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	Pomurje Technology Park
Country	Slovenia
Pilot coordinator (name, email)	Nuša Lisjak, nusa.lisjak@p-tech.si
Pilot activity title	Supporting Companies in Accessing Cascade Funding Opportunities
Digital solution validated	AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher
Pilot implementation period	5th period
Date of submission	24.6.2026

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	4
Of which micro	4
Of which small	0
Of which medium	0
Sector(s)	CNC Machining and Precision Manufacturing; Wood and Wood-Based Products; Additive Manufacturing and 3D Printing; Tourism, Natural Products and Functional Food Development

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.

The AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher is one of six digital solutions developed within the Danube DNA project. It is integrated into the B2GreenHub platform and is freely available to registered SMEs. The tool searches funding opportunities from the European Commission, OnePass and the Cascade Funding Hub. Users can filter calls by industry, status, budget and application deadline. Quick Search supports keyword-based searches, while Ask AI suggests related categories and terms. The tool helps SMEs identify relevant cascade funding opportunities more quickly and systematically. As part of the pilot, an AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit was also developed and presented to SMEs. The toolkit supports SMEs throughout the proposal development process by providing AI-assisted guidance for preparing project applications, structuring proposal content, refining project ideas, and improving the quality of funding submissions. Together, the Funding Call Matcher and the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit provide a comprehensive support system that helps SMEs not only identify suitable funding opportunities but also increase their capacity to prepare competitive funding proposals.

LDK TECH – Our work with LDK TECH first focused on the SIMSCAN 42 portable 3D scanner. We demonstrated how the technology can support dimensional inspection, CAD comparison, deviation analysis, reverse engineering and technical documentation. We then helped the company register on B2GreenHub and presented the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher. During practical testing, LDK TECH used filters, Quick Search and Ask AI to identify opportunities related to advanced manufacturing, digitalisation, production technologies and materials. Together, we reviewed the selected calls, focusing on eligibility, budget, deadlines and relevance to the company's future development plans. In the final phase, we presented the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit and showed how structured prompts can support the development of project ideas and the preparation of initial content for objectives, activities, expected results, impact and budget justification.

Vovk Turizem – We began the pilot by using the NLS solution to analyse honey with wild and organically grown herbs. We used the method as a complementary research and development tool to gain additional input for further product development, while clearly explaining that it does not replace chemical, toxicological or clinical testing. We then helped the company register on B2GreenHub and guided it through the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher. Together, we searched for opportunities related to tourism, natural products and functional food development and reviewed the selected calls according to their scope, eligibility, budget and deadline. Finally, we presented the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit and showed how structured prompts can help develop a project concept, objectives, activities, expected results, impact and required resources.

Les Rock – The pilot began by discussing the company's activities, development priorities and potential investment needs, and continued by supporting its registration on B2GreenHub. We presented the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher and guided the company through practical testing. Together, we searched for opportunities related to wood processing, sustainable production, circular use of materials and digitalisation, using different industries, keywords, budget ranges and deadlines. We also demonstrated Quick Search and Ask AI to broaden the search and improve the relevance of the results. The selected calls were then reviewed together to assess eligibility, thematic fit and possible links to future development projects. Finally, we presented the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit through practical examples and showed how structured prompts can support the preparation of a project concept, objectives, activities, expected results, impact and budget justification.

3DtehnoCAR – We first introduced the company to the Danube DNA project and B2GreenHub and supported its registration on the platform. We then presented the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher and guided the company through practical testing during an individual working session. Searches focused on additive manufacturing, 3D printing, digital production and product development. Together, we applied industry filters, keywords, call status, budget and application deadlines, while Quick Search and Ask AI helped identify additional relevant terms and opportunities. We reviewed the selected calls with the company, focusing on eligibility, innovation requirements and possible future investments. In the final phase, we presented the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit and showed how structured prompts can support the

preparation of initial project content, including objectives, activities, expected results, impact and budget justification.

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	To validate the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher in real SME environments and assess whether it can help SMEs identify relevant cascade funding opportunities more efficiently. The pilot also aimed to introduce the SMEs to practical AI-supported tools for preparing initial project proposal content.
Achieved result	The participating SMEs registered on the B2GreenHub platform and tested the Funding Call Matcher during individual working sessions. They used industry, call status, budget and application deadline filters, as well as the Quick Search and Ask AI functions, to identify and review funding opportunities relevant to their activities and development needs. The SMEs were also introduced to the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit and shown how structured prompts can support the preparation of key proposal sections.
Evidence supporting the achievement	B2GreenHub registration records, meeting and attendance photos, screenshots and results of funding searches, identified funding calls, presentation and guidance materials, AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit documents and SME feedback.
Benefits for the participating SME(s)	The SMEs gained a faster and more structured way to search for relevant cascade funding opportunities across several sources. They improved their understanding of search filters, eligibility requirements and the assessment of call relevance. The AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit also provided practical support for structuring project ideas and preparing initial drafts of proposal sections, while reducing the time required to start developing an application.

3. KPI values

Report the key performance indicators for your pilot. Add rows as needed. Complete the achievement rate where applicable (achieved / target × 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 involved in pilot testing	0	4	4	100%	SME feedback form, B2GreenHub registration	LDK TECH, Vovk Turizem, Les-Rock and 3DtehnoCAR participated in the pilot.

Indicator (KPI)	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Achievement rate (%)	Source of verification	Comment
SMEs registered on the B2GreenHub platform	0	4	4	100%	B2GreenHub registration records	All four participating SMEs registered on the platform.
SMEs testing the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher	0	4	4	100%	Photos	All four SMEs tested the search functions and filters to identify relevant cascade funding opportunities.
SMEs introduced to the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit	0	4	4	100%	Photos	All four SMEs were introduced to structured AI prompts for preparing key proposal sections.
Reduction in time required to identify relevant calls	0	2 hour	30 minutes	/	SME feedback (Client section of B2GreenHub)	The time needed for identifying right funding calls was significantly reduced.
User satisfaction score	0	4	4	100%	SME feedback (Client section of B2GreenHub)	All SMEs were very satisfied with piloting and digital tools.
Intention to continue using the tool after the pilot	0	4	4	100%	SME feedback (Client section of B2GreenHub)	All SMEs will continue to use the tool after the piloting.

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	The SMEs valued the possibility to search funding opportunities from several sources in one place and to refine the results by industry, call status, budget and application deadline. They also appreciated the Quick Search and Ask AI functions, as well as the individual guidance provided during testing. In addition, the

	participating SMEs expressed interest in the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit, recognizing its potential to support the development of project ideas and improve the quality and efficiency of funding proposal preparation.
Main weaknesses identified by SMEs	The relevance of the results depends on the selected keywords, filters and company information. The identified calls still need to be reviewed manually to confirm eligibility and suitability for the SME.
Suggestions for improvement	Additional explanations of why individual calls were matched, more precise filters and transparent ranking logic.
Would the SME(s) recommend the solution to another SME?	Yes, all 4 out of 4.
Reason for the answer above	The SMEs considered the solution useful for reducing the time required to search for cascade funding opportunities and for obtaining a more structured overview of relevant calls. They also valued the practical support and the introduction to the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit.

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)
Identifying funding opportunities that were both relevant and realistically accessible to each SME	Medium	The identified calls were reviewed together with the SMEs, with particular attention to eligibility conditions, project scope, budget, deadlines and alignment with potential project ideas.	Yes
The AI initially struggled to accurately match funding calls to user profiles due to variations in terminology and insufficient structured metadata in funding call descriptions.	Low	Fine-tuned the matching algorithm, improved data preprocessing, and incorporated user feedback to refine recommendation accuracy.	Yes
Ensuring that SMEs understood that AI-generated matching results require manual verification	Low	The SMEs were informed about the limitations of automated matching and were guided in verifying eligibility requirements and call relevance.	Yes
Introducing the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit in a	Medium	Concrete examples and structured prompts were	Yes

Challenge	Impact (Low / Medium / High)	Mitigation measure	Resolved (Yes / No)
practical and understandable way		presented to demonstrate how the toolkit can support the preparation of key proposal sections.	

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	Tailored support improves the relevance of funding matches
Thematic area	Stakeholder and SME engagement
Priority	High
Situation	The participating SMEs operated in different sectors and had different levels of experience with cascade funding and digital funding platforms.
What happened	The Funding Call Matcher produced more relevant results when the SMEs received individual guidance in defining their activities, development needs, keywords and search filters.
What worked or what you would do differently	A structured process for defining company activities, innovation goals, and funding needs significantly improved the relevance of the funding matches. In future pilots, we would introduce a standardized onboarding questionnaire to capture this information more consistently and reduce the need for later adjustments.
Transferability	High. This approach can be applied by all project partners when introducing AI-supported funding tools to SMEs from different sectors.

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

Lesson title	AI-supported results require informed manual verification
Thematic area	Digital tools and AI adoption
Priority	High
Situation	The tool can quickly identify and rank potentially relevant funding opportunities, but final eligibility and suitability depend on the specific requirements of each call.
What happened	The SMEs were able to identify suitable opportunities more efficiently, but the proposed results still required manual review of eligibility conditions, scope, budget, deadlines and alignment with the planned project idea.
What worked or what you would do differently	Future pilots should combine automated matching with a structured review process. Clear guidance should be provided

	on how to verify calls before an SME invests time in preparing an application.
Transferability	High. The lesson is relevant to all partners and SMEs using AI-supported tools for funding searches and proposal preparation.

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, all 4/4.
Reason for the answer above	The SMEs can continue using the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher through the B2GreenHub platform, which is freely accessible to registered users. The tool can support future searches for cascade funding opportunities and help SMEs monitor calls relevant to their activities and development plans. The AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher will remain an integral part of the B2GreenHub platform after the project ends and will continue to be maintained and updated to ensure its long-term usability and relevance. The AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit can also continue to support the initial preparation and structuring of project applications. The participating SMEs will retain access to the toolkit documentation and chatbot developed during the pilot, allowing them to continue using these resources in their future proposal preparation activities.
Resources required for continuation	Access to the B2GreenHub platform, staff time, basic digital skills and sufficient knowledge to define suitable search criteria and assess the relevance of identified funding calls.
Main barriers to long-term adoption	Limited staff capacity, insufficient time for regular funding searches, incomplete search criteria and the need to manually verify eligibility, relevance and call requirements before preparing an application.
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.

Future projects should combine access to the AI-Powered Funding Call Matcher with practical onboarding, individual guidance and follow-up support for SMEs. Before using the tool, each company should clearly define its activities, development priorities and potential project ideas, as accurate input improves the relevance of the matching results.
The tool will be regularly updating with new funding opportunities and further improved through more precise filters, clearer explanations of why individual calls were matched and sector-specific search examples. Automated results should always be complemented by a structured manual review of eligibility conditions, scope, budget and deadlines.

To increase long-term impact, future pilots should also connect the identification of suitable calls with the AI Proposal Preparation Toolkit and provide support from the initial project idea through to the preparation of application content. This approach can be transferred to other project partners and SMEs across the Danube Region.

Completed by

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