pilot delivery.

Lesson 2 *(optional, complete only if applicable)*

Lesson title	AI-supported funding identification significantly improves SME access to funding opportunities.
Thematic area	Technical and digital solution
Priority	High
Situation	Participating SMEs often have limited time and resources to continuously monitor numerous national and international funding programmes. Traditional manual searches are time-consuming and increase the risk of overlooking relevant funding opportunities, particularly for companies without dedicated staff for project development
What happened	The AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher enabled SMEs to identify funding opportunities more efficiently through AI-supported matching based on company profiles and development priorities. The participating companies confirmed that the solution simplified the initial screening process, improved their understanding of available funding programmes and increased their confidence in exploring future funding opportunities.
What worked or what you would do differently	The pilot confirmed that AI can substantially improve the efficiency of funding opportunity identification. However, the greatest value is achieved when AI-generated recommendations are complemented by expert guidance, particularly during the interpretation of funding calls and the preparation of project applications. Future development should focus on

	expanding funding databases and continuously improving AI matching accuracy.
Transferability	High – Transferable The solution can be applied across SMEs from different sectors and countries with minimal adaptation. Similar AI-supported funding identification tools can support business support organisations and SMEs throughout the Danube Region in strengthening innovation capacity and improving access to external financing.

Lesson 3 *(optional, complete only if applicable)*

Lesson title	Tailored onboarding and expert guidance significantly improve the quality of AI-generated funding matches.
Thematic area	Stakeholder and SME engagement
Priority	High
Situation	Although participating SMEs recognised the potential of the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher, their previous experience with AI-supported funding tools and EU funding programmes differed considerably. Successful pilot implementation therefore required not only access to the digital solution but also appropriate guidance throughout the pilot process.
What happened	SERDA supported the participating SMEs by coordinating the pilot implementation, providing onboarding, explaining platform functionalities and collecting user feedback. This combination of digital tools and personalised support enabled all participating SMEs to successfully complete the pilot and evaluate the solution based on practical experience
What worked or what you would do differently	The pilot demonstrated that digital solutions achieve the greatest impact when accompanied by structured support from business support organisations. Future pilot actions should allocate sufficient time for onboarding, user guidance and follow-up support, particularly when introducing AI-based solutions to companies with different levels of digital maturity.
Transferability	High – Transferable. This lesson is relevant for all organisations supporting SME digitalisation and innovation. Combining digital solutions with advisory support significantly increases user engagement, successful adoption and long-term sustainability of pilot results, at different levels of digital maturity.

7. Sustainability and future use

Set out whether and how the solution will continue to be used beyond the project. This is a key consideration for Interreg and for the consolidated lessons learned.

Will the SME(s) continue using the solution after project completion?	Yes
Reason for the answer above	The participating SMEs expressed interest in continuing to use the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher beyond the project, recognising its value as a practical tool for identifying funding opportunities that support innovation, digitalisation and business growth. The pilot demonstrated that the solution can significantly reduce the time and effort required for funding searches while improving awareness of relevant national and international funding programmes. The SMEs also recognised that the solution can support long-term strategic planning by helping identify financing opportunities aligned with their development priorities. Continued use will depend on maintaining an up-to-date database of funding opportunities and the ongoing availability of the platform. The long-term sustainability of the solution is further supported by its continued availability through the B2GreenHub platform, enabling

	SMEs to continue searching for funding opportunities after project completion.
Resources required for continuation	Long-term use of the solution requires regular maintenance of the funding database, periodic updates of the AI matching algorithms and continued technical support to ensure reliable platform performance. From the users' perspective, only limited internal resources are required, as the solution is web-based and designed to be easy to use. Business support organisations can further facilitate adoption by providing user guidance, promoting the platform and supporting SMEs in interpreting funding opportunities and developing project ideas.
Main barriers to long-term adoption	The main factors influencing long-term adoption include the regular updating of funding opportunities, continued technical maintenance of the platform and the availability of organisational support for users with limited experience in project development. Broader uptake may also depend on raising awareness among SMEs and ensuring that the platform continues to expand its coverage of national, EU and other international funding programmes.
Overall sustainability outlook	High

8. Recommendations for future projects

Set out forward-looking recommendations for upscaling the solution and for other partners planning similar pilots. Focus on what would improve feasibility, sustainability and transferability across the Danube Region.

The pilot implementation demonstrated that AI-supported digital solutions can significantly improve SMEs' access to relevant funding opportunities and strengthen their capacity for innovation and business development. Future projects should continue investing in user-friendly AI tools that simplify complex processes while ensuring that digital solutions are complemented by advisory support from business support organisations.

To maximise long-term impact, future initiatives should allocate sufficient time for SME onboarding, user training and pilot validation under real business conditions. Maintaining an up-to-date funding database, continuously improving AI matching capabilities and integrating additional national and international funding sources will further increase the value and usability of the solution.

The pilot also highlighted the importance of flexibility in pilot implementation. Where unforeseen technical, financial or organisational challenges arise, project partnerships should be able to adapt implementation approaches while maintaining the overall project objectives. Early assessment of implementation feasibility, SME commitment and financial arrangements can significantly reduce project risks and contribute to more efficient pilot delivery.

Future projects should include structured onboarding sessions and follow-up support to help SMEs effectively integrate AI-powered funding tools into their regular innovation and business development activities.

Finally, wider deployment of the solution across the Danube Region should be supported through stronger cooperation between technology providers, business support organisations and SMEs. Combining AI-powered digital solutions with expert guidance and knowledge transfer has proven to be an effective approach for increasing SME engagement, improving access to external financing and supporting long-term innovation capacity.

Completed by

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