

EU 4 CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND LIVABLE CITIES



Implemented by



Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



SUP² LOOP

Green Innovation Challenge

UNPACK THE FUTURE:
PILOTING PLASTIC FREE SOLUTIONS.



MILIEUKONTAKT
ALBANIA
SERVING SOCIETY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

APPLICATION GUIDELINE



SUP2LOOP Green Innovation Challenge

Green Champions Cup: Piloting plastic-free solutions

Contracting Authority: Milieukontakt Albania

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Reference Number for the Call: SUP2LOOP no. 81319746-5

Deadline for submission of online Application

16 March 2026, 17:30 hrs.

This Application Guideline document defines the rules for applying and submitting actions, the awarding and implementation of the actions funded through this call, in accordance with the rules of the project “Circular Economy for sustainable urban development in Albania”, which is financially supported by the “EU for Circular Economy and Livable Cities” project co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented by GIZ Albania in partnership with the Ministry of Environment.





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SUP2LOOP CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Guideline for applicants

This document relates to the SUP2Loop 2nd Call for Proposals, Green Champions Cup: Piloting plastic-free solutions, which provides an opportunity for funding for Albanian MSMEs and large companies with innovative solutions to pilot Single-Use Plastic-free solutions for implementing in sport and cultural events.

The Green Champions Cup Challenge invites Albanian businesses in the sport and cultural event to pilot innovative solutions that eliminate single-use plastic (SUP) cups. Outdoor events generate massive plastic waste from discarded cups, often millions per season across Albania. Your project must replace single-use cups with scalable reusable cup systems, significantly reducing environmental impact and plastic pollution while boosting sustainability in high-traffic venues like sportive and cultural events. Applicants are advised to read these guidelines before applying to the Call for Proposals to ensure adherence to its rules and criteria. All information and documentation about the Call for Proposals can be found on the following website CircularHub.al





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1. Background of the Call for Applications

Single-use plastics (SUPs) remain one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, particularly in sectors with high consumption and disposal rates, such as the hospitality and food services industries. Despite growing regulatory pressures and consumer awareness, the transition to circular solutions is slow due to system-level constraints, limited innovation uptake, and a lack of cross-sector collaboration.

Plastic producers and HORECA businesses in Albania are at the heart of this challenge and strategically positioned to lead impactful and circular solutions.

The SUP2LOOP project aims to drive a systemic reduction of single-use plastics (SUPs) by promoting sustainable alternatives, fostering circular thinking within business practices, and strengthening an innovation ecosystem that aligns with circular economy principles, reduces plastic waste, and unlocks new value chains.

Why SUP matters

Single-use plastics (SUPs) are products made wholly or partly of plastic that are intended to be used only once or for a short period before being discarded. They represent one of the most harmful sources of pollution and add increasingly large amounts of waste to already strained national waste management systems. For this reason, the **EU Directive (EU 2019/904)** introduced restrictions and bans on some of the most problematic items. The directive specifically bans 10 SUP items: *cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, beverage stirrers, balloon sticks, food containers made of expanded polystyrene, beverage cups and containers of expanded polystyrene, packets and wrappers, and wet wipes/sanitary items*. [Read more about the directive here.](#)

As Albania progresses toward EU accession, these same rules will soon apply nationally, based on the provisions of the upcoming new law on integrated waste management.

2. Information about the Call

Milieucontact Albania is a non-profit, civil society organization established in 2000, with the goal of improving the quality of life through environmental protection, sustainable use and enhancement of natural resources, and the promotion of responsibility, solidarity, active participation, cooperation, and social inclusion for a sustainable future. Its programs focus on three key elements: capacity building, public engagement, and solving environmental challenges.

What is the Green Champions Cup - Call for Proposals?

The **Green Champions Cup** - Call for Proposals is a grant sub-scheme for the GIZ project EU 4 Circular Economy and Livable Cities. Its main objective is to identify, support, and fund innovative green solutions that tackle SUP usage around sport and cultural events, such as football games, music festivals, or outdoor events.





The SUP2Loop Fund provides applicants with grant funding to overcome the uncertainties that inhibit innovation, research, and development. The funding is provided by the “EU for Circular Economy and Livable Cities” project. The latter is co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ Albania in partnership with the Ministry of Environment.

Innovation, according to OECD, is defined as *“a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from the unit’s previous products or processes and that has been made available to potential users (product) or brought into use by the unit (process)”*.

The aim is to encourage private sector participation by offering technical support and grants that help businesses transition toward more sustainable and waste-friendly practices.

The call is open to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and large companies to submit projects focused on developing innovative solutions for the prevention, reduction, reuse and recycling of single-use plastic waste (as per EU Directive 2019/904).

Key focus area suggestions for applicants:

Prevention and Reduction at Source

- Elimination and reduction of single-use plastic cups, bottles, plates, and cutlery
- Introduction of reusable systems (cups, food containers) supported by deposit-return schemes
- Mandatory plastic-free procurement guidelines for event organizers and vendors
- Piloting circular service models (e.g. reusable cup logistics)
- Engagement with local SMEs providing sustainable products and services

Engagement of event organizers, sports clubs, and vendors

- Training sessions for event organizers and food vendors
- Voluntary commitments or charters for plastic-free outdoor events
- Capacity building workshops for sports clubs and event staff

Awareness Raising and Behaviour Change

- Targeted awareness campaigns before and during events
- Visible on-site communication (signage, announcements, digital screens)

Specifically, this call invites applicants to propose more sustainable and conscious practices aimed at reducing the amount of plastic waste being discarded.

The grant funding aims to support a minimum of one Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and large company providing financial support from a **total pool of 50.000€** to develop and pilot their innovative solutions in the Albanian market.

Applications are required to be submitted in the English language





3. Objectives of the Call

The project objective is to drive a systemic reduction of single-use plastics (SUPs) by promoting sustainable alternatives in sports and cultural events, fostering circular thinking and design within business practices, and strengthening an ecosystem that supports long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

4. Target area

The main objective of the project is to reduce waste originating from SUPs on a national level.

5. Financial Support

Total amount allocated for sub-grants: €50,000

Co-financing is mandatory for this call for proposals: 20% for MSMEs and 50% for large companies. Cofinancing might also be in kind, but not entirely.

Project duration: 4 full months.

6. Eligibility Criteria

6.1 Who can apply?

The call aims to support at least **one business entity or consortia** in sports and HoReCa industry, but not limited to these, which are registered and operating in Albania (12 months of registration as a business entity at QKB to the date of publishing of this Call for Proposals). Public/Municipal companies, NGOs, and academia are not eligible as lead applicants but can be part of a consortium with a private company as lead.

The main beneficiary of this call must be a registered **business entity**.

The call is open to:

- local businesses that use single-use plastics (e.g., event organizers, sports clubs, and vendors, HoReCa)

Eligible beneficiaries also include:

- Circular economy innovators and startups developing sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics (SUPs)

The selection process for beneficiaries will be conducted in an open, fair, and transparent manner, based on merit, and designed to promote equal opportunity and inclusion. The following criteria apply:

- Impact on the reduction of single-use plastics (SUPs)
- Type of business service
- Impact on job creation
- Scalability
- Sustainability of the proposed solution and business model



6.2 Eligibility criteria for the applicants

Applicants must meet the criteria outlined in the table below:

No	Criteria	Description
1	Legal Form	Must be registered and active businesses in Albania, with a valid legal and tax status, and must be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the activities outlined in the application.
2	Type of Business	Eligible entities include Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and large companies.
3	Sector of Activity	Business entity or consortia in sports and HoReCa industry as well as entities active in the green economy, etc.
4	Grant History	Applicants must not have received any grant funding from public or donor-supported programs in the last two (2) years.
6	Clean Legal records	Applicants must have no prior legal convictions related to financial fraud, corruption, environmental violations, or business malpractice.
7	Financial and Operational Status	Businesses must be financially viable and operational, with no ongoing bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings.
8	Tax Compliance	Must have no outstanding obligations to taxes, social security, or other government institutions.

6.3 Non-eligibility criteria

Potential partners are not eligible for this grant call if:

- they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation, arising from a similar procedure provided for in the national legislation;
- they have been convicted of an offence concerning professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata (i.e., against which no appeal is possible);
- they are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means;
- they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of debts to the consolidated state budget;
- they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity detrimental to the national financial interests;
- they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations in connection with a procurement procedure or other grant award procedure financed by the national budget, or international donors;
- are subject to a conflict of interests; the conflict of interests represents any circumstances that may affect the assessment or implementation process, in an objective and impartial manner. Such circumstances may result from economic interests, political or national preferences or family connections;





- they do not fulfil standard requirements with regards to wages or accept the decent work agenda (i.e. adhere to offering productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity);
- any entity that has been found to have misused EU or other donor or public funds in the past;
- political parties, groupings, or their subsidiaries and affiliates;
- Businesses with unpaid debts to the state (taxes, social security contributions, etc.)
- Businesses without an active tax identification number (NIPT)
- Businesses that have received grants from other programs within the **last (2) two years**
- Proposals from recycling / Plastic manufacturers are not eligible.

6.4 Number of applications

Each applicant can submit only one (1) application under this call. Submitting the same proposal multiple times, including through different email addresses, is prohibited and may result in disqualification.

6.5 Co-applicants and Associated Partners

In this call, forming a partnership with other applicants is not mandatory. However, the call accepts partnerships without a budget (association) with local government institutions, NGOs or academia. In such cases, the applicant must provide a mandate letter containing the partner's details, expression of interest, and confirmation of their mandate.

7. Project Proposal Criteria

7.1 Sectors and Themes

Projects must contribute directly to **(I) the circular economy, (II) innovation (III) sustainable solutions.**

Priority topics include, but are not limited to:

- Stimulate innovation in reducing or replacing SUPs across production chains and service cycles
- Creation of new green job positions (with a special focus on the inclusion of youth and women) within Albanian MSMEs and large companies
- Identifying new companies, ideally situated outside Tirana, which have not received previous grant awards, and incentivizing them to prioritize green investments
- Facilitate collaboration between producers, users, and innovators for circular products/ services and packaging redesign
- Generate actionable and scalable prototypes for circular business concepts
- Raise awareness and build capacity on circular economy strategies



7.2 Categories of Supported Activities

The following solution areas will be especially encouraged:

Prevention and reduction at source (Priority Area)

Applicants are encouraged to design interventions that eliminate or significantly reduce SUPP at the planning and procurement stage of festivals and sports events.

- Elimination of single-use plastic cups, bottles, plates, and cutlery
- Introduction of reusable systems (cups, food containers) supported by deposit-return schemes
- Mandatory plastic-free procurement guidelines for event organizers and vendors
- Piloting circular service models (e.g. reusable cup logistics)
- Engagement with local SMEs providing sustainable products and services

Awareness raising and behavior change

Projects should address behavioral changes among participants combining on-site and digital communication.

- Targeted awareness campaigns before and during events
- Visible on-site communication (signage, announcements, digital screens)

Engagement of event organisers, sports clubs, and vendors

Applicants are encouraged to involve event organizing operators, sports federations, clubs, and vendors as active partners rather than passive beneficiaries.

- Training sessions for event organizers and food vendors
- Voluntary commitments or charters for plastic-free festivals and sports events
- Capacity-building workshops for sports clubs and event staff

Each project must address at least **one of the categories**. Projects that combine two or more categories will receive additional points. To ensure alignment with **gender objectives and inclusiveness**, proposals must include **measurable indicators**.

7.3 non-eligible activities

Projects that include the activities listed below are **not eligible** for funding under this call:

- Activities that carry additional risks that could harm health, women, or the environment (e.g., activities that reinforce gender stereotypes or create hazardous physical exposure at work);
- Activities that contradict the principles of the circular economy (e.g., focusing on incineration without material recovery);
- Activities related solely or primarily to individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, or congresses;





- Activities related solely or primarily to individual scholarships for studies or training;
- Activities related solely or primarily to a single conference or similar event;
- Activities related solely or primarily to academic research without content and/or feasibility studies;
- Activities associated with political parties or of a political/partisan nature;
- Activities involving emergency aid or charitable donations;
- Activities that fall within the general functions of competent state institutions or public administration services, including local government;
- Activities linked to political parties;
- Humanitarian activities.

7.4 Eligible Costs

Only “**eligible costs**” can be considered for financial support under this grant call. The categories of costs considered eligible and ineligible are listed below. Attention: Eligible costs must be based on actual cost values supported by documentation.

Applicants selected for a grant will always undergo a budget review and due diligence process before contract signing. This process aims to identify issues or items requiring changes in the budget (e.g., arithmetic errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic or ineligible costs). Therefore, it is in the applicant’s interest to submit a realistic and cost-effective budget.

7.4.1 Criteria for Eligible Costs

All costs included in the project budget must meet all the following criteria:

- They are incurred during the grant implementation period;
- They comply with the budget line categories according to the budget format;
- They are necessary for the implementation of the project proposal covered by the grant;
- They are identifiable, verifiable, and documented (e.g., contract, invoice, payment order), particularly recorded in the beneficiary’s accounting records and prepared according to applicable accounting standards;
- They comply with Albanian tax, social security, and national legislation;
- They are reasonable, justified, and in line with sound financial management, particularly regarding economy and efficiency;
- They are not listed in the ineligible costs section below.

7.4.2 Direct Eligible Costs

- Staff costs specifically assigned to project implementation, corresponding to actual gross salaries, including social security contributions and other related remuneration costs;
- Travel and subsistence expenses for staff and other participants in the project, provided they are actual costs supported by documentation;
- Costs of purchasing equipment and special services for project purposes;
- Direct costs for project implementation, such as services, visibility, actions, etc., for project purposes.





7.5 Ineligible Costs

The following costs are considered non-eligible:

- Customs duties;
- Debts and debt service charges (interest);
- Provisions for future losses or liabilities;
- Costs already declared by the beneficiary and financed by another project or program;
- Purchase of land or buildings;
- Purchase of vehicles and mobile phones (such costs may only be considered if essential for project implementation);
- Losses from foreign exchange;
- Bank guarantees or any other guarantees;
- Third-party loans;
- Fines, financial penalties, and legal dispute costs;
- Salaries of public administration personnel;
- Products or services from specific sectors considered ineligible under EU practices (e.g., alcohol production, tobacco, gambling, military);
- Business registration fees;
- VAT is generally considered eligible for costs, unless the beneficiary company is allowed to issue VAT invoices. In that case, the beneficiary company is expected to carry the VAT cost itself.

8. Application and Submission

Project proposals **must be submitted in English**, while respecting the guidelines explained in this document and using only the formats provided in the application package for this call.

8.1 Required Application Package

The application package must contain:

1. **Application Form** (Annex I)
2. **Budget Form** (Annex II)
3. **Supporting documents** as listed below:

Supporting documents, which must be included in the application, are listed below:

1. Extract from the National Registration Center / National Business Center (QKR/QKB) from the launching date of this Call.
2. Certificate of active status of the entity from the date of the launch of this call
3. Certificate of judicial record (Dëshmi Penaliteti) issued within three months from the application date*
4. Certificate of criminal record issued within three months of the application date*





5. Certificate of no bankruptcy proceedings issued within three months from the application date*
6. Certificate of national tax payment obligations (No Debt), up to the application deadline
7. Certificate of local tax payment obligations (No Debt), up to the application deadline
8. Tax certificates/proof of payment of contributions up to the application deadline
9. Financial statements for the last year, certified copies (signed and sealed) by the Tax Authority*;


Important: Documents **must not be older than 3 months** from the application date; originals or notarized copies are acceptable.

(*) For the supported documents, in the case of difficulties obtaining them in time, you can submit the Application and Budget Forms within the deadline and present the supporting documents later, but before contract signature.

All supporting documents must be combined and uploaded as a single .pdf file.

8.2 Submission of the Application

The application package, along with supporting documents, must be submitted **online to the following email address: office@milieukontakt.org**

 The **deadline for submission is 16th of March 2026, 17:30 CEST**

9. Evaluation and Selection of Applications

A dedicated Evaluation Committee will be mandated to ensure an objective, impartial, and professional assessment of the submitted project proposals. Proposals will be evaluated based on the [Waste hierarchy](#), meaning lower points for proposals that would simply replace single-use plastics with other single-use items, or recycling, and more points for reducing and reuse proposals.

The evaluation is planned to proceed in two phases:

9.1 Phase I: Opening and Administrative Check of Project Proposals

During the opening and administrative check of applications, it will be verified whether the **application package meets all eligibility criteria and includes the documentation required** in this guide.

- If any of the requested information is **missing or incorrect**, the application may be **rejected on this basis alone and will not be further evaluated**.
- If it is confirmed that the applicant and project proposal **do not meet the eligibility criteria** listed in this guide, the application may be **rejected on this basis alone**.

The evaluation process will continue **only for applicants who pass this phase**.

The criteria checked in this phase include:



Administrative Criteria	YES	NO	Comments
Application Form (Annex I)			
Budget Form (Annex II)			
Supporting documents as specified below:			
Extract from the National Registration Center / National Business Center (QKR/QKB)			
Certificate of active status of the entity			
Certificate of judicial record			
Certificate of criminal record			
Certificate of no bankruptcy proceedings			
Certificate of national tax payment obligations (No Debt), up to the application deadline			
Certificate of local tax payment obligations (No Debt) up to the application deadline.			
Tax certificates/proof of payment of contributions, up to the application deadline			
Certificate of annual turnover for the last three years			
Financial statements for the last year, confirmed by the Regional Tax Directorate			

9.2 Phase II: Evaluation of Project Proposals

Proposals that pass the administrative check will be evaluated based on **the quality** of the proposed action according to the **evaluation criteria listed in the table below**.

Each proposal will receive a maximum score of **100 points**, according to the breakdown below.

Only Proposals that receive a minimum of 65 points will be considered for pre-selection.

No	Evaluation Criteria for the project proposals	Max. points
1	Potential impact on circular economy systems and SUP reduction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of SUP waste diverted from landfills - Level of solution on the waste hierarchy as defined by the EU Waste Framework Directive. 	30
2	Potential impact on the local economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for employment creation - Synergies with & impact on other economic actors in Albania 	15
3	Scalability and growth potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Size of potential market & ease of scaling up - Replicability of the in other markets and/or countries 	15
4	Embedded innovative potential of the proposed solution.	15



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The business model is new to Albania, presents a new solution approach to, or targets a previously untapped niche market. - The business model has the potential to disrupt the respective market 	
5	Sustainability of the business model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The business presents a feasible plan for implementation during the project timeline; - The business has sufficient experience & reliability to successfully implement the proposed plan - The team has clarity about the market and the competitive differential of the business - It is likely & feasible that the solution will be continued after the project duration. 	25

For objective reasons or for reasons beyond its control, the Contracting Authority may decide not to award any grant and cancel the Call for Proposals, without giving applicants any right of appeal or compensation.

10. Notification of Winners

10.1 Notification Process

All applicants will be notified in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision on the submitted application. The notification will be sent by e-mail and will include the application reference number, whether the application has been evaluated or not, and the relevant evaluation results.

Any applicant who believes that his/her application has been rejected as a result of a technical or procedural error during the evaluation process has the right to submit a written appeal within 5 (five) working days from the date of receipt of the notification of rejection. The appeal must be sent by email to the official project address. The Contracting Authority will review the appeal and provide a reasoned response within 5 (five) working days of receipt.

10.2 Grant Implementation Conditions

After the decision to award a grant, each selected applicant will be offered a grant contract, which will formalize the relationship between the parties. By signing the Grant Contract, applicants accept the contractual terms. If necessary, budget clarifications may be made before signing the contract. Additionally, before signing the Grant Contract, applicants whose project proposals are provisionally selected will be required to submit a project summary in English and the budget in English format. Grant Contracts will be signed in English.

All applicants will be audited at the end of the implementation period.



11. Indicative calendar of the process

The calendar for the application, evaluation, and grant selection process is provided **for indicative purposes** in the table below:

Process	Date	Time
Public announcement of the grant call	18 February 2026	12:00
Deadline for submitting clarifying questions to the Contracting Authority	09 March 2026	16:30
Deadline for responses to clarifying questions from the Contracting Authority	12 March 2026	16:30
Deadline for submitting Applications	16 March 2026	17:30
Administrative check of applications	20 March 2026	16:30
Evaluation of project proposals by the Evaluation Committee	27 March 2026	16:30
Deadline for submitting complaints	03 April 2026	16:30
Response to complaints	10 April 2026	16:30
Notification of applicants about the evaluation results*	13 April 2026	16:30
Signing of the contract*	22 April 2026	16:30

12. List of Annexes

Annex I: Application Form

Annex II: Budget Form

