

€23 million Data Space Accelerator launched to fast-track SME integration within the Catena-X ecosystem

The study offers structured onboarding and results-based compensation of up to €30,000 for productive data exchange

- The Data Space Accelerator is a €23 million study funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE), targeting particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the automotive industry. Compensation is tied to verifiable productive data exchange.
- Participating companies can receive payouts of up to €30,000: up to €15,000 for onboarding and Certificate Management (standardising and simplifying the management and exchange of required certificates)
- as well as an additional €15,000 for a second use case such as Product Carbon Footprint, Digital Product Passport, traceability, quality management, or supply chain resilience.
- The study is conducted by the International Data Spaces Association (IDSA) in partnership with Catena-X and Cofinity-X and forms part of the German government's Manufacturing-X initiative to scale industrial data ecosystems.
- Further information and registration are available at <https://data-space-accelerator.com>

Berlin, Germany, June 08, 2026 – Catena-X and the International Data Spaces Association (IDSA) have announced the launch of the Data Space Accelerator, a €23 million programme funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE). The programme forms part of a German government-funded study designed to investigate how industrial data spaces scale and the value they deliver once critical mass is achieved.

Participating companies receive structured onboarding into the Catena-X data space, with optional support from certified onboarding and service partners. No prior experience with data spaces is required. Compensation is linked to two verified milestones: up to €15,000 for successful onboarding and productive implementation of Certificate Management, and up to an additional €15,000 for implementation of a second predefined Catena-X use case. In both cases, participating companies are required to take part in the accompanying survey. Applications and full implementation must be completed within the year 2026.

SMEs form the backbone of the automotive supply chain. Their integration into data spaces is essential to achieve the critical mass required for a fully connected global network.

Many SMEs still lack access to data spaces or the resources needed to invest in advanced digital solutions. At the same time, awareness of the potential of data spaces remains limited. Without broad participation, key network effects cannot materialise.

The Data Space Accelerator directly addresses this gap by supporting companies across the supply chain in digitising their operations based on Catena-X standards – aligned with customer requirements and regulatory frameworks.

Hanno Focken, Managing Director Activation, Governance and Operations at Catena-X, said:

“If Catena-X only works for OEMs and Tier-1 suppliers, it does not work for the industry as a whole. The ecosystem is already demonstrating its value, but the automotive value chain is built on SMEs. Without their participation, we cannot realise the industry-wide data collaboration that will benefit every level of the value chain.

The Data Space Accelerator makes it easier and faster for them to get started, while addressing cost concerns by linking compensation directly to results: real data exchange with real partners and real business value. This is not a pilot—it is a structured, funded pathway into productive participation in the data space.”

The programme addresses one of the most pressing structural challenges in the automotive industry. Seamless and trusted data exchange across the entire value chain is becoming essential—not only for regulatory compliance and supply chain resilience, but also for competitiveness. Data spaces enable companies to share data securely and sovereignly, forming a key building block for a resilient, AI-enabled, and sovereign European data economy.

Eight of the world’s ten largest automotive suppliers are already exchanging data via the Catena-X ecosystem, and leading OEMs are increasingly mandating participation in new supplier contracts. However, maximum efficiency and value can only be achieved when all tiers of the supply chain participate. Many SMEs—representing the majority of companies in the supply chain—continue to face barriers to entry, including limited resources, varying levels of digital maturity, high perceived upfront investments, and uncertainty about return on investment.

The Data Space Accelerator is designed to change this. Rather than subsidising costs, the programme rewards concrete results. Funding—up to €15,000 or up to €30,000 depending on the level of integration—is released once companies demonstrate verified productive data exchange with at least one supply chain partner. This makes it a practical entry point into the data space rather than a theoretical exercise.

How the programme works

Certificate Management has been selected as the primary use case because it replaces the inefficient and repetitive process in which suppliers upload the same compliance certificates—such as ISO 9001 or IATF 16949—to multiple different customer portals. Through Catena-X, certificates are uploaded once via a standardised interface, automatically shared with all relevant partners, and updated upon renewal. This significantly reduces administrative effort for SMEs while providing customers with a reliable, real-time view of compliance status.

Additional use cases address some of the industry’s most pressing operational and regulatory challenges: Product Carbon Footprint, Digital Product Passport, traceability, quality management, demand and capacity management, short-term supply management, and circular economy. Companies are free to choose their implementation approach.

Proven results across the ecosystem

The use cases available through the Data Space Accelerator are already delivering measurable results for companies active in the Catena-X ecosystem. For SMEs in particular, shared Catena-X standards have reduced the effort required for due diligence reporting by a factor of 100—transforming a substantial administrative burden into a manageable and repeatable process.

In sustainability, a mid-sized supplier reports that PCF calculations can be performed three to five times more efficiently than with manual methods, saving more than €10,000 per calculation. In quality management, a leading OEM and its Tier-1 suppliers report detecting errors an average of four months earlier through standardised data exchange. In one case, an investigation into a critical electrical component—previously requiring inspection of 1.4 million vehicles—was narrowed down to just 14, highlighting the significant cost-saving potential of end-to-end data flows.

“Just in the field of Sustainability Rating for Customers, we expect a cost reduction of 50 to 75 percent through Catena-X,”
said Josef Mitterhuber, CEO of Silver Atena.

These results demonstrate that the business value of participation in the Catena-X ecosystem is tangible and can be realised in the short term. The Data Space Accelerator is specifically designed to help SMEs unlock this potential. This is supported by an Accenture study showing that 67% of companies expect new collaboration opportunities through data spaces, 54% anticipate new revenue potential, and 50% expect reduced costs and risks.

Part of a broader initiative

The Data Space Accelerator is part of the German government’s Manufacturing-X framework for scaling industrial data ecosystems. While the initial focus is on the automotive sector through Catena-X, the study is intended to generate transferable insights for data space initiatives in other industries, including chemicals and semiconductors.

Lars Nagel, CEO of the International Data Spaces Association, said:

“Until now, the value of industrial data spaces has largely been based on theoretical models and isolated pilot projects. The Data Space Accelerator marks a fundamental shift in this approach—one that IDSA has been working towards for over ten years through its reference architecture. By integrating large numbers of Tier-n suppliers into the Catena-X ecosystem, it will generate robust empirical evidence of how network effects, data maturity and economic value interact in open data spaces. These insights will be directly transferable to data spaces in other industries now following Catena-X.”

Get involved

The Data Space Accelerator is open to automotive companies, particularly European SMEs looking to take their first step into the Catena-X data space. Companies can register now to participate in the study. More information and registration: data-space-accelerator.com

More about Catena-X: catena-x.net

Notes to editors

Catena-X Data Space is a non-commercial organisation under the umbrella of the Catena-X Automotive Network e.V. association, bringing together OEMs, suppliers, technology providers, and industry organisations, including ADAC, AIAG, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, Renault, Volkswagen Group companies, Volvo, VDA, TÜV SÜD, Fraunhofer, Amazon Web Services, Huawei, Microsoft, Magna, and others. A full list of members is available at catena-x.net.

The International Data Spaces Association (IDSA) is a non-profit organisation based in Dortmund, Germany. It develops open standards and governance frameworks for sovereign data sharing. Its reference architecture underpins the Catena-X data space and numerous other industrial data ecosystems worldwide.

About Catena-X

Catena-X is the world's first end-to-end, collaborative and open data ecosystem for the automotive industry, connecting stakeholders along the entire value chain. The association provides neutral governance to enable standardised, interoperable and data-sovereign collaboration, driving efficiency, innovation and compliance across the data ecosystem. Catena-X also serves as a model for Manufacturing-X initiatives in other industries. Founded in 2021, the association has hubs in the United States, China, Spain, Sweden and France, with more than 300 experts working in over 40 working groups to develop future standards.