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Financial Support to Third Parties

“Invest for Change – I4C” project

1ST CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Reference number: IPAIII/2025/483805

Implemented by: Partners Albania for Change and Development

Funded by: European Union

Deadline: May 4th, 2026, at 16:00

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| I4C project | Invest for Change project |
| PA | Partners Albania for Change and Development |
| FSTP | Financial Support to Third Parties |
| CfA | Call for Applications |
| EoI | Expression of Interest |
| CfFP | Call for Full Proposals |
| EU | European Union |
| MSME | Micro Small and Medium Enterprises |
| QKB | National Business Center- Qendra Kombetare e Biznesit |

Key Call Information

| ITEM | INFORMATION |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Total Financial Support Budget | EUR 320,000 |
| Total Financial Support Budget for the 1 st Call | EUR 160,000 |
| Total indicative number of entities to be supported | 16 |
| Total indicative number of entities to be supported under the 1 st Call | 8 |
| Timeline | 9-12 months |
| Range of the grant amount | EUR 15,000 – EUR 20,000 |
| Geographical area of implementation | Albania |
| Target of the Call | Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises ¹ (MSMEs) |
| Opening date | April 9, 2026 |
| Informative Sessions | April 15 , Shkodra, Hotel Rozafa April 17 , Vlora, Regina Garden Hotel April 21 , Online April 22 , Tirana, Iliria Boutique Hotel |
| Deadlines for Questions and Answers | April 17, 2026 (Q) April 23, 2026 (A) |
| EOI Submission Deadline | Date: May 4th, 2026 Time: 16:00 (local time) |
| Submission process | Online through the Dua Partner Invest (DPI) Platform |

¹ MSME classification (in accordance with the Law on SMEs in Albania) is based on annual turnover as follows: micro enterprises with annual turnover up to ALL 10 million, small enterprises with annual turnover up to ALL 50 million, and medium enterprises with annual turnover up to ALL 250 million.

I. BACKGROUND

Partners Albania for Change and Development (PA) is an Albanian NPO, established in 2001. PA's mission consists in the support of civil society and the facilitation of inter-sector cooperation to strengthen democratic institutions and advance economic development in Albania. PA is a member of Partners Global, a network of 20 independent organizations in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East, working for peaceful and democratic change. Since its inception, PA has dedicated itself to strengthening civil society and fostering collaboration between non-profit organizations (NPOs), state institutions, academia, and the private sector. This commitment aims to address Albania's primary democratization challenge: enhancing the interaction between citizens and state institutions through a robust civil society.

Partners Albania (PA) works to strengthen the social entrepreneurship and social enterprise ecosystem in Albania through research, advocacy, capacity building, and partnerships with civil society, public institutions, and the private sector. As a pioneer in this field, PA has contributed to shaping national and regional frameworks that support social enterprises as drivers of inclusive socio-economic development. PA promotes an enabling institutional and financial environment for social enterprises by advancing evidence-based policies, fostering cross-sector cooperation, and raising public awareness through national and international events. It also provides direct support to entrepreneurs and social enterprises through incubation and acceleration programs offering mentoring, networking, and seed funding. Through partnerships with networks such as Diesis and EUCLID, and platforms like Dua Partner Invest, PA connects entrepreneurs, investors, and experts to improve access to finance and strengthen impact-driven ventures aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Building on its experience, PA is currently implementing the **Invest for Change- "I4C"**, a four-year (2025 -2029) EU funded project that aims to strengthen economic and social development by *fostering financial and social inclusion; promoting impact investment; promoting green and digital transition and investing in social enterprises*. Partners Albania will implement "I4C" project in partnership with Impact Europe (Belgium) as lead partner and Foundation 787 (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Innovation Centre Kosovo (Kosovo), ADP ZID (Montenegro), ARNO (North Macedonia) and Smart Kolektiv (Serbia).

The main component of the project is **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)**, contributing to **the development and scaling** of the targeted beneficiaries. Scaling and development include the following: *Developing new products and/or services through new and innovative solutions; Refining, improving existing business models and working processes or innovating new ones contributing to the business scale-up; Diversification of products and/or services; Increase in production capacity; Access to new customer segments; Expansion of sales geography both within Albania and/or regional markets; and other relevant activities.*

In this regard, PA is launching a **Call for Expression of Interest** inviting **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** operating in Albania to apply for a financial support sub-granting scheme.

The Call aims to identify and support ambitious enterprises demonstrating **strong potential for growth, scalability, and sustainability**. It targets MSMEs that are committed to **co-investing in the expansion and development of their business operations**, while generating **measurable social and/or environmental impact**.

Priority will be given to enterprises whose activities contribute to **job creation and economic inclusion of vulnerable and underrepresented groups**, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. In addition, the initiative seeks to support enterprises that integrate **environmentally responsible practices and innovative solutions**, contributing to environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable and green business models.

The project adopts a holistic development approach, combining **funding with technical support**, contributing to:

- Strengthening of their **strategic and operational capacities**
- Improving of **financial sustainability and investment readiness**
- Developing **robust impact measurement systems**
- Enhancing ability to **scale their business models**

II. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION IN THE FRAME OF FSTP COMPONENT

2.1 The grant amount

The overall indicative amount made available under this **1st Call** is **EUR 160,000**. Partners Albania reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of sub-granting: Any grant requested under this **Call** must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- Minimum amount: **EUR 15,000**
- Maximum amount: **EUR 20,000**

The total grant amount from **sub-granting** must not exceed **80% of the total budget**.

2.2 Co-financing

The applicant must be able to **co-finance at least 20%** the proposed business investment under this initiative.

The co-financing must be provided exclusively **from alternative sources**: (e.g., own funds, private investment, loans, other sources). The sources of co-financing shall be **clearly identified and specified** in the application form, including a clear indication of the specific budget lines to be covered and the timeline of the availability of such funds.

The co-financed amount must be in cash.

2.3 Grant Payments

The disbursement of the grant will be made through **reimbursement**, after presenting all the necessary invoices for the expenses and justification documentation, in accordance with the approved budget and based on the Grant Agreement and the specific timeframes set out in the agreement.

III. PHASES OF THE 1ST CALL OF FSTP COMPONENT

The FSTP component will be implemented through subsequent stages of a competitive selection process, designed to ensure the identification of applicants with the highest potential for both business growth and impact generation.

| STAGE | SCOPE | ASSESSMENT CRITERIA | SCORING | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-------|-----------------------|----------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------|----------------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Stage 1 EOI | <p>Expression of Interest will undergo a preliminary assessment to identify enterprises that demonstrate strong potential for both business growth and social or environmental impact.</p> <p>During this phase, the following informative sessions will be organized to support applicants in preparing their application.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>DATE²</th> <th>TIME</th> <th>LOCATION</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 15</td> <td>11.00</td> <td>Shkodra, Hotel Rozafa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 17</td> <td>10.00</td> <td>Vlora, Regina Garden Hotel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 21</td> <td>11.00</td> <td>Online at the following link</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 22</td> <td>09.00</td> <td>Tirana, Iliria Boutique Hotel</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Based on this preliminary assessment, a shortlist of the highest-scoring applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage 2.</p> | DATE ² | TIME | LOCATION | April 15 | 11.00 | Shkodra, Hotel Rozafa | April 17 | 10.00 | Vlora, Regina Garden Hotel | April 21 | 11.00 | Online at the following link | April 22 | 09.00 | Tirana, Iliria Boutique Hotel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Viability of business model. - Growth potential. - Relevance of impact model. - Clearly defined indicators demonstrating the expected social and/or environmental impact - Commitment to co-finance. - Readiness to participate in the technical support component. | <p>0-100 points Minimum score 70 points</p> |
| DATE ² | TIME | LOCATION | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April 15 | 11.00 | Shkodra, Hotel Rozafa | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April 17 | 10.00 | Vlora, Regina Garden Hotel | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April 21 | 11.00 | Online at the following link | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April 22 | 09.00 | Tirana, Iliria Boutique Hotel | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

² The dates in the table may be subject to change. In any case, relevant notifications will be communicated through the Partners Albania's official communication channels (Social Media and Website).



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| <p>Stage 2 Full Proposal</p> | <p>Applicants invited to submit a Full Project Proposal, will provide detailed information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their business model - Expected social and/or environmental impact - Financial projections and sustainability plans - Proposed investment plan <p>Applications submitted in Stage 2 will undergo a comprehensive evaluation process, which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative check (submission of all required documents) - Technical evaluation of the proposal <p>Shortlisted applicants of Stage 2 will be invited to participate in the Pitching Stage.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality and relevance of the proposal - Clarity and viability of the business model - Strength and feasibility of the financial and sustainability plan - Clearly defined indicators demonstrating the expected social and/or environmental impact | <p>0-100 points Minimum score 70 points</p> |
| <p>Stage 3 Pitching</p> | <p>The Pitching Stage will provide applicants with an opportunity to present their business proposal directly to the Evaluation Committee, allowing for a deeper understanding of the applicant beyond the written proposal.</p> <p>The Evaluation Committee will assess the presentations based on the strength and viability of the business model; the applicants demonstrated or potential social and/or environmental impact; their competitive advantage; the feasibility of the proposed growth strategy; the capacity and expertise of the management team; and the strategic and effective use of the requested grant funding.</p> <p>Winners of Stage 3 will undergo the pre-awarding verification.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strength and viability of the business model - Demonstrated or potential social and/or environmental impact - Competitive advantage and market differentiation - Feasibility of the growth strategy - Capacity and expertise of the management team - Strategic and effective use of the requested grant funding | <p>0-100 points Minimum score 70 points</p> |



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|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <p>Stage 4 Pre awarding verification</p> | <p>The pre-awarding verification Stage represents the final verification step before the final selection. The purpose of this stage is to verify that the information provided in the full proposal form accurately reflects the situation on the ground and to confirm that the applicant meets all necessary preconditions for project implementation.</p> <p>It will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site visits to the business operation facilities, to observe the business operations, production processes, working environment, and overall organisational capacity. - Meetings with the enterprise management team, for budget clarification and negotiation purposes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of all necessary preconditions for project implementation - Ensure cost efficiency of the action; - Ensure a fair balance between operational and non-operational costs; - Reflect real market costs; - Reflect costs in accordance with proposed activities. - Cohesion of the Team. | <p>Pass/Fail verification</p> |
| <p>Stage 5 Contract signing</p> | <p>The grant allocation will be conditioned by the successful completion of all stages.</p> | | <p>Awarded</p> |

IV. APPLICATION FOR STAGE 1: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The purpose of this Call for Expression of Interest (EOI) is to invite **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** operating in Albania to express their interest in participating in the Invest for Change (I4C) **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) Scheme**.

Only applicants that meet **all the following criteria** at the time of submission of EoI are **eligible** to apply under this Call.

- The applicant is a micro, small or medium enterprise (MSME) established and legally registered in Albania, in accordance with the applicable national legislation
- The applicant is legally registered with the National Business Center (QKB) for at least one (1) year and no more than six (6) years from the deadline of the application to this Call.
- The applicant demonstrates a clear plan for economic viability and/or business growth.
- The applicant is committed to scaling its social and/or environmental impact, as reflected in its core business model, products, services, or employment practices.
- The applicant is able to meet the co-financing requirement of at least 20% of the total proposed budget.

- The applicant has no pending tax obligations, including obligations to national and local authorities.
 - The applicant is not under prosecution.
 - The applicant has no criminal cases currently under review by the court.
 - The applicant has not been convicted of a criminal offence by a final court decision.
 - The applicant is directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the activities described in the application.
 - The applicant is committed to participate in all stages of the evaluation process.
- In addition, the applicant is expected to participate in all the technical assistance programme phases (capacity building and mentoring sessions), if selected as an awardee.

V. SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION

Applicants should express their interest by completing and submitting the **EoI Application Form** by **May 4th, 2026, at 16.00**.

Only the EoI Application Form (provided template) is required at this stage.

Supporting documents will be required to be submitted only by the short-listed applicants.

5.1 Application Process

Applications must be submitted online **ONLY** after registering at the [Dua Partner Invest](#) platform, by following the necessary steps.

All applications submitted by other means (mail, e-mail, hand delivery, etc.) will be rejected.

Step 1

If you have not been registered before in the DPI platform, you need to do so. Go to the [“Entrepreneur”](#) menu, the [“Process”](#) submenu to see the necessary registration steps on the platform.

- a. For this call, you will register as an **‘Entrepreneur - Registered Start-up’**.
- b. Click the **“Join” button** and choose “Registered Startup” at the “Entrepreneur” Member type.
- c. **Put your name, surname**, fill the legal entity name and create a password. Fill in the required information dedicated to registered startups. Complete all the questionnaire fields. In the ‘Business Idea Name’ and ‘Business Idea Description’ put the idea you are applying to this call and submit.

Step 2

- a. After you send it, you will receive a pop-up asking you to verify your email. **Verify the email you entered in the questionnaire and check also the spam/junk folder.**
- b. Once the administrator approves your profile you will **receive an email informing you about this.**
- c. Using the password and email you entered in the registration questionnaire, **log in to the platform.**

Step 3

- a. Once approved, **please log in the DPI platform** with the email and password provided.
- b. You will find a "Funding Opportunity" menu on the dashboard. After clicking this menu, you will find "**Invest for Change 1st Call**".
- c. Click the "open" button and you will be introduced to general information about this funding scheme.
- d. Click the "Apply" button where you will find the **Guideline document** (for information only).and the **Application Form for Expression of Interest (to be completed by you).**
- e. Provide the information on the applicant. Download the **Application Form for Expression of Interest.** Complete and upload it on the platform when you are ready.
- f. You have the opportunity **to save as “draft”** the application and continue editing at a later stage.
- g. Only when you have successfully completed the required information and uploaded the Form click the "Send" button. Please be advised that once submitted you cannot change or edit the application.

Step 4

- a. After the deadline, you will **receive an automatic email** regarding your application status. Log in to the platform from time to time after the application submission deadline to see the status of your application. Whether you will be selected from the first phase or not, you will receive a message within the platform in both cases.
- b. Even if you are not selected from the first phase, your idea will remain on the platform to benefit from the advantages offered by the platform.
- c. In case you are selected (short-listed) from the first stage, you will receive communications from Partners Albania by email at the contact information provided for the preparation for the next phase – Full Proposal submission.

If you face any problems with the registration or application process, please contact us in the email: applications@partnersalbania.org

Please note that after submitting the application, you will not be able to access or modify it.

VI. EVALUATION OF THE EOI

The Expression of Interest will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

| Criteria | Maximum score |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Business overview | 24 |
| 2. Business Idea and proposed Use of Funding | 30 |
| 3. Social and Environmental Impact | 18 |
| 4. Employment and Inclusion | 8 |
| 5. Growth Potential | 10 |
| 6. Investment readiness: Financial Capacity and Co-financing Commitment | 10 |
| MAXIMUM TOTAL SCORE | 100 points |

VII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Any questions related to the application process should be sent in writing via e-mail no later than **April 17, 2026**. Partners Albania has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Questions should be sent to the e-mail address applications@partnersalbania.org indicating the **reference of the EoI in the subject**.

Questions and answers will be published at Partners Albania website and DPI Platform Website no later than **April 23, 2026**

It is therefore advisable to consult the above-mentioned website regularly in order to be informed about the questions and answers published.

VIII. COMPLAINTS

The applicants will be informed in writing regarding the results of their EoI application. Any complaint related to the procedure should be submitted in writing within 5 calendar days from the notification of the relevant decision.

The complaints should be sent to the email address: applications@partnersalbania.org

The complaints will be answered within **5 (five) working days** from the receipt of the complaint.

IX. CONFIDENTIALITY, DATA PROTECTION AND ETHICS

All personal and organizational data submitted within the framework of this Call shall be processed only for the purpose of evaluation, in accordance with applicable data protection rules. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all submitted information is accurate, complete, and lawful to share.

Partners Albania shall treat commercially sensitive information with due confidentiality, without prejudice to audit, reporting, anti-fraud, and transparency obligations applicable to EU-funded actions.