



ANNEX 1



Single Market Programme (SMP)

Description of the action (DoA)

[for FPAs: Action plan]

Part A

Part B

Version 1.0
15 April 2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE

What is the Description of the Action (DoA)?

The Description of the Action (DoA) is the Annex of the Grant Agreement which contains the details of how the project will be carried out. For EU framework partnerships for grants (FPAs) this Annex is called Action Plan.

It consists of 2 parts, which must be generated from the submitted proposal:

Part A contains structured tables with project information

Part B is a narrative description on the work to be carried out.

Part A is generated by the IT system. It is based on the information which you enter into the Portal Grant Preparation screens.

Part B (+ annexes) must be uploaded on the Grant Preparation Documents screen.

Make sure that Part B is synchronised with the information entered into the screens. Make sure that any changes are agreed with us.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION (PART B) *[for FPAs: ACTION PLAN (PART B)]*

Part B of the Description of the Action (DoA) must be uploaded on the Portal Grant Preparation Documents screen.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR PART B

Attach the Part B of your proposal.

There is NO need to make any other changes (cover page, footers, headers etc). In case of duplicate or contradictory information in Part B, Part A (or other parts of the Grant Agreement) will be considered to prevail.

The version used should be the submitted version of the proposal (— unless you have been explicitly requested to make changes). All changes need to be discussed and agreed with the EU Project Officer. Substantial changes to the proposal are NOT allowed. If you made changes, please indicate them in a versioning table.

If there are annexes, merge all parts of Part B into a single file, convert it into PDF and upload the PDF on the Grant Preparation Documents screen. The detailed budget table (if required) can be uploaded separately (as PDF or other file format, if permitted by the system).

[For SMP ESS: The personnel cost grids must be uploaded separately as Annex 2b.]

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	15.04.2021	Initial version (new MFF).
2.0	28.05.2025	The service delivery methodology is updated by clarification the methodology and the operational mechanism to deliver the services
3.0	28.05.2025	A paragraph has explained the sequence of the different steps to be followed in the client journey
4.0	28.05.2025	A paragraph is provided with explanations on how you will promote and collect the feedback about client satisfaction and impact
5.0	28.05.2025	A paragraph explains in detail the ways the consortium will guarantee client engagement and follow-up.
6.0	28.05.2025	A paragraph briefly develops the main elements of the hub-spoke model and its coordination in EEN-Albania, especially about the effort in collaborating with other EEN consortia at international scale
7.0	28.05.2025	The project demonstrates how basic and advanced services offers will be structured, promoted and delivered with good integration and distinction at the same time
8.0	28.05.2025	The project management section was updated with more in depth and details on the workflow and plan for the two year project
9.0	28.05.2025	A short description emphasizes on the effort of the team on SME feedback activities
10.0	28.05.2025	There is an increase of 10% of overall targets of KPIs for the whole consortium
11.0	28.05.2025	The methodology for fostering innovative international partnerships is updated
12.0	28.05.2025	The communication strategy to ensure consistent messaging to attract clients and promote the EEN activities is further elaborated
13.0	28.05.2025	Explanations are provided in improvement of learning activities to overcome the shortcomings
14.0	28.05.2025	
15.0	28.05.2025	A justification is provided on how collective capabilities will be mobilised and what actions will be taken to ensure that the appointed advisors for the different roles will be able to deliver in their duties despite limited expertise in some cases.
16.0	28.05.2025	The participation of the network advisors in the Sector and Thematic group meetings is updated
17.0	28.05.2025	The integration and cooperation of the stakeholder's management is updated
18.0	28.05.2025	The development of the operational and financial management of the project is elaborated

1. RELEVANCE

1.1 Background and general objectives

Background and general objectives

Describe the background and rationale of the project.

How is the project relevant to the scope of the call? How does the project address the general objectives of the call? What is the project's contribution to the priorities of the call?

In 2023, the Albanian economy recorded a real growth (in volume) of 3.94%. (INSTAT September 2024). In terms of GDP structure by economic activities, services continued to dominate the Albanian economy in 2023, accounting for 47.96% of GDP. Industry has a negative growth rate, compared to Construction that has a 8,48% growth. Meanwhile the agriculture, forestry and fishing remain a very important sector in Albania, accounting 16.22% of GDP

According to INSTAT 2024, Albania's foreign trade experienced notable shifts, characterized by a significant decline in exports (**EUR3,73 billion**) and a modest increase in imports (**Eur 8,94 Billion**), leading to a wider trade deficit. The year was challenging for export sectors, which declined by 15.4% compared to the previous year, reflecting reduced global demand and sectoral challenges. The sharpest declines were observed in construction materials and metals, textiles and footwear, and energy-related exports — all of which are traditionally vital to Albania's trade portfolio.

Imports, on the other hand, grew by 2.5%, driven by a strong demand for machinery, equipment, and spare parts. This growth signals continued investment in infrastructure and industrial capabilities, which could bolster future economic resilience. However, the persistent reliance on imports outpacing export capacity resulted in a trade deficit of 522 billion ALL — a 20.7% increase from 2023.

EU cooperation with Albania has increased during recent years. The implementation of the Interim Agreement between EU and Albania and the other Free Trade Agreements between Albania and other countries through CEFTA Agreement have improved the Albanian economy, increased the business cooperation, investment, increased the export and internationalisation of SMEs and expand the investment, encourages the start-ups creating and boost the innovation.

Specifically, regional trade with EU countries accounted for 57.4% of Albania's total trade volume. Italy remained the dominant trade partner, though exports to Italy dropped by 13.9%, while imports saw a slight decline of 2.3%. Other notable shifts included reduced exports to Kosovo and Greece but increased trade activity with China and Turkey, which grew by 4.2% and 14.2%, respectively.

Looking ahead, addressing the structural weaknesses in Albania's export economy is essential. Enhancing product diversification, increasing value-added production, and strengthening trade relationships beyond traditional markets will be critical strategies. Additionally, targeted investments in innovation and sustainable industries could help mitigate the growing trade imbalance and support long-term economic development.

Albania's enterprise sector in 2023 is characterized by a strong service orientation, a high prevalence of small businesses, significant foreign investment, and a notable presence of women in business management. Albania's business landscape has experienced notable growth and diversification. The total number of active enterprises reached 130,338, marking a 4.1% increase from the previous year, where the service sector remains dominant, comprising 86.2% of all active enterprises. Within this sector, trade activities are particularly prominent, accounting for 25.6% of the total number of enterprises and generating 40.8% of the annual turnover.

Small enterprises with 1-4 employees continue to play a significant role, representing 85.9% of all active businesses. These micro-enterprises contribute 22.6% to total employment and 20.2% to annual turnover. In contrast, large enterprises with 50 or more employees make up 1.6% of the total number of enterprises but employ 50% of the workforce and generate 45.3% of the annual

turnover. Women manage or own 31.2% of active enterprises, a figure consistent with the previous year and account for 47% of total employment. Foreign-owned or joint enterprises constitute 5.3% of all active businesses, with Italian companies representing 43.6% of this group, followed by those from Kosovo and Turkey.

Geographically, the majority of enterprises are concentrated in the central region, particularly in the prefectures of Tirana and Durrës. The Municipality of Tirana alone accounts for 61,602 enterprises, while the Municipality of Kukës has the fewest, with 1,408 enterprises.

Albania has commenced officially the negotiations for EU accession on October 15, 2024 which entails negotiating all 33 chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire*.

This negotiation process urges the Albanian government and the respective National Economic Council to communicate with the stakeholders and representatives of the Albanian businesses in preparation to raise awareness among the stakeholders on the need that the political integration process requires in the same time economic integration. And in this process, the business organisations are the main stakeholders of this process and invited to contribute in the process of preparation of the different sectors on the rules, regulations, standardization, need for investment to adjust to the EU requirement, etc.

Albania is implementing important structural reforms that will support equitable growth, raise productivity and competitiveness in the economy, create more jobs, and improve governance and public service delivery. Enhanced regional connectivity and access to regional and global markets, coupled with export and market diversification, can also help promote faster growth.

The government's focus is now on sustainable growth with special focus on tourism, agriculture, and digitization as well as increased attention to climate change and the environment

Albania's economic growth is expected to moderately accelerate driven by private consumption, tourism, and construction in 2025. Poverty is expected to continue to decline as employment and wages rise. The country's medium-term prospects hinge on global recovery, and structural reforms.

Also, in the recent meeting organised by the National Economic Council a main topic and the discussions were around the fact that the Albanian business is not aware at all on the costs that they should bear to prepare their business to be ready for the day zero, when they will enter into the EU market, to be able to prepare to compete successfully with the EU competitive industries that produce in compliance with the EU standards and be able to resist in a EU taught competition.

The business service provider' sector is developed in recent years, due to the commitment of the government and line ministries, other national support organisations, expansion of the business representative organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce, local associations organised based on sectors, industries, exports, etc., but still the sector is relatively weak to support the processes of digitalisation, innovation processes, development and expansion of the market. A new initiative of establishing a centralised Economic Chamber in Albania is still in a discussion process.

Many public and private initiatives, EU and donor projects are encouraging and supporting the Start-up ecosystem through organisation of events, pitches, bootcamps, support with small grants, locally and internationally, to encourage the start-up creation. The start-ups ecosystem, including the start-up, facilitator, public organisations and Minister for Entrepreneurship in Albania though in early stages, is developing rapidly and the Albanian young entrepreneurs are launching innovative start-ups and business ideas continually. Many organizations are also running start-up programs and competitions to raise awareness about the importance of entrepreneurship, to boost and encourage the creation of new start-ups and innovative ideas in Albania. There's potential, and in collaboration with all the stakeholders the number of Local and International institutions, donors that are trying to push the ecosystem forward with their programmes. Some new start-ups hold a good position and the market continues to grow.

In response to the challenges and opportunities faced by Albanian SMEs in the rapidly evolving global and European markets, the proposal for **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) – Albania** aims to strategically support both **existing SMEs** and **start-ups** through tailored services focused on **training, knowledge exchange, expertise sharing, and technology transfer**. By doing so, the project will help Albanian SMEs strengthen their entrepreneurial skills, improve their competitiveness, and integrate into the EU Single Market while promoting **sustainability, innovation, and digital transformation**. These efforts are fully aligned with the broader goals of the call, which seeks to foster a more competitive, resilient, and sustainable business environment.

Albania's economy is largely driven by SMEs, which form the backbone of the country's economic structure. However, these businesses face several challenges, including difficulties in adapting to the digital economy, accessing international markets, and integrating sustainable practices into their operations. By leveraging the **EEN Albania** framework, Albanian SMEs will gain the necessary skills and insights to navigate these challenges. Through a series of **training programmes, mentoring, and coaching**, SMEs will be better equipped to explore new business opportunities, create stronger international networks, and adopt innovative practices.

In particular, the focus will be on start-ups and micro-businesses, which often lack the resources to scale effectively. The project will provide **tailored education** to help these businesses transform innovative ideas into viable and scaling operations. This will help foster an entrepreneurial culture, equipping new ventures with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive environment.

Albania joining in Single Market Programme in December 2023 and this lagged EEN-Albania behind the other countries in benefiting from the whole instruments, tools and methodology, learning and connection with the other EEN Network offices in Europe and still faces challenges related to understanding the roles and responsibilities of consortium partners, operational methodologies, and the establishment of standardized services. These early hurdles, compounded by turnover in the consortium and staff changes, led to periods of discontinuity.

Therefore, the proposed strategy was elaborated through a series of meetings and consultations with Network partner's organisations to propose a suitable EEN structure adequate to new required business model that is possible to provide the basic services and the most advanced services provided tailor-made for the individual interest of the businesses. This proposal was drafted after a completed analysis of Albanian SMEs needs and constraints, identification of objectives to fill the needs of Albanian SMEs. Establishing the proper Consortium with adequate competences and skilled staff and the proper expertise from the experts, capable of reaching the objectives of the new structure. Later, the right methodology to implement and reach the objectives was settled, considering the project management and the principle of quality control.

The proposed project defines that the services will geographically cover the complete territory of Albania, which corresponds to NUTS1 region, aiming to maximise the benefits of Albanian business community and EU companies.

This proposal aims to place EEN-ALBANIA among the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem as a business services provider for enabling the business to be economically, environmentally and socially sustainable, to support innovation processes and digitalisation, to develop and enter into the Single market and integrated in the regional and global value chains. By doing so, the project will contribute in achieving the overall objective of the call.

Thus, the Consortium of EEN-ALBANIA prepares and submits the proposal which underpins the upgraded functioning of the Enterprise Europe Network-Albania in the territory, as part of the Enterprise Europe Network, including the implementing period July 2025 – December 2028. The proposed structure for **EEN Albania** was the same as the previous one, focusing on optimisation of the services provided to Albanian SMEs.

The consortium consists of five organizations, including the public organisation Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA) and private entities the Centre for Competitiveness Promotion (CCP), The Woman's Economic Chamber of Albania (WECA), Regional Development Agency of Tirana (RDA), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Dures (CCIDR) This

structure is designed to provide both from the first level service and advanced services tailored to the specific needs of Albanian businesses. The objective is to ensure that services are accessible to all types of SMEs for small to big size and to all different sectors. SMEs across all regions of Albania, with a strong focus on ensuring geographic coverage of the entire territory.

The proposed project acknowledges several key challenges that Albanian SMEs face, including the need for **digital transformation**, **access to finance**, and **integration into the EU Single Market**. These challenges are compounded by a relatively low level of technological adoption and productivity within the local business community. Additionally, Albania's small market size and fragmented economy require significant effort to overcome, particularly in fostering stronger links with neighbouring countries and the broader EU market.

By providing support through **tailored services**, including **technology transfer**, **capacity building**, and **access to finance**, the project will address these challenges head-on. Furthermore, the project will focus on ensuring that Albanian SMEs are equipped with the tools to comply with **EU standards**, **innovate**, and scale their operations both regionally and internationally.

Internationalisation is important for the Albanian SMEs to prepare for the EU market, to receive the most advanced technology, know-how and comply with EU standards to be ready to compete, therefore the partnering service will increase their internationalisation.

The project will also provide **access to EU funding opportunities**. By focusing on businesses with the potential to innovate, compete, and grow, the project will support access to international consortium and support and encourage them to apply for funds and financing instruments, to the creation of new jobs and the development of more sustainable business practices.

The project's approach, which focuses on **knowledge exchange**, **cross-border collaborations**, and **technology transfer**, will provide tangible benefits for local businesses. It will help reduce the structural weaknesses that currently hinder the growth of SMEs in Albania and improve their ability to compete in the **EU Single Market** and **global value chains**.

The long-term impact of this project will be substantial, with significant improvements in the **competitiveness** and **sustainability** of Albanian SMEs. By fostering an ecosystem of innovation and sustainability, the project will help SMEs better prepare for the future, contributing to the country's economic development and EU integration efforts. This will also lead to **increased job creation**, **regional development**, and **higher quality of life** for local communities.

Ultimately, the project's goal is to position **EEN Albania** as a **central business services hub** for supporting SMEs in their efforts to become more **innovative**, **digital**, and **sustainable**. By offering **high-quality, client-focused services**, the project will address the needs of Albanian SMEs while ensuring they can access the full range of opportunities available through the **EU Single Market** and beyond.

The **EEN Albania** project aims to elevate Albanian SMEs to a level where they can compete on the international stage while fostering a culture of **innovation**, **entrepreneurship**, and **sustainability**. By strategically addressing the current challenges faced by Albanian businesses and offering comprehensive support, the project will contribute significantly to the overall goals of the call, helping Albania's SMEs become more competitive, resilient, and sustainable in the face of global challenges.

1.2 Needs analysis and specific objectives

Needs analysis and specific objectives

Describe how the objectives of the project are based on a sound needs analysis in line with the specific objectives of the call. What issues / challenges / gaps does the project aim to address?

The objectives should be clear, measurable, realistic and achievable within the duration of the project. For each objective, define appropriate indicators for measuring achievement (including a unit of measurement, baseline value and target value).

The formulation of the specific objectives of the project went through a comprehensive analysis of the situation of the business environment in Albania, the capacities of SMEs to adapt to market dynamism and fluctuation, the financial market, the capacities of business support organisations to support SMEs, issues of digitalisation, technology and innovation, resilience and green are analysed. Different methods are applied for the need analysis from reports of Albanian government, researches, survey, observations and experience gained from a long period and extensive cooperation with the businesses, the business associations and Chambers, EEN experience, as well as the analyses of the documents prepared by the international organisations for the economic and business situation in Albania and the sectoral analysis on the specific issues.

Small and medium-sized enterprises in Albania form the backbone of the market economy and are vital to Albania's economic performance and development. However, regional discrepancies remain significant and its growth and competitiveness remain constrained by low levels of exports and foreign investment, weak governance and structural bottlenecks in the infrastructure.

The EU Growth Plan for Western Balkan has imposed Albania undertaking important reforms to formalize the economy, such as: the reform of the VAT system, the improvements of the procedures of the tax authorities, the success of the National Business Centre, introduction to a whole range of services the e-government services, through e-albania, The process of fiscalisation of the business operation is totally stabilised and function smoothly for the business and contributed to formalisation of the economy.

These reforms have been successfully implemented, but still some needs remain challenges of the future.

From this analysis results that Albanian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are pivotal to the nation's economic growth, yet they face several challenges that hinder their development and competitiveness. Recent assessments by international organizations have highlighted these issues, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

An important constraint remains the lack of SMEs management capacity and specific knowledge in human resource management and organisation, international cooperation and best practices, technology transfer, quality management and certification, product development and marketing. Albania has recorded a rapid growth in the number of enterprises, which indicates a breadth of entrepreneurial desire in the country.

A significant barrier for Albanian SMEs is **limited access to finance**. The World Bank reports that 16% of small and 34% of medium-sized enterprises consider access to finance a major constraint. This situation is exacerbated by the **banking sector's reluctance to lend to SMEs, viewing them as high-risk** due to insufficient collateral and financial reporting. The overall MSME finance gap in Albania is estimated at 9% of GDP. (World Bank)

The **quality of financial reporting among SMEs** is another concern. Despite improvements in the legislative and institutional frameworks, financial statements often lack credibility, making it challenging for SMEs to attract financing. Banks frequently rely on alternative data sources rather than trusting SMEs' financial reports. (World Bank)

The OECD emphasizes the need for user-friendly services that reflect the end needs of SMEs, including easy access and reduced paperwork. However, many Albanian SMEs **still lack digitalization and innovation capabilities**, limiting their competitiveness in the global market.

There is a notable **deficiency in technological skills** among enterprises. The World Bank highlights that MSMEs often lack the necessary skills to adopt new technologies and innovate, hindering their growth potential.

On the other side the World Bank notes that Albanian SMEs face challenges in **accessing EU and international markets**. They often lack the necessary skills to adopt new technologies and

innovate, adaption to the EU standards and regulation, hindering their growth potential. The figures of **export decreased** in 2024. SMEs need tailored export readiness programmes to meet international standards and compliance requirements. Enhancing knowledge of EU trade agreements, reducing non-tariff barriers, and identifying new market opportunities will help diversify export portfolios. Trade facilitation services and follow-up activities for international partnerships are also critical.

The Albanian businesses accessing the **EU Programmes** is still too low, considering as an obstacle, both, the innovation idea developed by business to compete into the EU market and the lack of knowledge and information to access to EU Programmes. From our experience and other attempts done by different actors/donors/programmes to support SMEs still they have a long way ahead.

The needs of Albanian **SMEs for resilience** have been thoroughly examined in various international reports and sectoral analyses, highlighting critical areas where improvements are essential for sustained growth and the ability to adapt to economic and market shocks. Addressing these needs will significantly enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs, which are the backbone of Albania's economy.

Financial Resilience remains a pressing need. SMEs require diversified access to finance through innovative funding mechanisms like venture capital, leasing, factoring, and crowdfunding. Despite few availability of these instruments, their use remains limited, and networks of business angels are almost non-existent. The weakness of the Euro versus Albanian Lek has hit the Albanian export in the textile industry.

Digital and Technological Transformation is another priority area for resilience. Many SMEs still operate without leveraging digital tools for business efficiency and market reach. There is an urgent need to adopt e-commerce solutions, customer relationship management systems, and digital supply chain management. Cybersecurity remains underdeveloped, requiring increased awareness and implementation of data protection measures.

Operational Flexibility and Innovation are vital for navigating an ever-changing business environment. Partnerships with research institutions for technology transfer and innovation-driven growth are still poor and should be encouraged.

SMEs need support in implementing energy efficiency measures and adopting renewable energy solutions. **Circular economy** practices, focusing on sustainable resource use and waste reduction, can improve long-term cost efficiency. A good approach of Albanian SMEs is recognised towards leveraging the various **energy efficiency** measures, installing of PV panels, led lighting, etc.

Upskilling the workforce in areas such as digital technology, quality management, and international marketing is vital for competitiveness. Additionally, training SME leaders in crisis management, strategic planning, and adaptive leadership will bolster their capacity to navigate disruptions effectively.

Lastly, **Collaborative Networks and Partnerships** are essential for knowledge sharing and innovation. Strengthening ties between businesses, academia, and government institutions will foster a more supportive ecosystem. Enhancing the capacity of business support services, incubators, and Albanian EDIHs, innovation hubs will provide SMEs with the tools and advice they need to thrive.

The right focus of EEN Albania in addressing these gaps can contribute in significant improvement to the resilience of Albanian SMEs.

To address these challenges, EEN-Albania has formulated the overall objective and the following specific objectives are expected for the period 2025-2028

Overall Objective:

The overall objective of the **EEN-Albania** project is to improve the **competitiveness** of Albanian SMEs through **capacity building, financial support, digital transformation, and internationalisation** to help create a more **sustainable, innovative, and resilient SME sector** in Albania, aligned with the EU's **economic integration goals**.

Specific Objectives:

Objective 1: SMEs received answers for all business issues linked to local and EU market information

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
1.1	Number of SMEs receiving first level services	0 from the Project starts	400- replies provided to Albanian SMEs and other EU Network partners

Objective 2: Facilitate the exporting of Albanian SMEs into the EU Single Market and outside

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
2.1	Number of SMEs engaging in export	0 SMEs considered in exporting when project starts	10 SMEs engaged in export activities within the EU and CEFTA areas by the end of the project.

Objective 3: Enhance awareness and improve sustainability of SMEs

Indicator:	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
3.1	Number of SMEs increase understanding of sustainability	0 SMEs from the project starts	80 SME participate in the thematic training at the end of the project.
3.2	Number of SMEs improve the sustainability of their business processes;	0 SMEs consider from the project starting	24 SMEs improve the sustainability of their business processes

Objective 4 Increase the adoption of digital solutions to improve business processes and developing new business opportunities

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
4.1	Number of SMEs improving business processes by	0 of Albanian SMEs have implemented digitalisation strategies form project starting	Min 6 SME introduced to digital solutions

	adopting digital solutions		
4.2	Number of SMEs developing new business opportunities by adopting digital solutions	0 of Albanian SMEs have implemented digitalisation strategies from project starting	6 new digital companies have adopted digital solutions

Objective 5: Improve Access to funding and financing

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
5.1	Number of SMEs better understanding EU legislation and programmes	Limited number of SMEs receiving information on EU legislation	At least 80 SMEs received information to EU legislation & Programmes
5.2	Number of SMEs understanding the opportunities to access EU funds or alternative financing.	0 consider from the project start	At least 80 SMEs successfully participated in capacity building to understand the funding and financing EU mechanisms and alternative sources by the end of the project.
5.2	Number of SMEs accessing EU funds or alternative financing in local programmes/funds	Limited number of SMEs accessing EU funds	At least 28 SMEs apply to receive financing through EU mechanisms and alternative local financial sources by the end of the project.

Objective 6: Enhance SME resilience

6.1	Number of SMEs adopting resilient business models and resilience challenges	0 SMEs from the project starts	20 SMEs were aware of resilience measure and improve and 5 adopted new business models for resilience
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Objective 7: Improve KPIs of the Albanian SMEs through support services in their client journey

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
7.1	Number of SMEs improving their key performance indicators	0 SMEs from the project starts	30 SMEs increase their performance indicators in market share, jobs, profitability, etc.

Objective 8: Collect SMEs feedback for business legislations

Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
8.1	Number of SMEs providing feedback	0 no contribution from Albania in SME feedback	10 SME are providing feedback (Albania is not part of SOLVIT)

Objective 9: Facilitate the Internationalisation and cross-border cooperation of Albanian SMEs into the EU Single Market and outside

Indicator	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
9.1	Nr of events organised for internalisation abroad and Tirana	0 will be considered from the project starts	Participated on 33 events, 8 B2B online, 17 participation abroad, 8 organised in Tirana
9.2	Number of SMEs engaging in partnership activities.	0 will be considered from the project starts being actively participating partnership activities	120 SMEs engage in partnerships activities
9.3	Number of SMEs engaging in offer and require cross-border partnership	0 will be considered from when the project starts actively participating in cross-border trade.	140 Profiles are prepared and 50 expressions of interests are formulated

Objective 10: Increase promotion and visibility of Network at European and national level

Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
10.1	Number of SMEs awareness of the EEN and its services	Minimal awareness and understanding of EEN service	1500 SME are informed about EEN through social media, leaflets
10.2	Number of infodays and EEN visibility events organised	0 from the project starts	20 events to promote EEN services with SMEs and other target groups and 11 organised jointly with other stakeholders; 2 Launching and Closing Events
10.3	Number of promotional materials disseminated	0 from the project starts	1000 leaflets on EEN objectives 500 leaflets on EEN results/roll ups/ blocks, pens and other promotional materials, roll-ups

Objective 11: Communicate the EEN impact to SMEs through different media channels

11.1	Number of communication activities and materials communicating the EEN impact	0 from the project starts	22 newsletters/4 brochures/14 media articles/ 7 TV presence/5 videos/ 5 success stories/210 posts in social media, boosting
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Objective 12: Raised capacities of SMEs for qualitative EEN services provisions

Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
12.1	Number of internal capacity buildings organised	0 considered from the project starts	10 internal training are organised by different partners on different subjects
12.2	Number of staff participated in online training	0 considered from the project starts	4 online training are attended by staff of 5 organisations
12.3	Nr of staff participated in study visits	0 considered from the project starts	1 study visit with participation of 1-2 staff per each organisation
12.4	Participation in Thematic group	0 considered from the project starts	2-3 participants from the project staff

Objective 13: Contribution to quality of the Network

Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
13.1	No. of hosting Network training	0 considered from the project starts	2 hosting or decentralised regional training
13.2	Participation as speakers in international activities	0 considered from the project starts	2-3 participation from the project staff

Objective 14: Successfully management and implementation of Project Results

Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline Value	Target Value
14.1	No. of Consortium meetings	0 considered from the project starts	12 regularly organised
14.2	Number of reports produced,	0 considered from the project starts	2 progress reports and 1 final technical and financial reports

	monitored and submitted		
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The services are in high quality delivered

These objectives are designed to be **SMART**, ensuring that each goal can be tracked and evaluated against clear targets within the proposed **42-month implementation period**. Through the successful achievement of these objectives, the project will address the key challenges faced by Albanian SMEs, boosting their **economic growth, competitiveness, and sustainability** in the global market and at the same time will increase the internal capacities of the EEN staff and contribute to the Network.

1.3 Complementarity with other actions and innovation — European added value

Complementarity with other actions and innovation

Explain how the project builds on the results of past activities carried out in the field and describe its innovative aspects. Explain how the activities are complementary to other activities carried out by other organisations.

Illustrate the European dimension of the activities: transnational dimension of the project; impact/interest for a number of EU countries; possibility to use the results in other countries, potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation among EU countries, etc.

Since EEN-Albania for the first period 2022-2025 started very late the implementation of the project due to some delays in officially starting, anyway it creates a base to build on the new project proposal.

Although the short experience with EEN, a previous cooperation existing between partners and their experiences, working and implementing activities that contribute to the provision of services to SMEs are a good start for better organisation, coordination and implementation of the project for the coming years 2025-2028.

The project proposal is conceived after gathering a long and extensive experience working directly with the business for more than 25 years, in supporting them for their needs, from their starting point and continuously in their journey to growth. In addition, the contribution of the public agency and the chambers in supporting SMEs in creating partnership and raising capacity of SMEs, adds value to the project.

The project is built on experience gained from the previous activities implemented in other EU projects, part of INTERREG and extensive experience established in Albania through the "Idea Beyond Project", supported by GIZ Germany/Albania that supported establishment of new business initiatives, through their journey from conceiving the business idea, developing the business planning and coaching during its implementation. A pool of trainers and coaches for supporting the business development are available and EEN-ALBANIA have access to the pool of experts to use them for provision of the specific tasks and needs of the business.

Regarding the resource efficiency implemented by another project with expertise of GIZ Albania has supported many SMEs through the application of PREMA methodology. This is a valuable capacity because the experience gained through practical implementation of this methodology to the business is embedded within the competencies of the EEN staff and experts and can be further explored to be implemented in the future.

Cooperation with Chamber of Commerce's, EBRD, PROTİK organisation, etc, are considered as well, a crucial factor throughout the project for planning, coordinating and organising joint activities. During the next phase of the project, the consortium plans to cooperate with 2 (two) new European Digital Innovation Hubs in Albania and coordinate activities with them.

EU for Innovation is another project supported by the EU to encourage innovative businesses, which through competition supports new business ideas. A cooperation is foreseen with this programme to support potential applicants in preparation of the project applications.

The national funds opened by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship is an initiative that started this year by supporting potential applicants to apply and will continue in the next calls or other national funds.

A strong point of EEN-ALBANIA will be the support of the women entrepreneurs. The involvement of the Woman's Economic Chamber of Albania in the Consortium will give the higher access to the business managed by the women to grow and internationalise their businesses. Through this cooperation, it is foreseen that the part of the SMEs receiving services by EEN will be business women. A mentoring scheme is foreseen with the engagement of successful business women to engage as Mentor for the other businesses in the growth and development phase.

Another innovative aspect of the project will be the creation of a platform for exports managed by AIDA, which will facilitate activities of EEN-Albania to outreach the businesses with focus on export into the EU market.

Also, cooperation of AIDA with other programmes that assist Albanian BSOs to empower export companies in three key economic development sectors such as value-added textile, sustainable tourism and natural ingredients will continue in improving export promotion services and strengthen this ecosystem through effective collaboration with EU companies

The main business partners of Albania are Italy and Greece, Germany, Spain, Romania and other neighbouring countries. So, the cooperation with them will continue. The initiatives of international cooperation of AIDA, CCIDR and WECA in the Consortium will be expanded and intensified through the project implementation. Cooperation with Romania partners for inviting us in online conferences with Romanian businesses, and support in establishment of partnership agreements with universities will continue in the next coming EEN programme.

Establishment of a Memorandum of understanding with EEN in Montenegro, organisation of the previous cooperation with EEN Kosovo will strengthen the ties between EENs in the region.

2. QUALITY

2.1 Concept and methodology

Concept and methodology

Outline the approach and methodology behind the project. Explain why the proposed approach and methodology are the most suitable for achieving the project's objectives.

Describe also how you intend to implement the hub and spoke model within your consortium and beyond (in the Network as a whole).

The implementation approach for EEN Albania has foreseen the integration and combination of the first level services (basic business support) with the second level services (value-added advisory and capacity-building), ensuring a **balanced distribution of tasks** among Consortium partners. The methodology was developed through **brainstorming sessions** between partners and **careful consultation** with call documents, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and Albanian SME needs. EEN Albania applies a **structured, client-centric approach** to service delivery, ensuring SMEs receive tailored support based on their specific needs.

The methodology integrates **multi-level services**, combining **broad informational support** with **specialised advisory and partnering services**. The approach follows a **two-tiered model**:

- **First-Level Services** – General business advisory, providing SMEs with direct solutions on regulations, market conditions, funding opportunities, and compliance.
- **Second-Level Services** – Advanced support, including capacity-building, financial advisory, internationalization assistance, and strategic partnerships.

The **service provision methodology** begins with **service design** to be result-oriented, addressing individual needs, and striving for effective solutions and outcomes. The client-centric approach enables the Consortium to offer optimal business support while maximizing impact and contributing to the sustainable growth of European SMEs.

Service design is important to be delivered by all partners, while maintaining their **specific areas of expertise**. The **basic business services** will be provided by **all partners** based on requests from their clients. Activities related to **advisory and partnering services**, which influence dynamic and sustainable growth, job creation, market development, quality improvement, and SME **competitiveness**, **will be allocated differently among consortium organisations, depending on their prior experience**.

The First-Level Basic Network Services are designed to offer advice and information for supporting a large audience of SMEs. This includes straightforward solutions to business issues that do not require extended assistance. The implementation of these services are simple, with direct responses providing up-to-date information on Albanian and EU topics relevant to SMEs, such as rules, regulations, legislation, policies, compliance requirements affecting SMEs. **Standards & Policies** information regarding the industry-specific guidelines and best practices, as well as tender and call opportunities for access to funding and market entry points, as well as other request will be provided based on the general and individual SME needs.

The second level of services involves provision of advanced network services for SMEs potential to grow that facing complex challenges. Hence, for SMEs encountering significant barriers, EEN Albania will provide **individualised support (one-to-one or one-to-few)**, ensuring tailored solutions that address their specific needs.

These services will ensure **comprehensive coverage** of SME needs, including:

- **Capacity Building** - Delivery of training on innovation, product development, greening, digitalization, revenue models, international marketing, and management.

- **Advisory on Public Funding Schemes** - Support for Albanian funding programs such as the Competitiveness Fund, Innovation Fund, Creative Fund, National Research Fund, Challenge Fund, Start-up Funds, and soft loan schemes.

Facilitation of EU Funding Access—to provide assistance with SMP, Horizon Europe, EIC, Eureka, and financing instruments under the EU Economic Plan for the Western Balkans and WBIF.

- **SME Internationalization & Market Expansion** – to support SMEs in expanding internationally, EEN Albania will implement a range of services, including identification of appropriate growth markets, assessment of potential export/import opportunities within the EU, and analysis of international market conditions. To further strengthen the impact of these services, EEN Albania will adopt a pragmatic and SME-adapted methodology to foster international partnerships, focusing on step-by-step support and practical tools. The approach will be built around four main elements:

1. Market Opportunity Identification and Partner Mapping

EEN advisors will support SMEs in analyzing accessible foreign markets based on their product potential and regulatory readiness. Using the EEN Partnering Opportunity Database and tailored sector analysis, potential partners will be identified based on shared interests, complementary services, or market access potential. Partner searches will prioritize clear business goals, product-market fit, and export readiness.

2. **Pre-Match Advisory and Business Profile Preparation**
SMEs will receive hands-on support to develop or improve their business profiles in the EEN system, ensuring they are aligned with European standards and understandable to international partners. EEN advisors will provide preparatory sessions to help SMEs clearly define their partnership goals—be it distribution, joint venture, technology cooperation, or subcontracting—while also advising on legal and commercial aspects.
3. **Organization of Practical Matchmaking Activities**
EEN Albania will organize and participate in targeted matchmaking events such as international brokerage events, business missions, and sector-specific B2B meetings, both in-person and online. These will be co-organized with other Network partners to increase outreach and efficiency. The events will be focused on key sectors for Albanian SMEs, including agro-processing, medicinal and aromatic plants, tourism, light manufacturing, and food & beverage.
4. **Follow-up and Partnership Maturation Support**
After the initial meetings, SMEs will be supported through a follow-up mechanism, including one-to-one advisory to explore cooperation possibilities further. This includes support for drafting Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), identifying funding options (e.g., participation in EU projects or grant schemes), and advisory on next steps such as logistics, certification, or customs requirements.

Where relevant, basic digital tools such as online matchmaking platforms and virtual events will be used, but always with support from the EEN team to ensure user-friendliness and accessibility. The aim is to ease SMEs into digital formats without creating barriers to participation. These activities will be complemented by a combination of advisory and partnering services, ensuring that SMEs receive both strategic guidance and direct matchmaking opportunities.

Overall, this methodology ensures that Albanian SMEs are guided step-by-step, from identifying the right partners to formalizing cooperation agreements—building trust, long-term collaboration, and gradual integration into the Single Market.

- Access to Finance & Business Model Optimisation- that are tailor-made financial advisory services to assist SMEs in **developing business plans**, conducting **diagnostic analyses**, and exploring **alternative financing opportunities** such as local funding schemes, business angels, venture capital, and other funding schemes. Special attention will be given to supporting SMEs in transitioning to more efficient business models, improving resource and energy efficiency, and leveraging funding schemes for sustainability. The PREMA methodology, introduced in Albania by GIZ and piloted by EEN-Albania experts, will continue to be implemented to help SMEs optimize their operations while ensuring environmental sustainability.

- Partnering Services - EEN Albania will facilitate **strategic partnerships** by linking SMEs with relevant business opportunities. SMEs receiving advisory services will be further supported in participating in **business missions, brokerage events, and trade fairs**, providing them with a platform to build international partnerships in business, innovation, and technology.

Business missions will be organized in Albania, the EU, and other EEN countries, aiming to **launch new cooperation projects, initiate business contacts, exchange ideas, and stay updated with the latest technologies**. These missions will be co-organized by EEN Albania and other Enterprise Europe Network offices, ensuring that SMEs can meet and collaborate with companies in their respective countries. The mission structure will focus on **common business interests**, aligning with specific development plans or strategic objectives.

To generate **successful partnership agreements**, EEN Albania will follow a **structured process**, identifying technology-driven and business-active companies interested in cooperation and facilitating their matchmaking with suitable partners. The most engaged EEN countries in this initiative will include **Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, and neighbouring countries**.

Additionally, SMEs will be encouraged to participate in **international brokerage events**, organized by other EEN Network partners, to strengthen cooperation between Albanian and EU businesses. These events will provide **access to a broad network of potential partners**, supporting SMEs in attendance and facilitating meaningful collaborations.

-The implementation of regional integration and stakeholder cooperation will be a key horizontal element of the EEN-Albania work program, aimed at reinforcing cross-border collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the alignment of support services within the Western Balkans and EU neighborhood. This will be achieved through a structured stakeholder management approach that includes mapping, engagement, coordination, and joint action with relevant national and regional actors. Specifically, EEN-Albania will identify and maintain an updated registry of stakeholders, including public institutions, chambers of commerce, regional development agencies, innovation hubs, research centers, and donor-supported initiatives operating in Albania and the region. Regular coordination meetings, thematic roundtables, and matchmaking activities will be organized to facilitate dialogue and explore complementarities in services. At the regional level, EEN-Albania will foster stronger ties with neighboring EEN consortia and other EU-funded SME support platforms through memoranda of understanding (MoUs), shared events, and co-organization of B2B and brokerage

events. The consortium will also seek participation in regional forums such as the WB6 Chamber Investment Forum and CEFTA mechanisms to align actions with broader economic cooperation agendas. Furthermore, joint capacity-building sessions and partner-specific collaboration (e.g., in tourism, agro-processing, sustainability, and export readiness) will strengthen the implementation of regional integration objectives and create added value for Albanian SMEs seeking to enter or expand within the regional and EU markets.

- Participation in Trade Fairs and Follow-Up Services- which will start with identification of relevant events that align with Albanian SMEs' interests. The **EEN Event calendar** will serve as a key resource for planning and selecting the most beneficial trade fairs.

To ensure **effective engagement**, Albanian SMEs attending brokerage events, business missions, and international fairs will benefit from **pre-arranged one-on-one meetings** with potential partners. These meetings will provide an opportunity to initiate discussions on cooperation and explore potential business agreements. The follow-up process will continue with companies interested in partnerships, ensuring that engagements lead to **formalised Partnership Agreements (PAs)**.

- Facilitating SME Partnerships and Collaboration - beyond organizing partnering events, EEN Albania will actively assist SMEs in **formulating expressions of interest** for collaboration. The **EEN Community Platform** will serve as a key tool for identifying cooperation opportunities between Albanian SMEs and other Network clients.

Partnering services will include preparation of the **SME profile**, and publishing in the platform under the **Cooperation Profiles** to potentially ensure the businesses are matched with relevant EU and international market cooperation opportunities.

Additionally, **business missions and trade fairs** will be organized mostly by **AIDA, WECA, and CCIDR**, ensuring broad participation and expertise-driven support. To further enhance impact, EEN Albania will **track success stories**, promoting positive SME collaborations within the Network and showcasing the tangible benefits of strategic partnerships.

This service design and structured approach ensures that SMEs receive **both basic business support and advanced advisory services**, fostering **growth, competitiveness, and internationalization**.

Operational Mechanisms to be used for implementation of service delivery methodology starts with expansion of the **client base** established during the 2022–2025 project implementation by Consortium partners, alongside the **membership database**, start-ups and other interested companies to expand market, export, develop green and digital models and interested to cooperate with EEN-Albania. This is a start for **client engagement**, allowing for further refinement and optimization of the methodology. Each partner has already established a basis and identified its clients' fields of activity and interests. The client-centric approach will focus on implementing core project activities that directly target SMEs.

However, conducting a **needs assessment** and preparing **action plans** and reopening the action plan for the existing clients remain essential steps in service provision. Based on individual needs, the project will design tailored services, supporting high-potential SMEs in innovation, scaling up, and expanding into the EU and international markets.

Experts will conduct **on-site visits**, engaging directly with SMEs to assess their constraints and challenges. This will be followed by a **detailed needs assessment**, where the project team will analyse the situation and consult with the Client and internally to identify the most suitable solutions. Based on the complexity of each case, services will be assigned to **senior or junior experts**, ensuring that SMEs receive targeted and effective assistance.

The needs identification and assessment will be a process that will include multiple **methods and channels**, including phone calls and virtual meetings to consult details of Action Plans; questionnaires distributed via emails or online platforms to collect need assessment dedicated to specific target groups; **info days and/or thematic seminars, training and workshops**.

To guarantee that the project will reach the Advisory and Partnering Achievements the structure of EEN – Albania is composed in a structured organisational model that enables the client-centric approach. This structure is formatted from the beginning where the composition of the Consortium started.

The role of each partner is clearly identified not to create overlapping but make possible that the **Hub and Spoke Model** to function smoothly. The **Hub-and-Spoke model** is a structured approach designed to optimize collaboration, expertise, and resource allocation. This framework ensures that SMEs receive tailored support, seamlessly integrating basic advisory services with advanced capacity-building initiatives.

Each partner organization serves as a **“local hub”**, acting as the primary contact for businesses in their region, represented by the **Network Advisors**. The hub will create the Client Cards and update the Action

plans and follow the client account in the Next platform. These interactions are the first step in building a **relationship of trust**, ensuring that SMEs receive timely and relevant support.

Yet, not all business challenges can be solved at the basic level. Advisors at the local level “Hubs” are supported by specialised experts “Spokes” within the consortium. The **specialised organisations**—such as CCP and RDA—can act as spokes, offering deeper expertise in areas that demand **advanced advisory and capacity-building solutions**, alongside with the external expertise reserved for each partner. All partners deploy **senior and junior experts**, ensuring that SMEs receive guidance tailored to their specific challenges, whether in product development, market expansion, digitalization, or sustainability.

A dynamic workflow enables the Consortium to maximize efficiency. While “local hub” initiates the meetings with companies and register the clients in the **Next platform** and support and design the **Action plans**, the execution of specialised tasks may fall to “**spoke**” **organisations** or even **external experts and stakeholders**. This flexibility ensures that businesses always have access to the best-suited expertise, rather than being confined to the capabilities of a single institution.

Beyond the mechanics of service delivery, the true strength of this model lies in its collaborative nature. Practicing the hub and spoke business model guarantees that designing more complex services for companies can utilise and ensure the best use of the resources that bring together knowledge and sharing experience and competence to deal with needs and challenges facing businesses. The sharing of information, resources, activities, and competences between Consortium partners they work **jointly**, reinforcing each other's efforts and extending the reach of SME development to guarantee a higher impact, instead of offering individual support without cooperating and connection with other pools of expertise and knowledge.

Moreover, this approach allows **cross-hub cooperation**, where companies registered under one hub can be redirected to a different hub that **better matches their specific needs**. No business is limited by geography, the support they receive by all companies.

Through the **Hub-and-Spoke model**, the Consortium transforms business assistance from a transactional service into a strategic partnership, ensuring that SMEs not only survive but thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape. By integrating expertise, fostering trust, and adapting to evolving business needs, this model serves as a cornerstone for sustainable growth and innovation of the Albanian business community.

The Albanian Consortium, aiming to expand international collaboration through the “Hub and Spoke” model, will focus on strengthening business partnerships and facilitating strategic cooperation. This approach will help connect Albanian companies with foreign clients and industry partners, fostering cross-border business relationships and market expansion.

By **establishing structured networks**, the consortium seeks to **streamline access to international markets**, ensuring Albanian enterprises can effectively engage in **business matchmaking, client acquisition, and sustainable growth opportunities**.

EEN-Albania is built around the **Client Journey** concept, designed to optimize support for SMEs by integrating their needs with tailored services and seamless collaboration among partners. This approach ensures efficient advisory and partnering solutions, allowing businesses to innovate, expand, and successfully transition toward sustainable growth.

The sequences of the “Client Journey” steps are tracked through the **Action Plan**, which is a structured roadmap with concrete steps and a defined timeframe, designed in close cooperation with **Network Advisors, Sustainable Advisors, and Scale-up Advisors**. This plan is continuously monitored and adjusted, ensuring flexibility to meet evolving business needs. Once, the SME becomes a Client, the Action Plan can be reopened again for the same Client to support it throughout the project life cycle, **through its journey in achieving significant results**. The Consortium delivers high-quality consultancy-style support free of charge, complementing rather than disrupting existing market services. In specific cases, services may be chargeable, as permitted under funding guidelines.

Engaging SMEs in the Enterprise Europe Network Albania Project requires a strategic outreach and communication approach. This includes **information days** with **practical exercises** to help companies understand EEN's operations and services. The organization of **promotional activities** and the showcasing of **success stories** serve as key tools in demonstrating EEN's added value for businesses.

Additionally, **building partnerships with key stakeholders**, including **business associations**, offers an effective way for **targeting new clients**. A **structured outreach strategy** tailored to companies' interests and aligned with services such as **capacity-building initiatives** enhances the quality of services available to SMEs and **supports SMEs in accessing expert guidance in innovation, digitalization, and international market expansion**. These services aligned with a **systematic follow-up strategy** post-service delivery is essential to **maintaining engagement** with SMEs, ensuring their continued participation in both **domestic and international market activities** facilitated by EEN.

By fostering collaboration across the Consortium and beyond, EEN-Albania creates a **sustained model** that ensures **EU added value and** maximizes impact and strengthens the competitiveness of SMEs, ensuring they are equipped to orient them in an increasingly dynamic and demanding marketplace.

The project is designed in 5 (five) work packages. Each work package is divided in tasks and the role between partners is divided by their expertise.

Work Package 1: Provision of value-added services to clients

Task 1.1 Provision of information services (first level)

Task 1.2 Provision of advisory services (Second level)

Task 1.3 Partnering services (second level)

Work Package 2: Promotion of the Network and communication

Task 2.1 Raising awareness on EEN Services

Task 2.2 Promotional, communication and dissemination

Task 2.3 Visibility of the EEN-ALBANIA and Network

Work Package 3: Networking, learning and development

Task 3.1 Coordination of internal Capacity building activities

Task 3.2 Capacity building activities in Network

Work Package 4: Network coordination and quality management

Task 4.1 Contribution to Network' international activities

Work Package 5: Project management (including Consortium Coordination)

Task 5.1 Project management, coordination and communication, quality management, evaluation and monitoring

Task 5.2 Project meetings

Task 5.3 Project Reporting

2.2 Consortium set-up

Consortium cooperation and division of roles (if applicable)

Describe the participants (Beneficiaries, Affiliated Entities and Associated Partners, if any) and explain how they will work together to implement the project. How will they bring together the necessary expertise? How will they complement each other?

In what way does each of the participants contribute to the project? Show that each has a valid role and adequate resources to fulfil that role.

Note: When building your consortium you should think of organisations that can help you reach the objectives and solve the problems.

The EEN-ALBANIA project proposal is conceived, consulted, prepared and submitted by a consortium made up of five organisations to ensure delivery of the full range of Network services, covering the whole geographic area of Albania.

The size of the consortium and the type of organisations composing the Consortium takes in consideration many factors to reach an efficient service delivery. The success and quality of the services depends largely on the skills and capacities of the Consortium partners. Therefore, the organisational competences and suitably skilled staff to deliver the services, the existence of in-house expertise, a good management and coordination of the project by a public organisation, a possibility to target the larger audience of SMEs, a geographic distribution of partners and the

quality of the promotion activities are factors that when combined well can achieve the effective results.

The deep understanding of the business needs and a wide consultation between partners has conceived the EEN structure in Albania as a flexible organism that goes beyond a simple bureaucratic structure. The provision of the services to business only within the frame of the information on the basic level is not sufficient and sometimes less-value service.

Albanian businesses are developed, innovative and sophisticated mostly on their own and less support is given by the business support organisations. The power of information, the easiest ways of communication, the diversified tools and mechanisms for cooperation have made the business to be in advance in applying new technology, innovation and finding easy ways to internationalisation. The specialized services to them require a deep knowledge and practice in the field and knowing the business throughout its growth journey.

Thus, the EEN-ALBANIA will take into account that support is more effective when it combines different methodologies to approach business, as well as the support should be provided by the experts in the different business areas of expertise, working directly with the business in the field.

The consortium demonstrates very good complementary expertise and experience in accomplishing this project. The consortium brings together a wealth of experiences and competences in all areas relevant services required to provide to the business. The comparative strengths of our consortium bring together and provides services that fall the following areas:

- ✧ Provision of the services to SMEs, including basic advisory services and information tailored to SMEs' individual needs to help them fulfil regulatory requirements and overcome obstacles in the Single Market and advanced advisory services in some of these areas;
- ✧ Provide and facilitate SME internationalisation through the development of market access advice and matchmaking and partnering services
- ✧ Support the business to transform their business models towards sustainability, by introducing circular economy, energy efficiency, and resource efficiency,
- ✧ Provision of services designed to increase the **resilience** of SMEs' business models, including advice on how to predict and prepare for disruptions in their value chain
- ✧ Support, advice and provision of creation of business model leveraging the digitalisation model of SMEs and introduction and integration of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence tools, internet of things, e-commerce
- ✧ Possibility to encourage the SMEs towards innovation including providing innovation capacity building services and facilitating access to or management of national/regional innovation support schemes;
- ✧ Support will continue to Albanian SMEs raising awareness about EU financial instruments and accessing to EU funds by different EU Programmes, (Horizon Europe, InvestEU, SMP EU Innovation Fund) and advising SMEs and national financial instruments about other national public or private sources of finance relevant to their needs and how to prepare for seeking funding from investors and financial intermediaries
- ✧ Expertise and experience in capacity building for reskilling and upskilling of SMEs through training and coaching for development of SME in specific thematic profile with business interests

Network is composed of: The Coordinator- Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA), the beneficiaries: Centre for Competitiveness Promotion (CCP), the Regional Development Agency in Tirana (RDA), The Woman's Economic Chamber in Albania (WECA), and Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Durres (CCIDR). All the partners have national geographic coverage. Only the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Durres will concentrate activities on the client base of Durres, Shijak, Kavaja, Kruja that are in its nearest location.

The Coordinator and some beneficiaries of this Consortium has been part of EEN-ALBANIA in the period between 2015-2016 and 2015-2021 and is the same Consortium of the period 2022-2025, which have gained some experience and knowledge on understanding and implementing services of EEN Albania.

Since the different tools have changed and can be processed on-line through the platform, a lot has to be learned from the project staff compared to other EEN Network colleagues.

The state-owned agency, **AIDA** with experience in EEN in the period 2015-2021 and in the recent one, further experience in SME' support in coordination with private partner organisations will

guarantee the provision of full services to Albanian SMEs and contribution to the Single Market and beyond. The partner organisations in the Consortium have different profiles, which guarantee the covering and complementing the full range of the required services. This prior involvement equips the team with a strong foundation to address the thematic and sectoral priority areas outlined in the current call.

WECA and CCIDR are organizations with a strong reputation in the business community representing their members. These organisations are considered important to be mostly involved in activities which reach the large audience, especially on partnering activities such as in organisation of business missions, organization and participation in the trade fairs, brokerage events, organisation of local events, etc. For this reason, some of the promotion activities are foreseen to be mostly covered by these organizations. The profile of other organisations complements the EEN services with actions related to the provision of value added services directly to SMEs, specially, in activities linked to partnering services.

CCP and RDA are organisations with in-house consultants and pool of experts in senior level with long experience in providing information and services to SME, especially in the area of access to market to support companies in finding partners abroad, experience in supporting SMEs with access to finance, opportunities in accessing to the EU funds and programmes that Albanian SME are eligible to potentially apply for those funds.

Support can target the preparation of business planning, support on introduction of new business sustainable models, application for funds, organisation of capacity building activities, training and seminars.

Specifically, the experience and the assigned role of each partner within consortium is detailed below:

The **Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA)**, as a state-owned entity, leverages its prior experience in EEN and SME support, complemented by private partner organizations, to ensure the provision of full-scale services to Albanian SMEs. These services will directly contribute to key European priorities, such as **Single Market integration, internationalization to third countries, innovation, sustainability, digitalization, resilience, access to finance, addressing SME feedback, and scale-up support**. The diversity of expertise among consortium partners ensures comprehensive coverage of these priority areas and a tailored approach to addressing the specific needs of Albanian SMEs.

The Coordinator (COO), AIDA, will focus on the development of SMEs by providing advisory and partnering services, supporting **business cooperation, cross-border collaboration, and technology transfer**. AIDA will lead activities such as the organisation of local events, business missions, trade missions, B2B meetings, brokerage events, and capacity-building initiatives. These activities will contribute to empowering Albanian SMEs to expand internationally, adopt innovative practices, and increase their resilience to market challenges.

Established in July 2010, AIDA is responsible for implementing policies in SME development, innovation, export promotion, investment attraction, and marketing. Its mission is to increase SME competitiveness by fostering **business innovation, market-driven technological development, the renewal and improvement of products and services, and internationalization through tailored support and financial assistance**. These efforts align directly with the objectives of the EEN project, providing Albanian SMEs with opportunities to grow and integrate into the **Single Market and global value chains**.

AIDA manages several public funds, including the **Start-up Fund, Competitiveness Fund, Innovation Fund, and Creative Economy Fund**, which enhance SMEs' technical and innovative capacities, improve quality standards, and boost entrepreneurial skills. The agency's strong organisational capabilities are demonstrated through the successful delivery of business networking activities, sector-specific seminars, and cross-border cooperation initiatives. Additionally, AIDA promotes business investment opportunities in Albania, offers up-to-date information to entrepreneurs, and provides recommendations for improving the business investment climate.

AIDA's experienced staff have consistently promoted EEN services and facilitated partnerships through activities such as info days, matchmaking events, international and national expos, and

personalised advisory services. Despite the staff turnover experienced in the past, AIDA prioritises continuous professional development to ensure its team remains equipped to deliver high-quality services.

As the lead organization, AIDA plays a pivotal role in the overall management, coordination, and successful implementation of the project, ensuring the successful implementation of activities and the achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) that have a direct impact on the SME sector.

AIDA's responsibilities include:

- ✧ Providing business advisory and partnering services, such as business missions, matchmaking events, and B2B activities, to facilitate cross-border cooperation and technology transfer.
- ✧ Promoting the EEN-Albania network through branding, communication, and dissemination efforts, ensuring visibility and outreach to SMEs nationwide.
- ✧ Enhancing SME capacities in internationalization, digital transformation, and green transition through targeted training, events, and expert consultations.
- ✧ Supporting the integration of digitalization and green technologies into SME operations.
- ✧ Encouraging SMEs to participate in EU-funded programmes and national funds

Additionally, AIDA will lead WP2 (Communication and Dissemination), focusing on branding and visibility of the EEN network, and promoting the EEN services and its results. Specifically, AIDA will be Task leader for 1.3 Partnering services (second level), WP leader for WP2, WP4 and WP5. Through these efforts, AIDA will establish EEN-Albania as a trusted partner for SMEs seeking innovation, internationalization, and sustainable business solutions.

The project partner, **the Centre for Competitiveness Promotion (CCP)**, has been providing services to SMEs for more than 14 years through the implementation of various projects or direct in-company consultancy. Regarding the core services of the project, the CCP will cover the entire range of basic services related to the provision of information on different aspects of the Single Market. A strong emphasis will be placed on awareness-raising activities for EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, the EIC pillar, the Single Market Programme, calls for proposals, cascade funding, and the diversity of EU funds and other financial instruments under the Western Balkan Investment Framework. Additionally, the CCP will support start-ups and other potential SMEs in applying for local funding and other financial instruments.

The CCP will provide services to identify business partners in EU countries through partnering services, offering market opportunities, and providing information on rules, regulations, and tariffs. It will also provide advice, facilitate direct contact with companies to promote business cooperation, and assist in the preparation of company profiles. Special attention will be given to sectors such as services, food processing, tourism, and agriculture.

The CCP will provide training on thematic issues, including EU funding and business planning. It will also serve as the task leader for advisory services. Functioning as a hub and spoke for the project, the CCP will leverage its internal expertise to provide sustainable advisory services tailored to the specific needs of clients. With its pool of experts, the CCP can deliver a wide range of personalised services, including access to financing instruments, support and assistance in finding business partners through tailored client profiles. In terms of partnership cooperation, the CCP will focus primarily on the preparation of partnering profiles, drawing on its previous experience and adhering to the quality standards required by the EEN.

The CCP has previously implemented projects funded by the COSME programme and Erasmus+ and has developed extensive knowledge of EU programmes. It is currently preparing a guide on EU programmes, IPA III funds, and other financing instruments linked to Cluster 2 of the Acquis "Internal Market" and Chapter 20, which will serve as a strong knowledge base to support SMEs in raising awareness about EU funds. The CCP also has expertise in project proposal writing and fund

applications, having successfully supported many clients in applying for various funding opportunities.

The organisation has experience in working with national organisations, including cooperation with other national, regional and local business service providers relevant for the activities related to innovation, energy efficiency, green economy.

Also, CCP considers important the cooperation with The National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI) to promote EU programmes in the field of RDI and STI (research development innovation – science technology innovation), such as HORIZON, EUREKA, COST, ERASMUS+, etc., with special focus given to supporting the private sector and SMEs participation in Research and Innovation programs in fields such as public health, agriculture and environment.

The CCP will coordinate with other partners to promote EEN services across Albania. During the implementation of the EEN-Albania project (2022–2025), various events and training sessions have been organised, focusing on the EEN key thematic area of “Access to funding and finance,” which is critical for Albanian SMEs. The CCP will also support the EEN Network by participating in capacity-building activities organized by the network and consortium. This includes enhancing the understanding of EEN methodologies, rules, regulations, and services, as well as mastering the IT platforms COMMUNITY, CONNECT, and LEARN. Internal capacity-building activities will be conducted for the entire EEN-Albania team to share experiences, understand the roles of hubs and spokes, standardize services provided by all partners, and emphasize the importance of reporting work done within the system to better monitor and measure achievements.

Additionally, the CCP will collaborate with other partners, including AIDA, RDA, and WECA, to create synergies, share knowledge, and exchange organisational methods and tools according to recommendations given by the EEN Platform. CCP will be the Task leader for 1.1- Provision of information services (first level) and Work Package Leader for WP3.

The Woman’s Economic Chamber of Albania (WECA) is beneficiary in the project.

The WECA is created by the women entrepreneurs from the known companies with long experience in the business in Albania. The Chamber (WECA) has a membership of 130 businesses of different economic sectors and has demonstrated to be a very dynamic organisation with a clear vision to support the development of the business in Albania with the strong EU dimension in their contribution.

WECA will be engaged in organising capacity building activities for the businesses in different thematic subjects, cooperation with the programme of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), cooperation with other experts to provide information and services. The WECA approached the women-led businesses throughout Albania to discuss and understand their needs and solve their problems. Also, WECA will be focused on promoting EEN in Albania with special focus on women entrepreneurs.

The role of the WECA in the project will be in provision of the basic advisory services and the tailor-made service in raising the capacities of companies through organisation of training on different subjects. The expertise is existing and the pool of experts of the WECA will be engaged if specific needs of the business are raised.

The role of WECA will be significant in organisation of the partnering activities. Most of the activities as business missions, participation on the international trade fairs and other matchmaking activities will be in charge and responsibility of WECA, due to the potential to outreach a large audience and the reputation the organisation has among the business and other stakeholders, in national and local authorities and its objectives to expand the cooperation agreement with the other organisation in the region. WECA will be in charge as Task leader for task 3.2 Promotional, communication and dissemination

The Project Partner (BEN) **Tirana Regional Development Agency (RDA)** has more than 25 years of experience that cooperates with the network of RDA-s in Albania and provides consultancy services to SMEs, corporates and start-ups. It provides services in regards to business cooperation

and business innovation services, information and advice as informative sessions, as well as tailored bilateral consultancy.

RDA has previously been part of EEN-Albania consortium during 2012-2014 and 2015-2016 and is experienced in the Network services and support for partnerships, internationalization, innovation and benefit from Single Market. It will continue to support Albanian businesses, by providing first level service and basic advisory services and organize informative sessions (info days).

Furthermore, RDA will provide scale-up advisory services regarding business cooperation and business innovation services, as tailor-made bilateral consultancy for the clients. With their know-how and qualifications, its experts will enhance innovation management capacities of various businesses by coaching them through innovation audits methods, energy efficiency, sustainability and resilience methodologies such as PREMA (Profitable Resource Efficiency Management Approach). Besides this, companies will be offered opportunities for access to finance to undertake their innovation projects. RDA has expertise in funding/grant application and has supported many on fulfilling the diverse application for different EU funds such as IPARD and EU for Innovation fund. Moreover, based on needs assessment RDA will offer advanced services and draft action plans for businesses' journeys.

The RDA covers the role of Scale-up Advisor in EEN. It will be WP leader for the WP1 and the Task 1.2- Provision of advisory services (Second level). It will support businesses, SMEs, and those especially who are in the highest stages of development. It will provide a full range of professional business advisory services including, but not limited to research and sector studies, access to finance, market surveys, business development & trainings, as well as coaching and consultancy, specifically in prior sectors such as services, agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, handicrafts, tourism, food processing industry and energy etc.

RDA for the component sustainability through their coaches will follow this approach: Support companies to identify needs and effectively convert such needs into demand driven support services, Start-ups should actively seek for solutions, help to overcome weaknesses and make the most out of opportunities, propose individual plans of intervention which might be coaching sessions, face to face consulting, or just facilitating information needed, must carefully tune their services to the current and future needs and finally matching demand and supply should be an important moment for improving of the competitiveness and innovation of SMEs.

RDA for companies that are in growth and expansion phase will provide more supporting services such as: Increase in size in terms of volume of business and employment, Increase diversity of product types and product lines, expansion into new markets whether domestic or foreign, adoption of new processes and higher technology etc, correspondingly introduction of new and better management systems, Increased decentralization, delegation and specialization are called for and strategic matters, developing competencies related to strategic corporate planning and negotiating, team building, networking etc.

RDA and CCP will jointly provide training and coaching to companies interested in EU funding, business planning, access to other financing loan mechanisms, ICT and digital solutions in the business, etc. Most of their activities will be in advisory services and partnering services regarding profile preparation and business partner cooperation.

The Project Partner (BEN) **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Durres (CCIDR)** is an organisation of the public rights, well-structured, which represents the business community of Durres, Kruja, Shijak, Kavaja regions.

The general objective of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Durres is to promote and support the development and growth of the entrepreneurship system, in all the sectors of the economy, in Durres Region. The Chamber supports an open economy, which guarantees equal growth opportunities for all the businesses and promotes the creation of start-up businesses in various sectors. Additionally, CCIDR offers technical assistance, training, seminars, consultancy and also useful information to the business interest, including business funding opportunities, such as national or EU funds.

Durres CCI is member of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce composed by nearly 40 Chambers of Commerce from many countries of the Adriatic and Ionian basin, such as Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia.

Through the years, CCIDR has organized business missions and B2B meetings with international partners, supported participation in fairs as exhibitors or visiting business, each resulting in successful business partnerships. They have been involved in international forums and workshops, supported business and technological partnerships, as well as have provided assistance with technical information to many foreign investors who want to do business in Albania

The CCIDR is offering services to SMEs. It has a client base created for 20 years. CCIDR will contribute mostly in basic business information services, training and to partnering activities, and cross-border partnering cooperation

Cooperation is foreseen between partners. Previous cooperation of CCIDR with the RDA contributed better in project implementation.

2.3 Project teams, staff and experts

Project teams and staff		
Describe the project teams and how they will work together to implement the project.		
List the staff included in the project budget (budget category A) by profile (e.g. Network Advisor, Sustainability Advisor, Scale-up Advisors, Communication Correspondents etc.) , and describe briefly their tasks. Provide CVs (short outlines) of all key actors.		
Name and function	Organisation	Role/tasks/professional profile and expertise
Kristi Qorri Project Manager Innovation and Funds Advisor	AIDA	Ms. Qorri has expertise in business administration and project management. She brings a wealth of expertise in facilitating essential initiatives vital for business growth and development. With a focus on empowering businesses, she is specialised in organizing informative events and training sessions covering essential topics like new legislation and business opportunities. Additionally, she facilitates SME participation in international fairs, providing exposure to national and international markets. By promoting business collaboration and innovation, she has assisted businesses expanding their horizons and seized new opportunities for growth. Her role involves gathering SME interests for strategic cooperation with European companies, fostering partnerships for export and technology acquisition.
Fiona Beqiri Sustainable Advisor	AIDA	Ms. Beqiri has proven expertise in financial analysis, project management, and regulatory compliance. Effective communicator and relationship-builder contributing to drafting laws, national strategies, and successful multinational projects. She brings a wealth of experience from diverse roles in both the public and private sectors across various industries. With a background in business and finance and certification in Leadership, Innovation and Psychology, she is dedicated to unlocking the full potential of businesses, through supporting digitization, and addressing issues related to resource efficiency and access to finance. She actively engages in fostering international business collaborations through B2B activities, fairs, and events, driving opportunities for export and investments. She is committed to enabling businesses to leverage opportunities for growth and intentional expansion.
Ermelinda Myftari Finance Manager	AIDA	Ms. Myftari has 17 years' experience in the field of accounting & finance. Her experience forms diverse roles in both the public and private sectors involved in several duties, different industries, different management and branches of multinational companies operating in Albania. During her work Ms. Myftari has proven expertise in financial analysis, financial management, and regulatory compliance. Effective communicator and relationship-builder contributing in management of successful multinational projects, such as RCC, UNOPS, IPA CBC etc. Good relationship in liaising with Banks, other financial institutions, and various regulatory authorities. Her profile work deals with large volume of data, but she had good eye for details and real love of numbers.

Dorian Leka Communication Correspondant	AIDA	Dr. Dorian Leka is an academic and professional specializing in law sciences and international relations. He holds a PhD in Public Legal Education from IUS in North Macedonia, a specialist diploma in International Relations and Diplomacy from ISSAT in Albania, and law degrees from UNS and the American Heritage University of Southern California. As an accomplished author, he has contributed to multiple books and scientific articles and has served as Editor-in-Chief of the journal The Heritage. He has extensive academic experience, currently serving as Head of the Student Services Department, a member of the Academic Senate, and an internal lecturer at Nehemia Gateway University, while also lecturing externally at the International University of Struga. His public sector experience includes roles in local government in Tirana and Pogradec, such as Assistant to the Mayor and General Director of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports. Beyond academia and public service, he is actively involved in civil society and media, serving on multiple foundation boards and leading projects supported by international organizations. As a journalist, he has contributed to the Albanian press, founded and directed four newspapers, and currently leads the online youth media platform Open Letter.
Alida Kondi Sustainable Advisor	CCP	The Sustainable Advisor has more than 30 years of professional experience in the area of SME development and tourism area, SME policies, business organization, consultancy and fundraising. She has 17 years proven experience with the EU and other donors funded projects in Albania. Her positions varied from consultant and senior expert to team leader/project manager, working with projects from the number of EU Programmes. She has experience in management of EEN-ALBANIA for 2015-2016 and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs under COSME Programme for 2016-2008, IPA CBC Programme, INTERREG (Balkan Med Programme). She has proven experience in studies, reports, survey and assessment with regard to SME policy and investment. She has designed capacity building programmes addressed to Albanian SMEs, including young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, consolidated business on the business plan preparation, project management, etc. using diversified training tools and techniques, including training need analysis, training-on-job, coaching, mentoring, training of trainers and counselling activities, demonstrating skills in moderation. She has experience in all types of event organisation, promotional, matchmaking and networking activities on the project's bases. TL has worked and cooperated with public authorities and different donors. She will be involved as project manager for the implementation of the tasks under the responsibility of the CCP (BEN) and WECA (AE). The specific role will be the sustainable advisor, with extensive knowledge on business development, specific sectors on business planning preparation, marketing plan. She will be engaged with companies to share the knowledge and capacity building regarding the opportunities for the EU funds and other funding schemes and will support them to apply under the EU funds. She will be engaged in supporting the management, monitoring and reporting of the project, as well as in the implementation of the specific tasks/activities according to the project design.
Sara Hyso Network Advisor/Comm unication staff	CCP	She has studied for International Trade. She is new staff in supporting the organisation. The main role will be in preparation of the communication and promotional materials and the organiser of all the events/info days foreseen by the project. She will support in delivering key messages in social network and newsletters
Ira Skendo Network Advisor	CCP	She has a background in Law with experience mainly in the legal departments of banking and in several positions in project management. She has access to the SME clients and will communicate with target companies, preparing of partnering profiles, answer and assist in their inquiries, organisation of different training/seminars and info days
Denisa Biba	WECA	Ms. Denisa graduated in Finance and Accountability (2018). She is part of working groups on different projects and participates in many courses regarding economic development, SME, trade, etc. She is responsible for creating successful and

Network Advisor		sustainable business models for the projects that WECA aims to develop and to help women entrepreneurs and their businesses to grow together. She has overall experience in client service and event coordination, promotional activities, marketing campaign development and respective reporting. Her contribution in the project will be to follow up activities and project timeline. She will be in charge of organising the logistics for training, conferences, B2B meetings, events, info days, as well as assisting in Network promotion and following up inquiries of clients. Additionally, she will support for newsletter preparation and other communication issues.
Albana Muçaj Communication expert	WECA	Ms. Muçaj has a background in Journalism and legal sciences. Starting 2000, she has been working as a journalist on economic matters for the Albanian Telegraphic Agency, Monitor Magazine, ABC News, etc. She has dealt with a variety of matters in the investment, production and service area, interviews and profiling of various women in business. For the last 7 years, she has been working as Editor in Chief for the digital magazine dedicated to enterprise and especially startups, "Businessmag.al". She has her own network in the area of journalism and entrepreneurship in various countries. Throughout her career, she has participated in several training sessions regarding the communication and enterprise development area. She has had a long experience in business media, editor for business magazines, marketing, promotional campaigns and event organization. She has written several articles in national newspapers and has good relationships with some media portals. She will be responsible for success stories, video preparation and other press releases to promote EEN in the media.
Sabahete Osmani Sustainable Advisor	WECA	A highly motivated and results-driven PR/Marketing Consultant and Digital Marketing Specialist with over six years of experience in creating impactful marketing strategies, managing public relations and organizing high-profile events. Skilled in brand development, digital marketing, content creation and community engagement. Passionate about empowering businesses and communities through innovative marketing approaches and strategic communication
Ilir Rembeci Scale-up Advisor	RDA-Tirana	Mr. Rembeci managed for 26 years as the director of Tirana Regional Development Agency, with 31 years of general experience in the area of SME development and agricultural and rural development. He is involved in many projects focusing on the area of agriculture and agro-processing, tourism and manufacturing. He is a senior economist with experience in project development in Albania and neighbouring countries. He has wide experience in capacity buildings, regional development, SME-s, agriculture, working with farmers for consultancy or capacity building for them; large experience in drafting of study reports, analyses, researches, seminars, and projects; large experience of long-term cooperation projects for business organizations; deep knowledge in need assessments and policy performance assessment. Besides this, Tirana RDA has managed various EU funded projects such as: EEN-ALBANIA 2014-2016; Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Cycle 6 and cycle 10 during 2014-2015 and 2019-2020 under COSME Programme, IPA CBC Programme, INTERREG (Balkan Med Programme) 2018-2020; He has a wide extensive experience in designing, delivering of trainings, providing consulting to SMEs; He has consulted/trained more than 2,000 SMEs in the area of entrepreneurship, marketing, strategic planning, sales techniques and art of negotiation, start and improve business, Nx Level-business planning, costing, etc. He is certified as Audit for SMEs/Technology Innovation, Trainer for Making Cents and Nx Level; Licensed Trainer on SMEs from GTZ based on CEFE methodology -1995. He has recently been trained with GIZ methodology of PREMA Profitable Resource Efficiency Management Tool – he will offer his expertise and coach

		businesses for resource efficiency such as energy, water and other essential materials. As such, he will offer scale-up advisory services as well as tailor-made advisory according to business needs in order to provide long-term impact and develop sustainably. He will ensure that beneficiary businesses have an impactful journey of support through the project and the Network.
Edmond Sheshi Energy efficient Auditor Scale-Up Advisor	RDA-Tirana	The expert has worked for EEN Albania on years 2012-2015; 2015-2016; and is specialized on working with enterprises. He is Certified Audit for Energy Efficiency in Buildings 2021; CEFE Trainer and Coach Licensed 2016; Business Diagnostic Trainer and Coach 2016 EBRD, Vocational Training Licence nr 1737-06-2016 NBC National Business Centre; Quality Assurance in Production 2007 EOMMEX S.a.; Certified Trainer for Making Cents -2004; NxLevel Instructor 2004; Licensed Trainer on SMEs on Open Space Technology Process Performance Change Iltis Inwent2004, GTZ, Trouble Shooting in Enterprise 2003 GTZ. He has 12 years' experience in academic activities as lecturer near the Polytechnic University of Tirana. Has also special expertise in Technology Transfer for production businesses, improving their efficacy, diversifying outcomes, engaging new sources in the business support. He has provided distinguished support to SME-s on specific issue, consulting to SMEs; 300 SMEs- trained in the area of capacity building, empower the entrepreneurship skills, classic marketing and new digital marketing, strategic development, financial issues as budgeting, cost calculation, sales and turnover, tax, NPV, IRR, ROI etc, Design of business plans, Understand the KPI indicator and their importance and use, etc. He covers a wide thematic of training starting from business skills, ITC skills, HSE health security environmental skills and academic professional programs. As such he will continue to offer his scale-up advisory services. Furthermore, he uses his experience in business networking with the same cluster industry, regional development, promotion events, road shows, and conferences for SMEs, survey design and conduct, Youth, VET, Entrepreneurship, Woman in business etc.; Diversified experience in EU policies, export procedures, ICT, marketing strategies, competitiveness etc.
Artan Luku Business Support Advisor	CCI Durres	Mr. Luku's background and experience in administrative sciences, public administration, administrative law, local governance as well as experience in the registration and processing of information related to national businesses centres, providing information on exporting procedures, as well as on quality standard, workplace safety, etc. He will contribute with network advisory and tailor-made advisory services, but especially with information one-to-many during seminars or other business mission activities.
Brizida Hoxha Business Network Advisor	CCI Durres	Ms. Brizida Hoxha has industry background as well as management and business marketing. She has worked for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Durres for more than 25 years. Her contribution has been industry specific information and advice, management and coordination of different activities supporting general interests of SMEs; promotion of SMEs, etc. She is representative of CCI Durres in Women Entrepreneurship Workgroup of Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce. She will offer network advisory services and fiscal package information, business legislation, regulatory framework, etc. Besides this she will support SMEs how to adapt supply chain and innovation change management related to the crisis faced. She will offer information and service for optimised impact based on Network partners (hub and spoke). She will offer sector specific or thematic information as required. She will follow Expression of interest from companies and their partnering requests; will offer complete support for start-up, new investors, new corporations and partnerships.

Julia Traja Business Partnering and Network Advisor	CCI Durres	Ms. Julia Traja has a legal background and has worked for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Durres for more than 15 years. She has been responsible for business registration and legal advice; provided various business support with legal and general information; organized and participated in several international workshops, forums and business activities abroad. She offers support with necessary export and customs documentation, customs duties, tariffs and taxes, procedures for customs clearance, sanitary and phytosanitary issues for alimentary products. She will offer network advisory services as well as be responsible for communication. Besides these, she will offer information on trade terms, GATTS and Free trade agreements (FTA), general country overview, risks and trade barriers, opportunities for entry to markets of European Union or international presence, regulations for business cooperation as well as cross border partnering services with European dimension. She will take care of organization of business missions, B2B matchmaking events, information and coordination of companies; as well as provide training and workshops on business internalisation.
Emila Raja Network Adviser	CCI Durres	Experienced International and National Project Manager with a strong background in finance and accounting. Skilled in managing complex projects, ensuring financial accuracy, and fostering collaboration between diverse teams and stakeholders. Adept at overseeing the Chamber's accounting records, implementing fiscal strategies, and providing updates on regulatory changes. Proven ability to manage both national and international projects from planning to execution, ensuring alignment with organizational goals and successful outcomes. Highly organized, with a strong attention to detail and a commitment to delivering results within budget and on time.

Outside resources (subcontracting, seconded staff, etc.)

If you do not have all skills/resources in-house, describe how you intend to get them (contributions of members, partner organisations, subcontracting, etc.).

If there is subcontracting, complete the table in section 4.

2.4 Consortium management and decision-making**Consortium management and decision-making (if applicable)**

Explain the management structures and decision-making mechanisms within the consortium. Describe how decisions will be taken and how regular and effective communication will be ensured. Describe methods to ensure planning and control.

Note: The concept (including organisational structure and decision-making mechanisms) must be adapted to the complexity and scale of the project.

Management mechanism and decision-making process for internal consortium governance are very important issues and as such they will be established from the beginning of the project.

A **Consortium Coordinator** is assigned to manage on the daily operation basis, to establish a good coordination between partners. The Coordinator will be in charge of organisation of the joint activities in Consortium level, overseeing the implementation of the hub and spoke model in the consortium and ensuring efficient workflows, collaboration between partners and synergies within the consortium.

The coordinator plays a key role in grant management, management of the project budget, and will take care of all the partners reporting according to rules and regulation.

The cooperation between partners and coordination of activities between them. This role will stay to the coordinator to ensure the overall coherence of the activities of the entire consortium as well as encourage the consortium partners to contribute to creating a Network team spirit.

These tasks will stay with AIDA, which will conclude and sign the **Consortium Agreement for the period 2025-2028** to guarantee a proper functioning of the consortium. The purpose of this agreement is to specify with respect to the project the relationships among the partners, to determine the rights and obligations of the Coordinator and each partner in the project. In overall, it will include the internal organisation of the consortium, fund distribution among partners, the respective responsibilities of each partner to carry out the activities stipulated in the Work Programme, rules on implementing the hub and spoke functions, registration of the clients within the consortium, settlement on internal disputes, any liability, compensation between the consortium partners, etc.

Each partner organisation will appoint a **Network team leader or a project manager** to ensure efficient management of their organisation' staff and guarantee the coordination of activities within the organisation and their coordination with the activities with other organisations in the Albanian consortium.

The project will engage the legal representatives of the host organisations, which will act as the formal decision-making body for the issues that are beyond the Network team.

It is important for the Consortium to receive the strong support by the host organisations for the responsibility of the administrative, financial, contractual, technical and management of the project, possessing the authority to make all decisions within the rules of Grant Agreement. Communication will be held with representatives of the top management of partner organisations to discuss the performance of the project implementation and to take decisions in case it will be necessary.

2) The decision-making process at Consortium level will be settled in the consortium meetings. It is envisaged to hold **annually four Project meetings** of EEN ALBANIA, in total 11 project meetings, to discuss the common strategy and activities and tasks for implementing the project, to monitor overall project performance and that of individual partners, to assess the KPIs for evaluation of achievements, communication and cooperation among partners, internal procedures, financial issues, etc.

The Consortium will hold informal meetings with participation of the respective project managers of the Consortium and the staff in charge for implementation of the project, to communicate on important issues that concern the partners and finding solutions. Meetings are important also to build up a close relationship and network of staff working for the project.

The first meeting will be held after receiving the project approval in order to discuss the activities, tasks, signing the Consortium Partnership Agreement, preparation and submit the communication plan for the year 2025-2026, Launching Conference, create consensus on the ways of communication among partners. The Consortium will improve the ways of communication, mechanism for systematic feedback from other Network events to all relevant EEN Albania staff members.

The Consortium coordinator will represent the Consortium to EISMEA and will be always available for consultation with the Project for all matters that may require his attention. Consortium management should guarantee that the communication correspondent implements the communication plans and ensures that all the existing staff and new staff members at a later stage must meet the requirements of this call. The training manager should be aware of the training needs of the staff and to prepare the report on training need assessment.

2.5 Project management, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation strategy

Project management, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation strategy

Describe the measures foreseen to ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and completed in time.

Describe the methods to ensure good quality, monitoring, planning and control.

Describe the evaluation methods and indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to monitor and verify the outreach and coverage of the activities and results (including unit of measurement, baseline and target values). The indicators proposed to measure progress should be relevant, realistic and measurable.

The EEN-Albania Consortium is committed to ensuring the efficient management, high-quality service delivery, and effective monitoring and evaluation of project activities to achieve the objectives outlined in the Grant Agreement. The consortium, led by AIDA as the Coordinator, will implement a structured project management framework, integrating quality assurance mechanisms, continuous monitoring, and a robust evaluation methodology to ensure the project's success.

At the consortium level, AIDA, as the Coordinator, will oversee the general functioning of the consortium, ensuring that all partners adhere to the consortium agreement, Network rules, and quality standards. The Coordinator will facilitate internal workflow coordination, ensuring that consortium members, Network partners, and relevant stakeholders work collaboratively to implement the project in a timely and efficient manner.

Project Management and Coordination Activities

The effective implementation of the EEN-Albania project will be ensured through a robust and well-structured project management and coordination system led by the Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA) as the Consortium Coordinator. AIDA will oversee both operational and financial management aspects, ensuring that all project activities are aligned with the objectives, timelines, and key performance indicators (KPIs) set out in the Grant Agreement and Description of Action (DoA).

At the operational level, a central Project Coordination Unit (PCU) will be established within AIDA. This unit will consist of a Project Manager, Financial Officer, Communication Coordinator, and thematic Work Package (WP) leaders. Each consortium partner will appoint a dedicated lead manager and designated WP representatives responsible for coordinating activities internally and reporting to the Coordinator. Regular coordination meetings (online or in-person) will be held monthly, and extraordinary meetings will be convened as needed to address critical issues. A shared communication system (cloud folder/SharePoint/Google Drive) will host up-to-date documents, timelines, and templates, enabling transparent and efficient collaboration.

Work planning and monitoring will be guided by a consolidated Work Plan prepared by the Coordinator and agreed upon by all partners. This document will break down deliverables, deadlines, responsible parties, and expected outputs. The Coordinator will prepare a Project Management Handbook that includes standard operating procedures (SOPs), communication protocols, documentation templates, and internal monitoring tools to ensure consistent and quality implementation across the consortium.

A Project Management Handbook will be developed, outlining:

- ✧ Project governance and decision-making procedures
- ✧ Roles and responsibilities of each partner
- ✧ Standardized templates for reporting, time tracking, and financial management
- ✧ Internal communication protocols
- ✧ Project timelines, deliverables, and milestones
- ✧ Risk management and contingency plans

To ensure financial compliance and accountability, AIDA's Financial Officer will coordinate the financial reporting from each partner and verify expenditures against the planned budget lines. All partners are required to submit quarterly financial reports, including timesheets, cost justification, and documentation of expenditures. These will be reviewed and validated before submission to the European Commission. In accordance with PRAG rules and EU financial regulations, procurement procedures, VAT exemption management, and subcontracting rules will be followed rigorously. Financial forecasting tools will be used to monitor budget execution and flag potential over- or under-spending in advance.

The project will also include internal quality assurance mechanisms. WP Leaders will provide regular performance assessments, and any risk of delay or deviation will be escalated to the Project Coordination Unit for immediate mitigation. The consortium will adopt a traffic-light

reporting system (green/yellow/red) to quickly assess implementation status per WP, facilitating early corrective actions.

In terms of communication and reporting, AIDA will compile and submit interim and final reports to EISMEA, including detailed narratives, financial overviews, and annexes. These reports will be based on contributions received from all partners, ensuring full transparency and accountability. Additionally, the project manager will be tasked with collecting project indicators and measuring the impact at consortium and client levels, feeding into the overall assessment of the EEN's effectiveness in Albania.

Also, to promote learning and continuous improvement, periodic internal reviews, partner feedback loops, and external evaluations will be conducted to refine project coordination and enhance service quality throughout the implementation period.

The consortium will use shared digital tools, such as a centralized online repository (Google Drive or equivalent), to ensure real-time access to project documents, training materials, templates, and reporting tools.

In consortium level, the Coordinator will monitor the production of deliverables by the consortium, will control the quality of the work performed and reported by the partners; ensuring that deadlines are respected and evaluated for any risks of delays or low quality deliverables and performance with the partners and inform the Agency about the issues cannot be settled within a reasonable time by the consortium.

The daily project management will follow the implementation of the Work Plan. A template prepared by the Coordinator will be filled in by each partner detailed for each activity in their charge and the responsible persons, by activation of the senior/junior consultants, etc. depending on the specific advance services, contacting issues, etc.

The Coordinator consolidated the **Action Plan** for the Consortium and followed up the implementation of activities. Coordinator monitors the implementation of the Work Plan and monitors if all partners carried out their deliverables. Also, the coordinator evaluates if the work done justifies payment of the cost, the funds used pursue the proper way, as well as try to enhance performance and stimulate continuous improvement of the services.

In partner level, each organisation nominates a **project manager**, and project staff based on the necessary competences and experiences to deal with the management and technical implementation of the project's tasks, as well as with the specific project objectives that have to do with each expert's educational and training background, technical capacity, expertise in the specific field and the allocated tasks.

They are in charge of ensuring delivery of the respective activities, reports and regular participation in the Consortium meetings. These meetings will serve to monitor the performance of each partners and discuss on the expected indicators for the forthcoming periods. The Project manager implements procedures for the follow-up of the execution of the tasks and work packages.

At the partner level, the project manager monitors the completion of the deliverables and indicators and the milestones, the level of achieving the indicators of output, the time for delivering of the deliverables the achievement and takes actions for improvement.

The achieved results will be measured against the objectives set in the Work plan and the indicators for activities, indicators for outputs and the KPIs. The monitoring tool to be used is the preparation of a *project* logframe including the indicators to monitor the results at the Consortium level. KPIs Data will be generated by the IT system items will serve for monitoring and evaluating the impact. Most indicators are quantitative.

Therefore, following indicators will be used to measure the activities of each WP:

- **WP1:** 400 email questions/answer will be registered for the first level services

55 training/workshops/seminars and information days will be held for maximum 500 persons; 183 companies have been contacted and the Action Plans are prepared. 89 companies receive Advisory services; 140 company profiles will be prepared, 33, participation of Albanian SME groups in B2B international trade fairs and or brokerages, will be organised by the Consortium.

No deliverables and Milestones are foreseen.

- **WP2:** 1 project website, 20 info days will be organised; 1000 leaflets, and 500 with project results, 22 e-newsletters, 4 brochures, 210 posts on social media, 5 videos, 14 articles in online and written media and press releases, 2 EEN launching and closing conference, 10 joint activities with stakeholders, 7 TV presentations and other promotional materials for EEN visibility.

- **WP3:** the participation of the staff in 3 EEN Conferences and participation in 2-3 different centralised or decentralised training activities. The training themes attended will be decided during the project implementation. Updating the Network profiles. 10 internal training activities, 4 online training attended by 5 organisations and 1 study visit are planned. The theme will be later decided.

- **WP4:** Representatives of the partners will participate as speakers in international or bilateral events. 5 Network training will be hosted online

- **WP5:** Each organisation will be in charge of the project management and the financial budget, but the overall management will be done by the Consortium Coordinator. 12 Project meetings will be organised, 3 technical and financial reports will be prepared, based on the requirement of the GA.

The project will measure the impact. Every 12 Months an impact assessment on all action plans will be carried out to determine the Achievements and the effect of the Network services delivered during the previous year as well as ensuring an update on matured impact from services carried out in previous years. The impact assessment is a cumulative measurement providing an overview of all impacts achieved by individual action plans in a client journey and at partner and consortium level.

Reporting

The reporting follows the Network common report system at regular intervals. It will serve all our Consortium partners to evaluate the progress towards the objectives set out in this Programme and the efficiency of the processes implemented to achieve results, to identify performance drivers and the weaknesses which need to be addressed.

Reports will include:

- ✧ Progress on milestones and deliverables
- ✧ Analysis of achievements vs. planned objectives
- ✧ Identification of challenges and corrective actions
- ✧ SME feedback on service quality
- ✧ Contribution to EU policy priorities (digitalization, sustainability, access to finance, etc.)

The consortium will also engage in continuous improvement, using evaluation findings to enhance service delivery, adjust strategies, and improve SME outreach.

Albania Consortium will submit the reports based on the Grant Agreement, within the reporting period. All data will be extracted by the Next Platform

The Consortium considers the Quality essential to deliver and create a positive impact on the EEN clients. EEN Albania will maintain high quality standards, specifically:

Quick responsiveness to the requests coming from companies and other clients, other Network partners, or the Agency without delay.

Collaboration with other Network partners in line with the hub and spoke model;

It will ensure the quality of information and data entered in common Network databases, especially cooperation profiles published in the Network's POD. The Consortium plans an internal process to control the quality of the information and train accordingly the staff appropriately;

Also, the partners will consider important the quality of delivering the activities and provision of services to clients;

To guarantee the high quality too much work shall be done by the staff to apply the EEN common standards to specific activities, such as the use of the partnering database or the organisation of partnering events.

That means that the Albanian staff should consider working and learning at the same time as a key factor ensuring high quality standards in the Network.

Although the project has been operational for a short period (2022-2025), any gaps identified in past learning activities will be addressed through continuous feedback loops and adjustments.

Regular assessments will be implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the training sessions and ensure they are aligned with the evolving needs of SMEs. Additionally, the Consortium will focus on providing targeted and adaptable training, leveraging both in-person and digital platforms, ensuring that all services are delivered by experts with up-to-date knowledge. This will ensure the quality of training is maintained and SMEs receive the most relevant support.

Participation in the Network's training, learning and development programme is expected to be a priority for EEN Albania consortium.

To ensure that the appointed advisors can successfully deliver on their tasks, even in cases where individual expertise may be limited in specific areas, the Consortium applies the structured Hub-and-Spoke model to mobilise internal collective capacities. Furthermore, ongoing capacity building activities and peer-to-peer learning sessions are planned to enhance both individual and institutional competencies. This collaborative approach guarantees that each client receives high-quality services, while any gaps in expertise are addressed in a timely manner through resource-sharing and joint service provision.

The Consortium will use the **repository of existing tools and methodologies** to facilitate the implementation of the hub and spoke model and increase the efficiency of individual client journeys.

Our staff will follow training courses deemed essential to upholding high quality standards in provision of services. The training Advisor will support the staff to address their gaps in knowledge and skills to be able to provide better service.

Also, our staff will follow training courses deemed essential to upholding high-quality standards in the provision of services. These trainings will be based on the Network's learning and development program and will cover topics relevant to the advisory needs of Albanian SMEs. The appointed Training Advisor will assess staff competencies and support them in addressing specific gaps in knowledge and skills to enable more targeted and impactful service delivery. The main targeted groups include:

- ✧ Agri-food Sector Group – given the high export potential and growth of the agro-processing and MAPs sectors;
- ✧ Tourism – reflecting Albania's strategic positioning as a tourism destination;
- ✧ Sustainability – to support SMEs with resource efficiency, circular economy practices, and low-threshold green transition actions;
- ✧ Access to Finance – to better connect Albanian SMEs with EU and national financing opportunities;
- ✧ Textile and Creative Industries – as relevant to niche production sectors like garments, handicrafts, and leather.

In addition, EEN-Albania advisors will actively participate in selected Sector and Thematic Groups of the Network, based on Albania's economic landscape and SME potential. Participation in these groups will allow our staff to engage in cross-border collaboration, gain updated market insights, co-organize partnering events, and adopt tested methodologies that respond to the real needs of Albanian SMEs. Outcomes from these engagements will be shared internally to enhance collective know-how and tailor local services accordingly.

2.6 Cost effectiveness and financial management

Cost effectiveness and financial management

Describe the measures adopted to ensure that the proposed results and objectives will be achieved in the most cost-effective way.

Indicate the arrangements adopted for the financial management of the project and, in particular, how the financial resources will be allocated and managed within the consortium.

 *Do NOT compare and justify the costs of each work package, but summarize briefly why your budget is cost effective.*

The total budget proposal is EUR 828 902,63 and the EU contribution is EUR 501 392.08

The distribution of budget is shared between the work packages based on the importance, the activities and the cost related to them. The calculation of personnel cost is based in unit cost and is linked with the real cost of staff depending on organisation and the level of expertise of the staff involved in the activities.

The project plans to contract staff categories A2 from the pool of experts, highly depending on the results after the need assessments carried out to companies. The fee for key experts is calculated the same as the level of in-house consultants.

The international travel, accommodation and subsistence is calculated based on the

EU Grants: Additional Information on Unit Costs and Contributions Annex 2a and 2b Vi.7 dated 15.01.2024 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. The local travel is calculated as actual cost.

The project will allocate a total number of **265.6 person-months** with a high percentage of 68% of FTEs dedicated under the WP1 that is linked to the core activities of the EEN services, the basic and advanced advisory and the partnering services. The detailed contribution of FTEs per partner is divided around: AIDA (73) CCP (63,6 person-month), RDA (54 person-month), WECA (45 person-month and CCIDR (30 person-month).

The partners will allocate their contribution of 40% by own resources coming from membership fees and other charged activities, in-kind contributions and/or financial resources by third parties

2.7 Risk management

Critical risks and risk management strategy

Describe critical risks, uncertainties or difficulties related to the implementation of your project, and your measures/strategy for addressing them.

Indicate for each risk (in the description) the impact and the likelihood that the risk will materialise (high, medium, low), even after taking account the mitigating measures.

Note: *Uncertainties and unexpected events occur in all organisations, even if very well-run. The risk analysis will help you to predict issues that could delay or hinder project activities. A good risk management strategy is essential for good project management.*

Risk No	Description	Work package No	Proposed risk-mitigation measures
1	Lack of interest for the target groups and the stakeholders.	WP2	This is a medium risk, but all the WP3 is planned to target the increasing the audience on understanding the EEN services and empower the EEN brand. The Work package leader of WP2 – AIDA and the support organisation WECA can create trust because of the strong influence in the promotion to the business community and have established links and support from the other stakeholders.
2	Many of the staff members are not yet familiar and lack required capacities to properly provide information and business services according to the Network rules.	WP1	This is a high risk. Staff members will be trained internally by the experienced staff with knowledge on EEN functions and services, firstly to understand the concepts and the methodology and then with practical on the job training to reach the quality required Also, the project has foreseen the participation in various training activities organized in Brussels, decentralised events by other EEN partner

			organisations, study visits, as well as sharing of information between the Albanian Consortium through meetings or other forms of communication.
3	Staff turnover and changes might create problems in transferring the knowledge to the newcomers.	WP1, WP2, WP3	Each organisation will give the new staff access to the training for the newcomers as well as encourage cooperating with other members.
4	The EEN structure is linked to some organisations that the management and control is not dependent on the EEN Management. This bring the lack of communication between partner organizations and members to coordinate with each-other for the same /specific topic	WP5	This risk is considered from the Consortium composition. The previous links between Coordinator and other partners, the evidenced cooperation between other partners in different specific activities and assignments has proven that the communication and understanding is run smoothly. To mitigate this risk, it is planned to establish communication with the legal representatives of the organisations to make them aware and more responsible to this project. Anyway, the coordinator will assign specific persons to disseminate the information to all the partners (and specific members involved) and make sure that all partners report and share updated information regarding the development of events where they have participated/organised.

3. IMPACT

3.1 Impact and ambition

Impact and ambition — Progress beyond the state-of-the-art

Define the short, medium and long-term effects of the project.

Who are the target groups? How will the target groups benefit concretely from the project and what would change for them?

Does the project aim to trigger change/innovation? If so, describe them and the degree of ambition (progress beyond the status quo/state-of-the-art).

The project plans to impact the business community in Albania and give a modest contribution to the EU market and beyond, due to the small market of Albania and the low level of standards, innovation and technology development.

The main ambition of the project is making the EEN brand known among the SMEs, business community, business support organisations and the innovation ecosystem in Albania. Still, the EEN brand and services are not widely known by the business community and business support ecosystem.

With regard to the core activities, the planning, organisation, activation of the resources of skilled experts can create touchable and concrete results. The project will work with businesses for all sectors, but we consider as the most promising sector to create impact to business towards digitalisation, access to funds, access to market, application of green business models, resource and energy efficiency, and develop their management capacities.

The project will **impact** the Albanian SMEs to the following indicators such as job creation with at least 100-150 persons, improve the quality of products or services, optimise costs in the short term, expansion internationally, etc. The turnover and profitability of the companies are other indicators to measure the impact in the long-term.

The Consortium will approach SMEs with higher potential for growth and internalisation. The SMEs will be supported and followed up through the client journey.

These impact indicators can be measured at the end of each year of implementation. Track of the records can measure the short-term impact.

Albanian SMEs are the primary target group to benefit from the general services of EEN-Albania. In particular, the Consortium members will work with clients for whom they have prepared the client cards in the Platform and continue with identification and cooperation with SMEs, which demonstrates, as below:

- ✧ SMEs in the potential sectors such as food processing, energy, tourism, agriculture and fisheries, IT sector, manufacturing activities and recycling will be the main priorities sectors.
- ✧ The SMEs already operate in the international market or have high potential for internationalisation.
- ✧ SMEs interested to engage in business and technology partnering activities and to exploit new opportunities in the Single Market and beyond
- ✧ SMEs, which express the interest and has potential to grow, ready to scale their activities in the Single Market and markets in third countries
- ✧ Companies with high potential and ready to innovate which need more tailor-made services.
- ✧ SMEs and start-ups in the IT sector as quite dynamic, flexible and open to international market
- ✧ Textile, shoe, plastic and agro-processing industries are considered as high potential industries that contribute to increasing employment in Albania. The project will offer tailor-made specialised activities and support to these sectors.
- ✧ Other companies that are interested in investment in energy efficiency applications, etc.

Network clients: - Some services might be directed to other organisations, including:

- ✧ **Public and private organisations:** EEN Albania will target a number of other public authorities and organisations, Universities and Technology Transfer Centres interested to provide service to SMEs. The cooperation will be in many folds such as partners in organisation of joint activities to reach large audiences, questions and answers to our/their requirements, or partnership for providing specific services or high expertise, etc.
- ✧ **Sectoral organisations:** A strong link will continue between Consortium partners and sectoral organisations, in particular export-oriented industry associations, Association of Albanian Producers, Sectoral Chambers, other regional Chambers, etc.
- ✧ **Public authorities,** a strong relationship with government and other EU technical assistance programmes will continue to promote SMP COSME Programme, Horizon InvestEU and other EU programmes.
- ✧ Business support organisations
- ✧ Professional organisations
- ✧ **EU Programmes and donors:** Cooperation with other programmes that supporting SMEs will be the target for sharing experience and co-organising events
- ✧ **EU structure,** cooperation with Europe House in Albania
- ✧ **Cluster organisations:** still weak structures in Albania. However, the Consortium will try to promote clusters creation in specific industries
- ✧ **Social Enterprises** consists a small market in Albania, but also some of them might be considered to be part of the beneficiaries

The KPIs indicators distributed between partners and per each year

KPI1. SMEs served by Enterprise Europe Network	[1050]
KPI2. Unique clients in the Network client journey	[183]
KPI3. Achievements, of which:	[89]
KPI3a. Advisory achievements (AAs)	[43]
KPI3b. Partnering achievements (PAs)	[44]
KPI4. Impact on clients in a client journey	No target required
KPI5. Communication activities	No target required
KPI6. Contribution to other client journeys managed by other Network partners	No target required
KPI7. Promotion of SME feedback activities	[10]

TOTAL PER PARTNERS

Target indicators/Partners	AIDA	CCP	RDA	WECA	CCIDR
KPI1. SMEs served by Enterprise Europe Network	300	180	180	300	190
KPI2. Unique clients in the Network client journey	55	33	33	40	22
KPI3. Achievements, of which:	22	18	21	17	11
KPI3a. Advisory achievements (AAs)	7	12	14	6	4
KPI3b. Partnering achievements (PAs)	15	6	5	11	7
KPI7 - Promotion of SME feedback activities	10	0	0	0	0

Impact on non-EU countries

Not applicable.

3.2 Communication, dissemination and visibility

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding

Describe your communication strategy for the entire project. Your strategy must be implemented via successive communication work plans which are due for submission once in every period of 12 months after the project start (deliverables D3.1, D3.2 and D3.4)

Describe the dissemination and communication activities which are planned in order to promote the activities/results and maximise the impact (to whom, which format, how many, etc.). Clarify how you will reach the target groups, relevant stakeholders, policymakers and the general public and explain the choice of the dissemination channels.

Describe how the visibility of EU funding will be ensured.

The Communication Strategy presents a focused and strategic approach for the Enterprise Europe Network-Albania, to achieve the communication objectives within a forty-two-month project aiming at supporting and empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Albania, potential to growth and ambitious to enter into the EU Market

The strategy is designed to boost visibility, encourage collaboration, to strengthen the EEN brand, promote the EEN services and the successful results and ensure clear, consistent communication with key stakeholders. By crafting a unified message and utilising a variety of communication channels, the strategy will effectively promote the project's objectives, engage SME beneficiaries, and amplify the consortium's collective impact.

Introduction

The Consortium defines this communication strategy to attract the interest of the Albanian business community to understand and benefit from the EEN integrated advanced business services.

The main objective is to increase awareness, promotion and visibility of the EEN and its services among the business community, other economic operators, research institutions and interested stakeholders and the ecosystem of business support, including national and local authorities.

The communication strategy defines mechanism, instruments, tools and channels which will help to reach target audiences and to bring it closer to the information, services and opportunities

The Consortium coordinator (AIDA) will be in charge of implementing the EEN promotion strategy, but the responsibility in preparing and implementing the communication plans will stay with all Consortium partners. The project communication covers the following communication components addressing the target groups, stakeholders and the Network clients to be reached by means of the communication channels

The EEN-Albania project communication strategy is based on the communication and visibility goals to achieve. It will be implemented based on all different activities of the consortium during preparation, implementing and evaluation of all activities of the consortium. The communication strategy will involve actors of the consortium, stakeholders, partners and clients.

Communication Objectives

The present communication strategy covers the EEN-Albania communication goals, target groups, key messages and communication channels, together with the relevant resources, timeframe and evaluation measures for the envisaged communication activities. The Communication strategy aims to ensure the effective internal communication flows among the project partners (PPs), as well as the high-quality external communication addressed at the project target groups, Albanian and EU SMEs and the EEN Network partners to ensure, as well as an effective communication among the project partners and stakeholders. All PPs shall comply in their communication with the requirements of the Guidelines and visibility for EU Projects, as well as with the Description of Action in the Application Form.

The main goal is to ensure a clear and effective messaging across the whole SME ecosystem in Albania, policymakers, local and national organisations regarding the EEN project as the most impactful programme in fostering Albanian SMEs.

The main communication objectives of EEN-Albania project are as follows:

- ✧ Promoting project goals, activities, results and benefits for Albanian SMEs
- ✧ To raise the visibility of EU's assistance under the Single Market Programme 2021-2027 and the potential project impact in the eligible area
- ✧ to enhance the wide SMEs awareness with regard to the opportunities that open up with the participation of Albania in the Enterprise Europe Network
- ✧ to promote the SMEs success stories by cooperation through EEN and create transparency of the project activities and the use of public funding
- ✧ to actively and efficiently promote the possibilities for business cooperation and cross-border partnership of Albanian SME into the EU market
- ✧ to communicate with stakeholders of the EEN-Albania services for the features and developed tools and engage them as an important supporter for the benefit of the SMEs
- ✧ to generate interest and trigger cooperation in support of SMEs' competitiveness, growth, development of sustainable model, digitalisation, etc.
- ✧ to ensure sustainability of the project results and benefits

Key themes and messages

With the communication actions of this strategy, EEN-Albania will be presented as the most important project in order to support and develop the Albanian SMEs.

The most important messages will be:

- ✧ **Raising awareness** --The message will address SMEs for their needs to develop and prepare to be able to compete for the EU market.

- ✧ **Informing** -- Albanian SMEs and stakeholders on the possibility to benefit by the integrated EEN services and the existing ways for cooperation in EU level.
- ✧ **Engaging** - The message will encourage the Albanian SMEs to be engaged from the activities organised by the EEN and benefit from the value-added services. Also, the message will engage the stakeholder to invite EEN organising joint activities
- ✧ **Promoting** --- The key themes will be the promotion of the project activities and results, promoting green business development, sustainable business models, international cooperation, the success achieved by the companies through the EEN support

Target Audience

The external Project Communication is very important for the EEN-Albania project in order to guarantee that the project outputs and results are communicated to the target groups through leveraging the messages for raising awareness, informing, engaging and promoting [

The external project communication covers the following communication components:

Communication with project target groups:

- ✧ Albanian SMEs from different sectors, potential to grow and export and SMEs already operating in the international market, start-ups, business Women.
- ✧ Network partner and their clients from other EEN countries
- ✧ EU SMEs as clients of Network partner

Communication with project stakeholders

- ✧ Public agencies that SME support development and research and innovation
- ✧ Scientific organizations, research centres,
- ✧ universities, scientific laboratories, training and education facilities
- ✧ Business support organisations
- ✧ Professional organisations
- ✧ Regional development agencies
- ✧ EU Programmes and donors: Cooperation with other programmes that supporting SMEs will be the target for sharing experience and co-organising events
- ✧ National and Regional authorities
- ✧ Chambers of commerce
- ✧ NGOs active in the project field
- ✧ Media of economic profiles
- ✧ Other stakeholders identified during the project implementation

The target audience above will be reached by different means of the communication channels.

Communication Channels

The strategy includes standardised Project communication practices agreed by all Partners and containing designated tools, resources and timeframe for implementation of the envisaged communication activities. The following communication tools shall be generally used (as defined in terms of the key communication message to be transmitted, i.e. raising awareness, informing, engaging and promoting): The Project Communication, dissemination and visibility will be the main line on how to raise awareness of the target group, how to inform them, meaning to educate and challenge them to grow their business, innovate and cooperate internationally, how to engage by attracting them to be the EEN clients and how to promote and disseminate the output and results for a higher visibility in Albania and EU level.

The main communication channels are:

- ✧ Social media
- ✧ Website
- ✧ TV and written media
- ✧ Online media
- ✧ Business magazine

- ✧ Promotional materials: newsletter, brochures
- ✧ Information days/Events
- ✧ E-mail listing
- ✧ Printing materials

Strategic communication tools and materials

Common Visual Identity – to ensure coherent, unified and more comprehensible for the target audience, the Communication Coordinator with other staff in charge of communication shall observe the requirements and templates prepared and ready made in the EEN Platform and provide them to all partners at the beginning of the project implementation. Any communication or publication about the operation, including information published online or during a conference or seminar must mention that the operation/documents/publication has been co-financed by the European Union, the SMP Programme.

All communication materials produced by the Project must contain the EU flag and the EEN logo, placed in a visible position and never smaller than any other logo included in the same material, in addition to the EEN platform <https://een.ec.europa.eu>

Events

2 (two) Major events for raising awareness of the EEN services and dissemination of the Project results are planned to be organised along the whole period of the project implementation with participation of a wider audience of SMEs, other economic operators, universities and research institutions, interested stakeholders, other governmental institutions decision- makers, media and EU delegation. It will be organized in Tirana to make the EEN Network in Albania. A list of companies of different sectors will be regularly updated and will be used to invite the participants guaranteeing the wider representation of the businesses. All partners will put efforts to reach a higher number of target groups and support the organisation of the events. An Launching and a Closing Conference shall be held at the beginning and the end of the project completion.

Promotion on business missions/International trade fair. The preparation will start weeks before starting the events. The Proper venue will be chosen to organise the events. Preparation of list of invitees, list of media, the invitation for participants will start in advance. Press releases will be prepared and distributed and interviews in the media will be organised. The EU flag shall be placed during the events and visibility of the EEN logo shall be ensured.

Social media Campaign: Online social networks are effective means of outreach to the public. The project activities, forthcoming and ongoing and the achieved results may be disseminated through popular social networks: Facebook, Instagram and X. LinkedIn dedicated the project. They will be the main sources for the dissemination of the news, illustrating each activity organised by the project and disseminating the intermediary and the final results of the project. The same information will be shared to the social media of the partners, as well.

Online Media platforms specialised in economic issues, as our media partner, covering our events, activities, success stories, writing articles regarding SMSs in Albanian, the impact of EEN Project.

Audio-visual media: The frequent invitation on different TV media of the representatives of the partners will be used to disseminate the project and its results. Special participation dedicated to the project will be communicated and decided with the media. Also, the Head of host organisations from AIDA, WECA and CCIDR will use the media space to disseminate the project results and the impact in the area. **Video Interviews** in at least 7 TV and broadcasting media, such Public Television, and economic specialist media. Other 5 videos will be prepared and disseminated on the YouTube channel, prepared by the testimonials from the successful partnership, businesses and the training providers and beneficiaries and all others that contributed to the achievement of the results.

Website: EEN- Albania will have its own website. The website will provide information on the Albanian and EU legislation, EU programmes, cooperation possibilities, standards, technology and innovation, resource information access to finance, respectively as they will be defined by the

Project. Also, the other partner's websites will have the link on the EEN website. Coordinator will maintain this web site in Albanian and English language. The website address shall be indicated on all print items, press releases, paper and electronic correspondence, etc.

Newsletter/brochure: Bi-monthly newsletters will be an electronic document containing information on the recent project activities, information on the important changes in EU legislation with impact on specific sector with interest for Albanian SMEs, information on the business opportunities retrieved by the IT platform, promotion of the success stories and project results. The e-newsletter will be prepared each 2 months of the project duration. Responsible for this activity is the communication Coordinator, but all the partners are obliged to provide the necessary materials. Articles will be written by the relevant partner together with photos and other illustrations. An email listing of the Partners client bases, media and other stakeholders will be used to send the newsletters by email regularly and published in social media and websites. The promotional materials will mostly be produced with contribution of the Work package/task leaders, but partners will be involved in communication and dissemination. The client databases of all partners will be used to disseminate electronically the information to all interested parties.

E-mail communication: The Communication will be addressed to the target audiences and the right messages will formulate for them. Several communication and information instruments and tools will be employed for promotion of Network and EEN Albania's portfolio services. A generic email address: will be created in the same structure. It will be monitored every day and enquiries directed to it will be forwarded to the most appropriate consortium partner. In all the email communication, the project team will include the logo of EEN.

Branding and the guidelines: The Consortium partners will follow the Network' Visual Identity and promote the same logo in all the events organised by the project and by the host organisations. The EEN Albania will be responsible for promotion, communication and branding of the EEN to the Albanian SMEs and other interested stakeholders. The communication channels of organisation partners will be used in a coherent and concerted manner to promote and reach the EEN visibility.

The branding of the Enterprise Europe Network will place the name and logo of the European Commission and the Enterprise Europe Network logo to all Consortium publications, electronic communication products, posters, programmes and other communication and event materials produced under this project.

All Network partners will place the Enterprise Europe Network logo and an explanatory text of the project on the EEN Albania website. Also, they will place the EEN logo in front of their premises to show the membership in Enterprise Europe Network.

Partner organisations will benefit from tools, templates, training and support provided by the Agency. Partners are aware that the use of the visual identity and logo is compulsory for all organisations. All published materials, websites will use the fonts described in the visual identity guidelines. Also host organisations will follow the and comply with the visual identity guidelines of the Network Promotional materials: A set of promotional materials will be prepared and the website of EEN Albania will be updated with the new information on Partners and full-service packages offered to SMEs. Promotional packages for dissemination of the project at training, workshops, info-days and other events will be prepared including writing pad, pens, t-shirts For specific promotional material, the project will download the templates from the Network's Intranet, corresponding to the particular communication tool.

Printed Communication Materials - 500 brochures and 1000 leaflets, roll ups, other promotional materials, pens, blocks, folders shall be printed and distributed in different activities organised by EEN-Albania, starting from the Launching Event. The printed communication materials shall clearly identify the project is co-financed by the EU Single Market Programme and their format shall follow the Programme's visual guidelines.

Printed communication/promotional materials will be distributed among partners based on a distributed plan and the dissemination will be in all events organized with business community and

other interested parties, to individual activities and in addition to each event organised by host organisations.

Success stories: The Consortium for all the Achievements reached during the Client Journey will prepare a story to be promoted in all the channels in order to demonstrate the impact of the Network and to inspire other businesses to make the best use of the EEN Services. Network successful results, successful partnership, success stories and their impact on SME will be continuously published on the EEN website, disseminated through electronic newsletters and highlighted in most activities and events organised by host organisations in or out Albania. Once a year the success stories will be provided to the Network.

Communication with the Stakeholders: A number of promotional activities such as local or national events in cooperation with other interested stakeholders will be employed to take space to highlight the quality of EEN Network and its services.

Communication within the Network: All partners will communicate and connect regularly and frequently every day to the Network's Community/Connect/Learn Platform which is the main communication channel within the Network. Regular communication will be established with the Agency by the Project Coordinator. EEN Albania' staff will update their contact information on the online directory of Network staff members. Participants from EEN-Albania will attend the Annual conference.

Measuring communication Impact

The main goal of the monitoring and evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the EEN-Albania communication measures and to improve the used communication tools and activities, if needed. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators shall be used for evaluation of the communication campaign. Overview and evaluation of communication activities/results in months 13, 25 and 37 of the project, respectively for the annual Communication plans.

The evaluation will be carried out on a 12-monthly basis to allow possible corrections of the Communication Plan. Project communication shall be duly monitored both on project and on partner level. The means of verifications are the documents of inclusive media coverage, number of event participants, social media statistics, number of newsletter subscribers, etc. Records for proof of the communication channel's effectiveness shall also be kept by the Partners such as attendance lists, photographs, minutes of meetings, mailing lists, e followers, likes, etc. This verification will measure the level of effectiveness of the communication plan on an annual basis.

During the implementation of the EEN-Albania project, the Communication Correspondent will track periodically the achievements of the indicators and KPIs. The indicators of local info days organised (20), number of e-newsletters (22), brochures (4), 1 dedicated webpage, number of visitors in the web, number of attendees in info days (160 participants), subscribers (400) e-mail listing (300), fans, followers, likes, media coverage, etc. will measure the level of effectiveness of communication plan on annual basis. The means of verification are the documents, materials, list of participants, photos, etc. Corrective actions for continuous improvement in coming years will be undertaken to update regularly at the end of each year.

Roles and Contribution of Consortium Partners

The Communication strategy identifies **each Partner role playing in achieving communication objectives**. While there can be one Partner taking the lead on communication activities, the Communication Correspondent, there should be **a clear commitment from all participants** to give visibility to the Network, raising awareness about its added value, and to ensuring an optimal reach at local level and promotion at international level, if possible. Each Partner should clearly commit to following the requirements and their roles should be clearly stated in the strategy.

(The coordinator of Consortium (AIDA) will be in charge of preparing and monitoring the implementing the EEN promotion strategy, but the responsibility in implementing the communication plan will stay with all Consortium partners. The overview and the evaluation of communication activities/results will be conducted by the Communication Correspondent. AIDA is in charge of organisation 6 info days and participation in 3 activities organised with stakeholders,

6 newsletters and 2 brochures, 70 posts, 2 videos, 3 press editors in written media, 3 TV presences and main organiser for Launching and Closing Events.

All Consortium members will have their role in implementation of Communication Plans: The Centre for Competitiveness Promotion (CCP), is in charge of organisation of 5 info days and 1 with other stakeholders, 6 newsletters and 1 brochure, 50 posts in social media, 4 writing, as well as engagement in organisation of Launching and Closing Events, preparation of promotional materials, etc. TIRANA Regional Development Agency (RDA) will be engaged in organisation of 3 info day, preparation of 2 newsletters and 10 posts. Women Economic Chamber of Commerce in Albania (WECA) is in charge of 4 info days and 3 activities with other stakeholders, 6 Newsletters, 50 posts in social media, 2 videos, 5 writings and 3 TV presences. The Durres Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIDR) will prepare 2 info days and 2 with other stakeholders 2 newsletters, 30 posts in social media, 1 video and 2 writings.

All partners will share in their communication channels, (social media, email and other offline activities) the information regarding the importance of EEN Consortium, objectives, real opportunities, information regarding the programs activities and results, etc.

3.3 Sustainability and continuation

Sustainability, long-term impact and continuation

Describe the follow-up of the project after the EU funding ends. How will the project impact be ensured and sustained? What will need to be done? Which parts of the project should be continued or maintained? How will this be achieved? Which resources will be necessary to continue the project? How will the results be used? Are there any possible synergies/complementarities with other (EU funded) activities that can build on the project results?

The Consortium applying in the following 42 months is the same as in previous call and although the project started very late the implementation, it will continue the project with the already identified companies, supporting them again to sustain the impact created.

The project cannot estimate the impact due to late starting of the project implementation of the first call and less can be done to maintain the results, but naturally the intervention will be in the sectors and companies that have already engaged with the EEN-Albania to keep them in client journey to ensure impact.

The mobilisation of the external experts will be necessary in the following years. The results achieved by the EEN-Albania will be used as promotional elements to be used for implementation of communication strategy. Success stories promote and emphasize the efficiency of the development of businesses benefitting by the EEN services will be promoted through different communication channels.

The EU Project, EU4Innovation have some components, including the support to new start-up companies through sub-grants and supporting SMEs to apply under the Horizon Europe Programme. Both components are complementary of EEN services, so far, the EEN-Albania considers this project as a potential collaborator in the EEN project.

EBRD is another institution with focus on Albanian SMEs applying for EU funds. Potential cooperation is foreseen to complement the efforts.

Financial sustainability of the services is quite an important issue for this project. The functioning of the structure of the EEN-Albania can continue operating after the project completion. So far, the project will create and strengthen the skills and expertise, working methodology which will embed within the organisations to continue working in support of the business community through the mechanism of the self-sustained. Some of the activities foreseen in case the EU fund ends are:

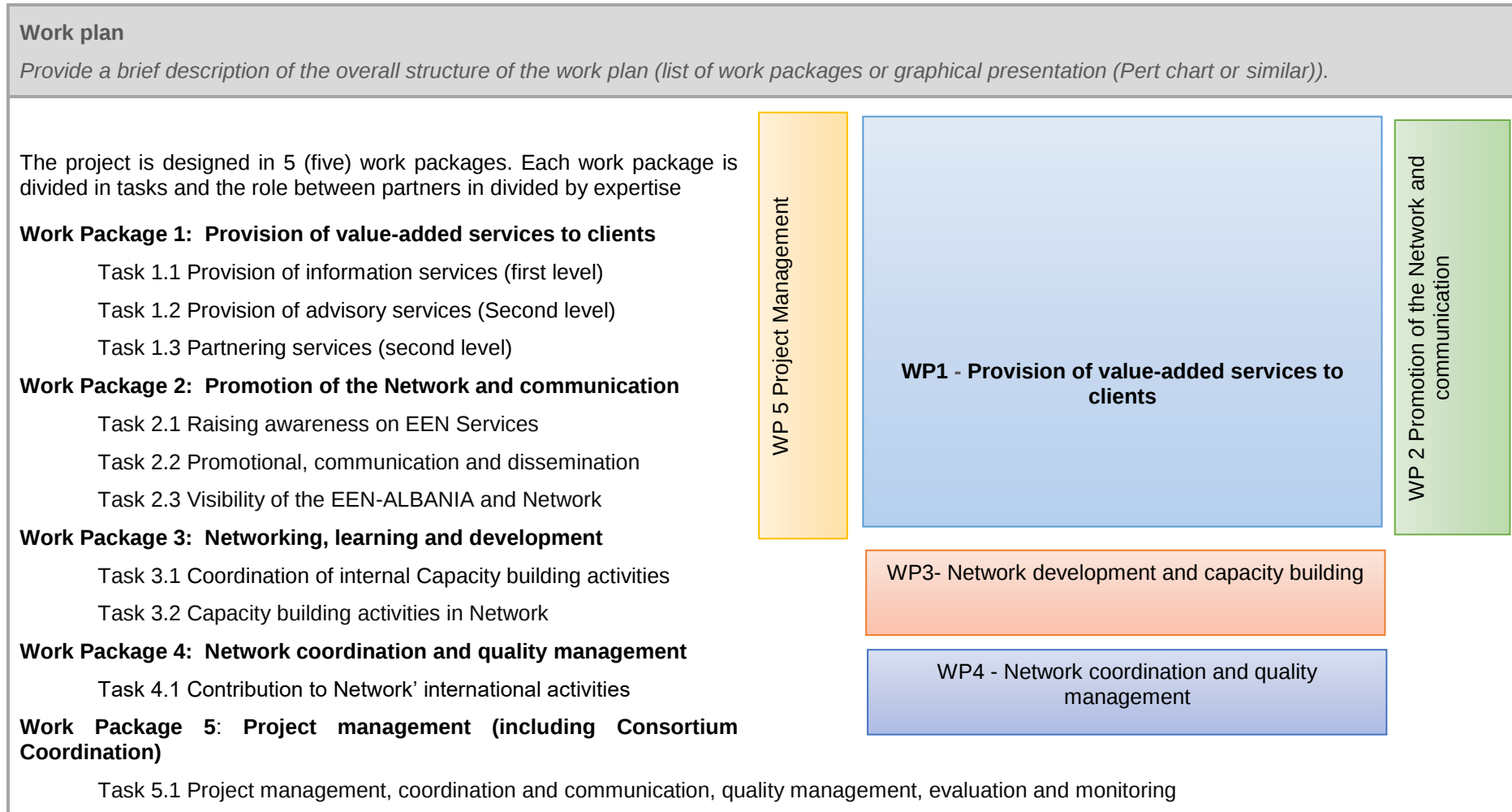
- ❖ Capacity building activities, depending on the themes can be payable activities, but lower than the market, or through the support of other donors

- ❖ Support the advanced advisory services fixing a market fee, based on the cost calculation.
- ❖ Applications for other projects, with focus on supporting SMEs can be practised.
- ❖ The integrated services experienced by the EEN-ALBANIA are embedded within the organisations and can further be practiced.
- ❖ The IT platform of Business opportunities can be used, although not as internal users.
- ❖ The first level service will continue to be provided free of charge after the project ends.

These are some of the measures for follow-up activities to be considered after the project ends. Regarding the synergy with other EU projects/Programmes/donors, there are s possibilities to support companies with advanced services to the business, especially in cooperation with EBRD through the Advisory programmes, but during the implementation of the project, in the third year, the raised opportunities will be analysed to find synergy or complementary with other instruments operating in Albania.

4. WORK PLAN, WORK PACKAGES, ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES AND TIMING

4.1 Work plan

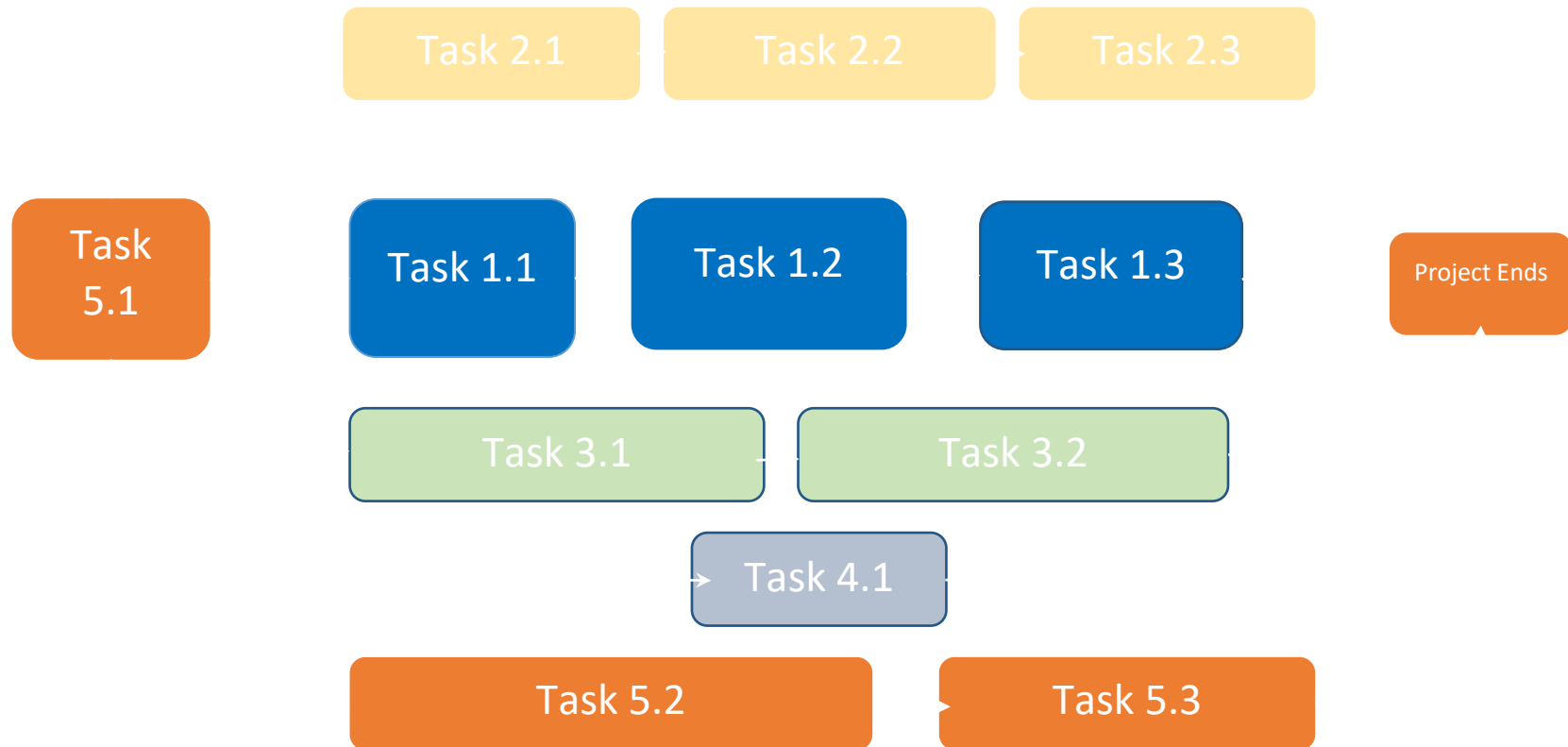


Task 5.2 Project meetings

Task 5.3 Project Reporting

The core activities of the project are linked only with work Package WP1: Provision of the value-added services to clients, which should produce results and create impact to the business communities.

The links between different tasks are explained below through a simple PERTH Diagram



4.2 Work packages, activities, resources and timing

WORK PACKAGES

Work packages

This section concerns a detailed description of the project activities.

*Group your activities into work packages. A **work package means a major sub-division of the project**. For each work package, enter an objective (expected outcome) and list the activities, milestones and deliverables that belong to it. The grouping should be logical and guided by identifiable outputs.*

Projects should normally have a minimum of 2 work packages. WP1 should cover the management and coordination activities (meetings, coordination, project monitoring and evaluation, financial management, progress reports, etc.) and all the activities which are cross-cutting and therefore difficult to assign to another specific work package (do not try splitting these activities across different work packages). WP2 and further WPs should be used for the other project activities. Work packages are standard in this action and cannot be changed.

Work packages covering financial support to third parties (⚠ only allowed if authorised in the Call document) must describe the conditions for implementing the support (for grants: max amounts per third party; criteria for calculating the exact amounts, types of activity that qualify (closed list), persons/categories of persons to be supported and criteria and procedures for giving support; for prizes: eligibility and award criteria, amount of the prize and payment arrangements).

⚠ Enter each activity/milestone/output/outcome/deliverable only once (under one work package).

⚠ Ensure consistence with the detailed budget table/calculator (if applicable).

Objectives

List the specific objectives to which the work package is linked.

Activities and division of work (WP description)

Provide a concise overview of the work (planned tasks). Be specific and give a short name and number for each task.

*Show who is participating in each task: Coordinator (COO), Beneficiaries (BEN), Affiliated Entities (AE), Associated Partners (AP), indicating **in bold** the task leader. (n/a for OG)*

Add information on other participants' involvement in the project e.g. subcontractors, in-kind contributions.

Note:

In-kind contributions: In-kind contributions for free are cost-neutral, i.e. cannot be declared as cost. Please indicate the in-kind contributions that are provided in the context of the work package.

The Coordinator remains fully responsible for the coordination tasks, even if they are delegated to someone else. Coordinator tasks cannot be subcontracted.

If there is subcontracting, please also complete the table below.

Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)

***Milestones** are control points in the project that help to chart progress (e.g. completion of a key deliverable allowing the next phase of the work to begin). Use them only for major outputs in complex projects, otherwise leave the section empty. Please limit the number of milestones by work package.*

Means of verification are how you intend to prove that a milestone has been reached. If appropriate, you can also refer to indicators.

Deliverables are project outputs which are submitted to show project progress. Deliverables are standard in this action and cannot be changed. Indicate the lead beneficiary and the dissemination level.

Please use exactly the milestones and deliverables listed in section 10 of the Call document for each work package, and do not add or remove any milestones or deliverables. Please make sure that the names of all milestones and deliverables in this application form are identical to the ones in section 10 of the Call document. Note that some work packages do not have any deliverables or milestones.

The labels used mean:

Public — fully open (🚩 automatically posted online on the Project Results platforms)

Sensitive — limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement

EU classified — RESTREINT-UE/EU-RESTRICTED, CONFIDENTIEL-UE/EU-CONFIDENTIAL, SECRET-UE/EU-SECRET under Decision [2015/444](#). For items classified under other rules (e.g. national or international organisation), please select the equivalent EU classification level.

Add details in the description if you find it useful.

Work Package 1

Work Package 1: Provision of value-added services to clients

Duration:

M1- M42

Lead Beneficiary:

1-RDA

Objectives

First level services: information services

Objective 1: SMEs received answers for all business issues linked to local and EU market information and legislation

Second level services: advisory services

Objective 2: Facilitate the exporting of Albanian SMEs into the EU Single Market and outside

Objective 3: Enhance awareness and improve sustainability of SMEs

Objective 4 Increase the adoption of digital solutions to improve business processes and developing new business opportunities

Objective 5: Improve Access to funding and financing

Objective 6: Enhance SME resilience

Objective 7: Improve KPIs of the Albanian SMEs through support services in their client journey

Objective 8: Collect SMEs feedback for business legislations

Second level services: partnering services

Objective 9: Facilitate the Internationalisation and cross-border cooperation of Albanian SMEs into the EU Single Market and outside

Activities and division of work (WP description)

Task No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Task Name	Description	Participants		In-kind Contributions and Subcontracting (Yes/No and which)
			Name	Role (COO, BEN, AE, AP, OTHER)	
T1.1	Provision of information services (first level)	- Expand the potential EEN client' basis - Preparation of database with resource knowledge and information 400 answers /replies to queries on daily operation	CCP AIDA RDA WECA CCIDR	BEN COO BEN BEN BEN	
T1.2	Provision of advisory services (Second level)	55 awareness raising/Capacity building activities/ Webinar with nearly 500 businesses on specific subjects on: 4 local activities for export 6 local activities for internalisation 5 local activities on digitalisation	RDA AIDA	BEN COO	

		▪ 12 local activities on sustainability business models ▪ 2 local activities on resilience ▪ 16 local activities on EU and national funding and financing ▪ 10 local activities on general business issues such as management, digital marketing, IP rights, financial management, etc 183 companies have prepared the action plans to support and 83 receive value added advisory services ▪ 12 Personalised coaching/advising activities for Access to funds and financing instruments, SMP open calls where SMEs are eligible, EIC Accelerator, local grants ▪ 14 personal advices on addressing to financing opportunities local or regional opportunities ▪ 11 companies supported on adopting new digital solution or new business initiatives ▪ 12 potential export companies are supported ▪ 24 companies are supported for application business sustainable models ▪ 5 companies are supported for resilience in case of the crisis situation	CCP WECA CCIDR	BEN BEN BEN	
T.1.3	Partnering services (second level)	▪ Identify the companies interested in partnerships and prepare their Action Plans ▪ Preparation of 140 high-quality partnering profiles (offers and requests) and disseminating of these profiles into the Network's partnering opportunities database ▪ Searching the partnering tools to find profiles that suit their clients' needs and creating expressions of interest on their behalf (125 Eols)	AIDA WECA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN	

		Participation on 33 different international events in site and online, specifically: 7 SMEs groups participate in B2B missions/trade fairs with other Network partners 8 Organisation of SME companies to participate on virtual B2B missions through the Platforms 10 participation with small SMEs groups in international fair and transnational brokerage events 8 business missions organised in Tirana	CCP RDA	BEN BEN	
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Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)

Milestone No (continuous numbering not linked to WP)	Milestone Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Description	Due Date (month number)	Means of Verification
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Not applicable.

Deliverable No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Deliverable Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (month number)	Description (including format and language)
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Not applicable.

Estimated budget — Resources

See detailed budget table/calculator (annex 1 to Part B).

Work Package 2

Work Package 2: Promotion of the Network and communication					
Duration:	M1 - M42	Lead Beneficiary:	1-AIDA		
Objectives					
<i>Objective 10: Increase Visibility of Network at European/national and regional level</i> <i>Objective 11: Promotion EEN brand among SMEs, public and private institutions</i> <i>Objective 12: Communicate the EEN impact to SMEs through different media channels</i>					
Activities and division of work (WP description)					
Task No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Task Name	Description	Participants		In-kind Contributions and Subcontracting (Yes/No and which)
			Name	Role (COO, BEN, AE, AP, OTHER)	
T2.1	Raising awareness on EEN Services	✧ Design and implementation of the EEN communication plans for the 3 years of (2025-2028) ✧ Overviews of the implemented Communication Plans ✧ Reporting in implementation of the Communication plan ✧ Preparation of the deliverables required	AIDA WECA CCP RDA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN BEN BEN	

		✧ 20 Info-days for both SMEs and entrepreneurs to foster the communication between the EEN and the local enterprises. ✧ 10 activities to promote EEN organised jointly with stakeholders or speaking in other forums or activities			
T.2.2	Promotional, communication and dissemination	✧ 20 issues e-newsletters, ✧ 4 e-broshures ✧ 1000 copies of leaflets on objectives ✧ 500 copies of leaflets for dissemination of results of each year ✧ A national website www.een.al ✧ 1500 follows on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter for broadcasting EEN services and dissemination the information on companies and achievements; folders, pens, blocks, etc. ✧ 5 videos with success stories (story leads) of cooperation between Advisors and companies, in Albanian and English language ✧ Dissemination of videos the success stories to YouTube, website and to the Network; ✧ Communication with business magazine to promote and disseminate the results to the written media in 14 press writings; ✧ 12 promotion and dissemination in media covering business programmes, press release (6 in national channels and 1 activity in local channel-Durres) ✧ 1 Launching EEN Conference with a wider audience for 80 participants	WECA AIDA CCP RDA CCIDR	BEN COO BEN BEN BEN	

		✧ 1 EEN Closing Conference to disseminate the achievement and impact of the Project for 100 participants ✧ Continuous communication with the rest of the Network					
	Visibility of the EEN-ALBANIA and Network	✧ Design the promotional materials based on the template of the Network ✧ Placing the logo of the Network in all publicity and promotional materials, websites, emails of the staff ✧ Preparation of roll-up to display in all activities. ✧ Co-branding with host organisations, national and local authorities, financial institutions, and other donors. ✧ Continuous communication with the rest of the Network	AIDA WECA CCP RDA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN BEN BEN			
Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)							
Milestone No (continuous numbering not linked to WP)	Milestone Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Description	Due Date (month number)	Means of Verification	
Not applicable.							
Deliverable No	Deliverable Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (month number)	Description (including format and language)

(continuous numbering linked to WP)							
D2.1	Communication work plan 2025-2026 (M1-12)	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M2	Prepare annual communication work plan according to template
D2.2	Communication work plan 2026-2027 (M13-24)	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M12	Prepare annual communication work plan
D2.3	Overview and evaluation of communication activities/results in months 1-12	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M13	Evaluation will be measured based on the KPIs for communication
D2.4	Communication work plan 2027-2028 (M25-42)	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M24	Prepare annual communication work plan
D2.5	Overview and evaluation of communication activities in months 13-24	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M25	Evaluation will be measured based on the KPIs for communication
D2.6	Overview and evaluation of communication activities in months 25-36	2	AIDA	[R — Document, report]	[PU — Public]	M37	Evaluation will be measured based on the KPIs for communication

Estimated budget — Resources
See detailed budget table/calculator (annex 1 to Part B).

Work Package 3

Work Package 3: Network development and capacity building					
Duration:		M1 - M42	Lead Beneficiary:		1-CCP
Objectives					
<i>Objective 12: Raised capacities of SMEs for qualitative EEN services provisions</i>					
Activities and division of work (WP description)					
Task No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Task Name	Description	Participants		In-kind Contributions and Subcontracting (Yes/No and which)
			Name	Role (COO, BEN, AE, AP, OTHER)	
T3.1	Coordination of internal Capacity building activities	- Support in organisation of 10 internal training with participation of the team. - Attending 4 different online training	CCP AIDA WECA RDA CCIDR	BEN COO BEN BEN BEN	

	Learning from the experience of the Network	▪ annually participate in centralised and decentralised training programme organised by the Network ▪ 1-2 persons participate annually in the Network Conference ▪ 1 Study visits to raise capacities of the staff	CCP AIDA WECA RDA CCIDR	BEN COO BEN BEN BEN		
Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)						
Milestone No (continuous numbering not linked to WP)	Milestone Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Description	Due Date (month number)	Means of Verification
MS1	Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 1-12	3	CCP	The analysis will be based on the methodology advised by the Network, or will develop its own methodology by comparing the required knowledge and availability to identify the gaps to further advising for the training programmes needed to attend	M2	
MS2	Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 13- 24	3	CCP	The same analysis will be done at the end of the first year of implementation	M12	
MS3	Analysis of the consortium’s training needs for months 25- 42	3	CCP	The same analysis will be done, but the body of knowledge can differ from the previous ones.	M24	

Deliverable No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Deliverable Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (month number)	Description (including format and language)
Not applicable							

Estimated budget — Resources
See detailed budget table/calculator (annex 1 to Part B).

Work Package 4

Work Package 4: Network coordination and quality management					
Duration:	M1 - M42	Lead Beneficiary:	1-AIDA		
Objectives					
<i>Objective 13: Contribution to quality of the Network</i>					
Activities and division of work (WP description)					
Task No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Task Name	Description	Participants		In-kind Contributions and Subcontracting (Yes/No and which)
			Name	Role (COO, BEN, AE, AP, OTHER)	

T4.1	Contribution to Network' international activities	Participation as speaker in international activity organised by Network partners Hosting 5 decentralised Network training	AIDA All Partner		COO BEN		
Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)							
Milestone No (continuous numbering not linked to WP)	Milestone Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Description		Due Date (month number)	Means of Verification
MS4	Outline of the consortium's planned contribution to the Network's learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 1-12 (due in month 1)	4	AIDA	A modest contribution is foreseen		M1	
MS5	Outline of the consortium's planned contribution to the Network's learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 13-24	4	AIDA	A modest contribution is foreseen		M12	
MS6	Outline of the consortium's planned contribution to the Network's learning, development, networking and quality assurance activities in months 25-42	4	AIDA	A modest contribution is foreseen		M24	
Deliverable No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Deliverable Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (month number)	Description (including format and language)
Not applicable.							

Estimated budget — Resources

See detailed budget table/calculator (annex 1 to Part B).

Work Package 5

Work Package 5: Project management					
Duration:	M1 - 42	Lead Beneficiary:	1-AIDA		
Objectives					
Objective 14: Successfully management and implementation of Project Results					
Activities and division of work (WP description).					
Task No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Task Name	Description	Participants		In-kind Contributions and Subcontracting (Yes/No and which)
			Name	Role (COO, BEN, AE, AP, OTHER)	
T5.1	Project management, coordination and communication, evaluation and monitoring and quality assurance	- Communication regularly with email, WhatsApp and virtual meetings - Internally reporting in the IT Platform - Quality control of the deliverables prepared - Monitoring regularly in project meetings	AIDA CCP WECA RDA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN BEN BEN	NO

T5.2	Project meetings	12 regular consortium meetings of EEN ALBANIA to discuss the approach methods, roles and responsibilities for implementing the project, to monitor overall project performance and that of individual partners, to evaluation of achievements, communication and cooperation among partners, internal procedures, financial issues, etc.	AIDA CCP WECA RDA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN BEN BEN	NO	
T5.3	Project Reporting	The reporting follows the Network common report system at regular intervals. It will serve all our Consortium partners to evaluate the progress towards the objectives set out in this Programme and the efficiency of the processes implemented to achieve results, to identify performance drivers and the weaknesses which need to be addressed. The Project will report KPIs and, which will be counted automatically in the Network IT Platform and record the Activity Indicators (ACTs). Each partner has individual targets, but the progress on their achievement will be assessed at consortium level. 2 Progress Reports be uploaded 1 final report. The Coordinator will be in charge of reporting and all partners will provide input of their respective activities and costs in the system.	AIDA CCP WECA RDA CCIDR	COO BEN BEN BEN BEN	NO	
Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)						
Milestone No (continuous numbering not linked to WP)	Milestone Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Description	Due Date (month number)	Means of Verification
MS7	Completed profile in the Network Directory	5	CCP	All Staff members have completed their profile in the Network Directory in the IT Platform	M2	IT Platform

MS8	Tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners	5	AIDA	Provision of a list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners		M2	IT Platform
MS9	Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners	5	AIDA	Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners		M12	The list prepared
MS10	Analysis of the Consortium’s training needs for months 25- 42	5	AIDA	Prepared the document of consortium’s training needs for months 25- 42		M24	IT Platform
MS11	Update Network Directory profiles and list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners	5	AIDA	Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners		M24	
MS12	Update Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies	5	AIDA	Update (if necessary) of Network Directory profiles of staff members and of the list of tools and methodologies that can be used by other Network partners		M36	IT Platform and the list
Deliverable No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Deliverable Name	Work Package No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (month number)	Description (including format and language)
D5.1	Description of internal quality control system of the consortium for partnering profiles	5	AIDA	[DMP — Data Management Plan] [	[SEN — Sensitive]	M2	Use the format proposed and trained by the partner

Estimated budget — Resources *(n/a for prefixed Lump Sum Grants)*

Not applicable (WP = lump sum)

Subcontracting**Subcontracting***Give details on subcontracted project tasks (if any) and explain the reasons why (as opposed to direct implementation by the Beneficiaries/Affiliated Entities).**Subcontracting — Subcontracting means the implementation of ‘action tasks’, i.e. specific tasks which are part of the EU grant and are described in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.***Note:** *Subcontracting concerns the outsourcing of a part of the project to a party outside the consortium. It is not simply about purchasing goods or services. We normally expect that the participants have sufficient operational capacity to implement the project activities themselves. Subcontracting should therefore be exceptional.**Include only subcontracts that comply with the rules (i.e. best value for money and no conflict of interest; no subcontracting of coordinator tasks).*

Work Package No	Subcontract No (continuous numbering linked to WP)	Subcontract Name (subcontracted action tasks)	Description (including task number and BEN/AE to which it is linked)	Estimated Costs (EUR)	Justification (why is subcontracting necessary?)	Best-Value-for-Money (how do you intend to ensure it?)
	S1.1					
Other issues: <i>If subcontracting for the project goes beyond 30% of the total eligible costs, give specific reasons.</i>			Insert text			

Timetable**Timetable (projects up to 2 years)***Fill in cells in beige to show the duration of activities. Repeat lines/columns as necessary.***Note:** *Use the project month numbers instead of calendar months. Month 1 marks always the start of the project. In the timeline you should indicate the timing of each activity per WP.*

ACTIVITY	MONTHS																							
	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	M 8	M 9	M 10	M 11	M 12	M 13	M 14	M 15	M 16	M 17	M 18	M 19	M 20	M 21	M 22	M 23	
Task 1.1 - Provision of information services (first level)																								
Task 1.2 - Provision of advisory services (Second level)																								
Task 1.3- Partnering services (second level)																								
Task 2.1 Raising awareness on EEN Services																								
Task 2.2 Promotional, communication and dissemination)		D2.1										D2.2	D2.3											D2.4
Task 2.3 Visibility of the EEN-ALBANIA and Network																								

Task 3.1 Coordination of internal Capacity building activities(		MS1									MS2											MS3
Task 3.2 Capacity building activities in Network																						
Task 4.1 Contribution to Network' international activities	M S4										MS5											MS6
Task 5.1 Project management, coordination and communication, quality management, evaluation and monitoring		MS7									MS9											MS10
		MS8																				MS11
		D5.1																				
Task 5.2 Project meetings																						
Task 5.3 Project Reporting																						

Timetable (projects of more than 2 years) <i>Fill in cells in beige to show the duration of activities. Repeat lines/columns as necessary.</i> Note: Use actual calendar years and quarters. In the timeline you should indicate the timing of each activity per WP. You may add additional columns if your project is longer than 6 years.														
ACTIVITY	YEAR 2025		YEAR 2-2026				YEAR 3-2027				YEAR 4-2027			
	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
Task 1.1 - Provision of information services (first level)														
Task 1.2 - Provision of advisory services (Second level)														
Task 1.3- Partnering services (second level)														
Task 2.1 Raising awareness on EEN Services														
Task 2.2 Promotional, communication and dissemination)														
Task 2.3 Visibility of the EEN-ALBANIA and Network														
Task 3.1 Coordination of internal Capacity building activities)														
Task 3.2 Capacity building activities in Network														

Task 4.1 Contribution to Network' international activities														
Task 5.1 Project management, coordination and communication, quality management, evaluation and monitoring														
Task 5.2 Project meetings														
Task 5.3 Project Reporting														

#\$WRK-PLA-WP\$#

#@ETH-ICS-EI@#

5. OTHER

5.1 Ethics

Ethics
Not applicable.

#SETH-ICS-EIS# #@SEC-URI-SU@#

5.2 Security

Security
Not applicable.

#SSEC-URI-SUS# #@DEC-LAR-DL@#

6. DECLARATIONS

Double funding	
Information concerning other EU grants for this project  Please note that there is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions).	YES/NO
We confirm that to our best knowledge neither the project as a whole nor any parts of it have benefitted from any other EU grant (including EU funding managed by authorities in EU Member States or other funding bodies, e.g. EU Regional Funds, EU Agricultural Funds, etc.). If NO, explain and provide details.	YES
We confirm that to our best knowledge neither the project as a whole nor any parts of it are (nor will be) submitted for any other EU grant (including EU funding managed by authorities in EU Member States or other funding bodies, e.g. EU Regional Funds, EU Agricultural Funds, etc.). If NO, explain and provide details.	YES

Financial support to third parties (if applicable)
If in your project the maximum amount per third party will be more than the threshold amount set in the Call document, justify and explain why the higher amount is necessary in order to fulfil your project's objectives.
Not applicable.

ANNEXES

LIST OF ANNEXES

Standard

- Detailed budget table/Calculator (annex 1 to Part B) — *mandatory*
- CVs (annex 2 to Part B) — *mandatory (short outline)*
- Annual activity reports (annex 3 to Part B) — *not applicable*
- List of previous projects (annex 4 to Part B) — *not applicable*

Special

- Communication work plan (annex 5 to Part B) — *mandatory*

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	15.04.2021	Initial version (new MFF).
2.0	01.06.2022	Consolidation, formatting and layout changes. Tags added.
3.0	01.03.2024	Update for 2024 call.