

Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) Announcement of the 3rd Call for Expression of Interest

The Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) is a financing facility designed to increase employability, especially youth. It boosts the competitiveness of enterprises in Western Balkan 6 economies by funding investments in equipment and infrastructure for selected cooperative or dual training projects implemented through partnerships between vocational training institutes and enterprises. The grants are allocated through a competitive regional challenge.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development commissioned 64.43 million EUR for the RCF, and the Swiss Government, represented by the SDC Swiss Development Cooperation, co-financed an additional 9.7 million CHF. The funds were commissioned to the KfW Development Bank and executed by the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6-CIF), a joint initiative of chambers of commerce from the region. The Fund is implemented by the consultant consortia.

The first and the second round of applications attracted more than 300 Expressions of Interest from all Western Balkan 6 economies. The selection process led to selecting 63 projects for financing, allocating approximately 27 million Euros for the investments in equipment, infrastructure, and training at the vocational training providers and partnering enterprises.

Now the RCF opens the Third call for Expressions of interest and invites interested consortia of vocational training institutes and enterprises devoted to joint implementation of cooperative training programmes to apply and:

- Compete for the opportunity to realize substantial investments in training equipment and training facilities at vocational training institutes and encourage the introduction of new technologies
- Support the development of cooperative training methods to address human resource shortages effectively and strategically approach capacity building
- Improve employability of trainees/VET graduates and their integration into the labour market
- Increase productivity and competitiveness of local enterprises as a result of successfully implemented cooperative training programmes.



THE THIRD CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST WILL BE OPEN UNTIL JULY 7TH, 2023, AT 23:59. THE CALL IS PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE SIX WESTERN BALKAN ECONOMIES: ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA, KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO, NORTH MACEDONIA, AND SERBIA. THE RCF INVITES APPLICATIONS FROM ALL SIX ECONOMIES AND ALL ECONOMIC SECTORS.

The expressions of interest can be submitted by VET consortia formed of vocational training institutes and a minimum of two enterprises per CT programme, jointly engaging in the provision of cooperative VET. Consortia, led by vocational training institutes implementing cooperative or dual VET programmes that lead to nationally recognised certificates in one of the WB6 economies, can apply.

The application process for RCF funding has two stages. Applying consortia submit expressions of interest and supporting documents in the first stage. In the second stage, shortlisted consortia will be invited to submit the full application, including the project proposal and the detailed elaboration of the planned investment.

More information on the eligibility of the applicants, actions, costs, application procedures to follow, and other issues of relevance could be found in the Guidelines for the Third Call for the Expressions of Interests available [here](#). The schedule of the upcoming online info sessions can be found [here](#).