

DREAM

Digital Resilient Europe
for Advance Manufacturing

Innovation Open Call Guide for Applicants

Opening date: 21 March 2023

Closing date: 25 May 2023, 17:00 CET





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Project Acronym	DREAM
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Duration of Project	24 Months



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1. Background on DREAM project

Accelerating digital transformation and innovation uptake in industry is at the forefront of Europe's growth agenda and clusters are at the heart of supporting the EU growth strategy, as they help to consider the geographical and thematic context in order to boost jobs, SME growth and investment. The COVID19 crisis has demonstrated the absolute necessity of having strong European digital ecosystems as key enablers to avoid disruption in value-chain, in the new business circumstances where digitalisation has proven its benefits, both from a business and sustainable point of view. However, digitalisation can only be efficient if digital ecosystems are strongly interlinked with their applied market sectors, and manufacturing domain is one of the most challenging.

In this context, [DREAM](#) is one of the 30 [Euroclusters projects](#), co-funded by the European Commission in the Single Market Programme. DREAM has been built as a network of 4 European clusters from digital and smart manufacturing and one supporting organisation and aims at supporting clusters' activities towards SMEs to speed up the adaptation of digital technologies and processes to transform manufacturing companies as greener and more digital.

DREAM will support companies' by taking into account the following topics:

1. **Network** to improve the resilience of the EU industrial ecosystems by developing value chains interlinkages in the EU Single Market;
2. **Innovate** for strategic autonomy to build capacity in the most critical supplies and technologies of their ecosystems;
3. **Adopt processes and technologies** to reinforce transformation into a greener and more digital economy;
4. **Train** to foster up- and re-skilling of the workforce whilst attracting talents;
5. **Go international** to boost access to global supply and value chains;
6. **Outreach** to attract economic actors, mainly SMEs, beyond Euroclusters' locations.

Moreover, DREAM will put in place a **cascade funding mechanism via an open call**, to support the deployment of **35 projects** from digital ecosystem into manufacturing context, for more digitalized sector, with a focus on efficient management of resources.

The project is coordinated by [Pôle SCS](#), and includes [Pôle Mécatech](#), [G.A.C Group](#), [MESAP](#), [Cluj IT Cluster](#).

This document presents the main points of the DREAM Open call for applicants.





2. Basic information about the DREAM Open Call

The general objective of the DREAM Open Call is to financially support small and market-oriented projects involving SMEs, consisting of the integration and the use of digital technologies into manufacturing environments.

The DREAM Open Call aims at providing a means of accelerating and facilitating collaboration between actors with digital offer and actors from the manufacturing side that have a need for such innovative digital component (process / product). At least one of the actors involved in the collaborative project should be a digital SME. Collaborative consortium applying to the DREAM Open Call will have to **demonstrate how the implementation of innovative digital technologies support the green transition of manufacturing processes, especially concerning the improved and more efficient use of resources (energy, water, supplies, materials).**

It also seeks to accelerate the access to the market to new digital products and services provided by technology SMEs, applied to the manufacturing domain strengthening innovation and growth in Europe.

This call will be the unique one launched by the DREAM project, **it will open on 21/03/2023 and close on 25/05/2023 at 17:00 CET.**

Under this DREAM Open Call, DREAM will select up to 35 collaborative projects. The total budget for the DREAM Open Call is 1.050.000 €.

3. Scope and Expectations

3.1 Type of projects

The DREAM Open Call is focused on the applications of digital technologies into manufacturing environment, with the overall aim to demonstrate how digital technologies can support the green transition of manufacturing processes.

Projects proposed to the DREAM Open Call shall gather at least one SME representing the digital side (technology offer) AND another entity representing the industry side (demand) which could be a machine or tool manufacturer or an end user with manufacturing activities (see sections 4. *Consortium composition* and 5. *Eligibility conditions* for more details).

Projects shall have a strong European dimension, involving **entities from at least two different NUTS 1 regions of Europe from eligible countries** (see 5. *Eligibility conditions* for more details).

Projects are expected to be innovative, i.e. going beyond the state-of-the art in terms of technologies used and use cases addressed.



3.2 Digital technologies

The expected technologies in the DREAM Open Call are digital technologies that can contribute to the sustainability challenge and the resilience of processes:

- Artificial intelligence, Big Data and analytics
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Cloud Computing
- Autonomous Robotics
- Immersive technologies (AR/VR)
- Simulation
- System Integration
- Cybersecurity

3.3 Industrial sectors

The expected industrial sectors addressed in the DREAM Open Call are manufacturing industries, including electronics, nanotechnologies, automotive, mechanicals, aerospace, medical & pharmaceutical, construction, energy & utilities, marine (naval industries), metal working, chemicals, food & beverage, logistics, printing, textile, luxury, cosmetics, wood, paper, furniture, consumer products, etc. (not limitative).

3.4 Expected impacts

Projects shall demonstrate that the integration and application of digital technologies can improve the market competitiveness of the involved SMEs, and contribute to the green transition of manufacturing processes, especially concerning the improved and more efficient use of resources (energy, water, supplies, materials, waste management).

In particular, projects must demonstrate:

- their impact on the reduced consumption of resources thanks to the deployment / use of digital technologies;
- the increase in efficiency of the production means of the manufacturing company, improving its competitiveness on the international market;

- the growth opportunity for technology providers of the implementation of their technology into a machine or a factory and the replicability and scalability of the same solutions in other industries and use cases;
- the sustainability and scalability of the approach and the business perspective for the technology providers.

4. Type of proposals and consortium composition

4.1 Type of actions

The DREAM Open Call will provide financial support to two different types of actions, namely:

- **Prototyping action** will target companies having already carried out a feasibility study, and having the need to develop a prototype, to spend efforts in miniaturisation, testing, experimentation, MVP building, etc. (TRL 6).
- **Demonstration action** will target companies having already developed and tested a prototype, with the need to demonstrate its efficiency on a larger scale, in real environment (TRL 7-8).

The table below shows the corresponding TRL, timing, maximum amount per SME and maximum amount per project, according to these two types of actions:

	Prototyping	Demonstration
TRL	6	7 - 8
Maximum financial contribution per beneficiary (SME)	30 000 €	30 000 €
Maximum financial contribution per project	30 000 €	30 000 €
Type of support	Grant: Lump sum	Grant: Lump sum
Project duration	Up to 9 months	Up to 9 months

A lump sum is a fixed amount of money which can be used by beneficiaries for several purposes related to the achievement of the project objectives. It is necessary to provide an explanation in the application on how the lump sum will be used (personnel costs, subcontracting, travels, equipment) but detailed reporting of the spending, cost statements and time sheets are not requested after the end of the project, unless in case of audits. Since the granting of a lump sum does not foresee the delivering of a cost statement, the use of the project budget will be controlled considering the technical advancements by the technical reviewers.

Subcontracting costs are allowed, but not exceeding 30% of each SME budget.

The final technical evaluation will assess the coherence of the spent money with the achieved results.

4.2 Consortium composition

The consortium composition must be composed at least of the following:

	Type of entity	Sector
Partner 1	SME	Digital technologies
Partner 2	Private entity: SME or Large groupe	Industrial end-user, from manufacturing domain

All entities applying as one consortium should be autonomous to one another (without capital or personal links).

The DREAM partners or their affiliates or employees, are NOT considered as eligible applicants and can NOT apply for funding.

At least one legal entity of the consortium (digital SME or end-user) must be based in a country of one of the DREAM consortium partners, i.e. Belgium, France, Italy, or Romania.

The consortium shall gather entities from at least two different NUTS 1 regions of Europe from eligible countries.

Applicants from the EU-13 countries¹ are encouraged to apply.

¹ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

5. Eligibility conditions

Proposals will be eligible if and only if all the following conditions are met:

- Applicants are legal entities located in one of the participating in the Single Market Programme (SMP), namely:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries: listed European Economic Area EEA countries and countries associated to the COSME part of the Single Market Programme (list of participating countries: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf)
- The consortium is composed at least of two legal entities based in two different NUTS 1 regions of European member states and SMP associated countries (definition here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/nuts-maps>).
- The two legal entities that compose the consortium must be independent (no capital link nor no personal link among the two entities).
- At least one of the two legal entities that compose the consortium is a for-profit SME from the digital sector. “For-profit SMEs” means micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, as defined in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC. Definition here: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en. The SME applicants will need to fill in the self-assessment tool (<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/>) demonstrating their status and include/annex its result into the application platform.
- At least one legal entity of the consortium (digital SME or end-user) must be based in a country of one of the DREAM consortium partners, i.e. France, Italy, Belgium or Romania.
- Applications respect the conditions described in the present guide for applicants; namely the type of action is indicated, the TRL envisaged, the maximum financial contribution per beneficiary and per project and the project maximum duration.
- Applications must be submitted through the dedicated DREAM platform (<https://dream.grantplatform.com>) before 17:00 CET of the deadline indicated in section 7 of the present guide for applicants.
- Applications must be written in English, in scope and complete in all the parts indicated in application forms; Only parts written in English will be evaluated.



- SMEs that are under liquidation, in difficulty², or excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority are not eligible to apply for funding. Before applying, SMEs will have to check their financial situation by filling out the SME Financial Viability Self-Check. SME applicants must provide the outcome of this self-assessment in their application, to prove the SME financial capacity <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>. More information can be found in the FAQ document.
- Each SME applicant can only be engaged in 1 application to the DREAM Open Call. If more than one proposal is submitted by an SME (even with a different entity as partner or for a different project), only the last edited proposal which has been submitted will be evaluated. Other proposals will not be eligible.

The eligibility criteria will be checked based on the information provided in the applications during the whole evaluation process. The applications that do not comply with those criteria will be excluded and marked as ineligible.

6. Funding conditions

Only for-profit SMEs are eligible to receive funding.

The maximum funding per project is 30.000 €, for a duration of maximum 9 months.

In case the consortium is composed of more than 1 SME, the SMEs that form the consortium can share the financial contribution (up to 30.000 € per project).

Successful applications shall receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a lump sum according to the following timeline:

- A pre-funding payment of 40% of the requested financial contribution will be provided at the beginning of the project.
- A final payment of 60% of the requested contribution will be provided after the approval of the final report by the DREAM consortium. The approval process will check that the project KPIs (defined by the applicants in their application) are met and satisfactory and demonstrators and deliverables are satisfactory. Furthermore, a physical or remote meeting with an interactive session will be organised to better verify the quality of the technical results. Should the technical check be unsatisfactory, DREAM Steering Committee can decide to revoke the funding in whole or in part.

² According to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18

7. Open Call calendar

- **21st of March 2023: Opening of the call**
- **25th of May 2023: Deadline of the call at 17:00 CET**
- 26th of May – 31st of May 2023: Eligibility assessment (administrative check)
- 1st of June – 21st of June 2023: Evaluation by external experts
- 29th of June – 3rd of July 2023: Evaluation Summary Reports sent to the applicants and administrative documents requested to the selected applicants
- 10th of July – 28th of July 2023: Sub-grant Agreement signature for the selected applicants
- 1st of September 2023 – 31st of May 2024: Projects Execution

8. Application process

Guide for applicants can be downloaded from the following link: <https://www.mesap.it/collaborazioni/dream-digital-resilient-europe-for-advanced-manufacturing/>

The published link leads to the call front page which lists all information and application conditions with respect to the call.

An online tool, based on GoodGrants platform, is used for the submission of applications. This tool is created especially for the publication, management and evaluation of the DREAM Open Call.

Applications to the DREAM Open Call shall be submitted exclusively to the following web address <https://dream.grantplatform.com/> (DREAM application web site)

Applicants have to firstly create an account on the aforementioned website. Then, after registration, a dedicated form will appear where all the required information for the application has to be entered as text box or dropped down menu or similar. Some additional documents in pdf have to be attached (letter of support if any, results of self-financial viability check and SME self-assessment).

The last step in the application process is clicking the final submission button. Once applicants have finally submitted their proposal, they receive an automated e-mail stating that the submission has been entered successfully. Applicants can return to their application to make any changes themselves up until the application deadline by visiting the DREAM application web site.

9. Evaluation and selection process

9.1 Criteria, scoring and thresholds

At least two independent experts will evaluate independently each proposal according to the following criteria:

1. Excellence:
 - Soundness and pertinence of objectives with the scope of the call
 - Credibility of the technological KPIs to measure the results
 - Concreteness of the technical approach
 - Coherence of the TRLs and scope with the type of proposal applied for (prototype or demonstrator)
 - Innovativeness of the proposed solution
2. Impact:
 - Industrial and market relevance
 - Credibility of targets for environmental KPIs
 - Expected environmental impact of the solution
 - Quality of the exploitation, market opportunity, IPR and knowledge protection strategy
3. Implementation
 - Soundness of the workplan, including relevance of the tasks described, and the timing of the activities
 - Appropriateness of the consortium: evaluate completeness (digital Technology providers and industrial users are present) and complementarity (the provided solutions match with the needs of the final users), expertise of the team
 - European dimension (in terms of transnational dimension of the consortium and exploitation intentions towards European countries)
 - Cost-effectiveness of the workplan: quality and effectiveness of the resources assigned to the project in order to get the proposed objectives/deliverables
 - Operational capacity (evaluate the technical capacity of the proposers related to the proposed work)





A score from 1 to 5 including half scores will be assigned to each of the 3 criteria.

The meaning of the marks is as follows:

- 0: The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1: Very Poor - The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2: Poor - While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- 3: Acceptable - The proposal addresses the criterion, although significant improvements are possible.
- 4: Good - The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are still possible.
- 5: Very Good - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

The final scores of each application will be calculated as an average of the individual assessments provided by each evaluator.

The threshold for each criteria will be 3 points. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10 points.

For each application above the threshold, a bonus point will be given the applications in which the 2 participating entities are from 2 different countries (transnational bonus point).

9.2 Ranking list for selected projects

After the external evaluation process, a ranking list will be defined where all the applications will be ranked according to their final scores.

In the case of ties, the following criteria will be used to rank the projects, in order: 1) Impact score, 2) Implementation score, 3) Excellence score. In case of further tie, priority will be given to projects with partners coming from EU-13 countries³.

Successful proposals (i.e. above threshold) are funded in descending order until the available sum for the call is totally assigned. A Selection Committee composed of one representative of each DREAM project's partner will be reserved the rights of modifying the ranking of successful proposals (in case of equal scores) in order to balance the list of selected projects according to geographical

³ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.



coverage and vertical sectors represented, to better reflect diversity of industrial sectors and countries covered in Europe.

At least 10% of the supported SMEs will come from EU regions different from the countries of individual DREAM Euroclusters' partners (namely from EU regions different from Belgium, France, Italy, Romania).

An Evaluation Summary Report containing the scores and Evaluators' justifications for each score as well as the Selection Committee ranking justifications will be provided to proposal coordinators.

10. Sub-grant signature

Participating entities from the successful applications selected for funding will firstly have to provide a number of administrative and financial documents to check their eligibility. Applicants will have a maximum delay of two weeks to provide the requested documentation.

The DREAM Consortium will proceed to a verification of these documents to make sure the selected applications are eligible.

If all eligibility conditions are indeed met and confirmed, participating entities from the successful applications selected for funding (DREAM beneficiaries) will be invited to sign a sub-grant agreement with SCS cluster, coordinator of the DREAM project. This sub-grant agreement contains the obligations of the SMEs funded in the framework of DREAM Open Call (including conflict of interest, confidentiality and security, ethics, visibility, record-keeping) and payment process to be proceeded by SCS.

11. Support from DREAM and reporting

Each funded project within the DREAM Open Call will be followed by one DREAM consortium partner. The assigned DREAM consortium partner will be in charge of following and assessing the progress of the funded projects.

In addition to the financial support and project follow-up provided by the DREAM consortium partners, dedicated info/training sessions will be proposed to the funded projects, notably on how to prepare a resilience preparedness/business continuity plan.

Specific template will be provided by DREAM to the funded projects for the mid-term reporting and the final reporting. The final report to be prepared by the funded projects will include a section on resilience preparedness/business continuity plan.

The projects' performance will be assessed:

- During interim review at mid-term, based on a mid-term report provided by the funded projects
- During the final review at the closure of the funded projects, based on the final report provided by the funded projects

The final payment will be done once the final report is approved by the DREAM consortium partners, based on the following criteria:

- Deliverables quality and completeness
- Technical performance indicators (based on the KPIs established in the applications).
- Deadline Compliance.

12. Helpdesk and FAQ

12.1 *Contacts and FAQ*

A helpdesk is provided via the email address dream-opencall@pole-scs.org

A FAQ document is also available here: <https://www.mesap.it/collaborazioni/dream-digital-resilient-europe-for-advanced-manufacturing/>

The template of the application form (for information only – all fields must be directly entered into the application platform <https://dream.grantplatform.com/>) is available here: <https://www.mesap.it/collaborazioni/dream-digital-resilient-europe-for-advanced-manufacturing/>

12.2 *Complaints*

If, after receiving the results of the evaluation phase, an applicant considers that a mistake has been made, resulting in the rejection of the application, a complaint can be sent (in English and by email) to dream-opencall@pole-scs.org within three calendar days following the official receipt of the Evaluation report, including the following information.

- contact details and name of the application
- subject of the complaint
- information and evidence regarding the alleged mistake

The DREAM consortium will review it within no more than 7 calendar days from its reception. If the DREAM consortium needs more time to assess the received complaint, the applicant will be informed by email about the extension.





Most of the evaluation process is run by independent external experts in the given field. The DREAM project consortium does not interfere with their assessment; therefore we will not evaluate complaints related to the results of the evaluation other than related to the mistakes in the evaluation of the eligibility criteria.

13. Confidentiality and GDPR Data protection

13.1 *Application stage*

A full list of applicants will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will be also shared with the European Commission for transparency. The applicants' list will not be public but will serve as statistics in project communication materials.

13.2 *Evaluation stage*

To process and evaluate proposals, the DREAM consortium will need to collect personal and industrial data. Pôle SCS (SCS) will act as a Data Controller for data submitted through the GoodGrants platform. The GoodGrants platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data are managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the GoodGrants terms to ensure coverage.

DREAM may share the proposals with selected external independent evaluators, with whom Non-Disclosure Agreements are signed to protect the confidential information given by the applicants.

The final list of the awarded projects and SME applicants/beneficiaries will be made public, including name of the projects, abstract, legal name of the companies, sector, country/region of origins, results of the project, duration of the projects and project budget.



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