

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

“Enhancing EU Market Readiness of Albanian Innovative Start-ups and MSMEs”

Challenge Fund | EU4Innovation invites startups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) established and operating in Albania to apply to participate in the training programme “Enhancing EU Market Readiness of Albanian Innovative Start-ups and MSMEs”.

WHY IS THIS TRAINING PROGRAMME IMPORTANT?

As Albania progresses towards EU membership, Albanian start-ups and MSMEs will increasingly need to understand the requirements, standards and market conditions of the EU Single Market and prepare for the opportunities and obligations that come with closer integration with the EU.

As part of the accession process, Albania is progressively aligning its legislation and business environment with the EU acquis. This alignment has direct implications for businesses, particularly in relation to market access, regulatory and technical requirements, digital compliance, internationalisation, competitiveness and innovation, sustainability, and access to funding and partnerships.

The training is designed to help Albanian start-ups and MSMEs assess their readiness, identify potential gaps, and strengthen their capacity to enter and compete in EU markets. Through practical knowledge, tools, guidance and examples, participants will gain insights that they can apply directly to their own businesses.

Thematic areas include:

- EU accession process and implications for businesses
- EU Single Market: regulatory requirements, standards, and compliance relevant to market access, Including EU laws on taxation, IP, consumer rights, and e-commerce, navigating VAT, invoicing, customs, and tariffs for cross-border trade.
- Digital business compliance, including GDPR and data protection requirements
- EU market entry strategies, export readiness, and internationalisation pathways
- Business adaptation and competitiveness in EU markets
- Innovation and digital transformation for business growth
- EU Green Deal, environmental standards, and sustainable business practices
- EU funding ecosystem, partnership development, and networking opportunities.

The programme will consist of **four full-day¹, onsite training sessions in Tirana in November** designed to provide participants with practical and interactive learning experience. The training will:

- ## WHO CAN APPLY?

The Call is open to start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) established and operating in Albania.

The programme is particularly relevant for businesses that:

- are preparing to enter EU markets or expand their presence outside Albania;
- are interested in developing export and internationalisation strategies;
- want to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of EU market requirements;
- are looking to improve their competitiveness, innovation and digital capabilities; or
- are interested in exploring EU funding, partnerships and networking opportunities.

PARTICIPATION AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

More than one representative from the same start-up or MSME may participate, depending on the relevance of the training topics to their roles and responsibilities. Each participant must register individually by completing the Registration Form.

Participation in the training programme is **free of charge** and is subject to registration and availability of places.

Please note that travel, accommodation and other participation-related costs for participants travelling from outside Tirana **will not be** covered by the project.

Coffee breaks and lunch will be provided during the training days.

¹ The exact dates of the four sessions will be communicated to registered participants once the schedule is finalised.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested participants are invited to complete the [Participant Registration Form](#).

Registration deadline: **16 October 2026**.

Following registration, selected participants will receive further information regarding the confirmed training dates, thematic sessions and practical arrangements.

For further information

For questions regarding the application process, eligibility or the training programme, please contact:

Email: challengefund@eu4innovation.al

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE FUND | EU4INNOVATION:

Website: <https://challengefund.eu4innovation.al/>

The Challenge Fund is the granting scheme of the EU4Innovation Phase II (2023-2026), a multi-donor action programme co-financed by the European Union, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Sida. The programme is implemented by GIZ and the Embassy of Sweden in Tirana.

The Challenge Fund is implemented by the Embassy of Sweden in Tirana in cooperation with Partners Albania for Change and Development. It aims to improve and diversify financing and support opportunities for Albanian start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) developing innovative products, services, business models and processes, including technology-driven solutions with potential for growth and international expansion.

The Challenge Fund combines financial support with capacity-building opportunities to strengthen the innovation, competitiveness and internationalisation potential of Albanian businesses. Through its support, the Fund contributes to helping start-ups and MSMEs develop their businesses, access new markets and build the capacities needed for sustainable growth.

Under the Challenge Fund, 55 Albanian start-ups and MSMEs from different regions and sectors of Albania have been supported through three calls for applications. In addition to financial support, beneficiaries have had access to capacity-building activities designed to strengthen their business knowledge, skills and readiness for growth.