INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

STEP-EU: Strengthening the Albanian Parliament for EU Integration

Reference No: **2026-11-103**

Deadline for Submissions: Proposals must be submitted on or before **23:59 (CET), 10 December 2026**. Late submissions will not be considered for evaluation.

Address for Submissions: E-mail: tendersubmissions@idea.int

This email address is set up with auto-response to acknowledge emails received. In the event that you did not receive an autoreply after the submission, please send a text message prior to the submission deadline (NO CALLS, CALLS WILL NOT BE ANSWERED) to this number **+46725375735**. In your text message, please provide the following:

- Reference no. and title
- Email address you used for submission.
- Date and Time, you sent your submission (e.g. 01 December 2026, 12:30 CET).
- The above information must also be sent to tender@idea.int before the deadline for submission.

Format for Submissions: Proposals must be submitted by email, using the templates provided on this call.

The following text should be put in the subject field of the email: Reference No. 2026-11-103; Proposals for Lot (*specify lot number*) - [Full Name of your organization].

Info Session: An Information and question and answer session will be hosted via Microsoft Teams on **20 November 2026 at 10:00 CET**. **Click here to join the meeting** (Meeting ID: 393 713 686 798 051 1; Passcode: xr6LV9ia). Recording of the session will be saved and shared on our website.

Clarification Email Address: tender@idea.int

Clarifications may be requested via e-mail no later than **24 November 2026** at the above email address. Note a response to a request for clarifications will be issued on our website http://www.idea.int/. Therefore, please check the website regularly during the process.

This initiative is organized in the framework of the project "Strengthening the Albanian Parliament for EU Integration (STEP-EU)", financed by the European Union and implemented by International IDEA.

Funded by the European Union

KEY INFORMATION

Key information	Details
Main goal	Strengthening democratic governance through enhanced civil society participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes in Parliament in the framework of EU accession
Grant types	Consortium grants: EUR 50,000-75,000 Single organisation grants: EUR 10,000-20,000
Indicative allocation	EUR 385,000 4 Consortium Grants 4 Single Organization Grants
Implementation period	Anticipated start: 1 March 2027 Maximum duration: 12 months
Submission deadline	before 23:59 (CET), 10 December 2026
Submit applications to	tendersubmissions@idea.int
Questions and clarifications	tender@idea.int
Call notices and updates	www.idea.int

Note: There are two different email addresses as outlined above, one to be used for Submission of your final proposal and the second one to be used for clarifications and other related correspondence.

1 ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

1.1 International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1995, with member states across all continents, which aims to support sustainable democracy world-wide and assist in the development of institutions and the culture of democracy.

1.2 The STEP-EU project

The 'Strengthening the Albanian Parliament for EU Integration- STEP-EU" is a project implemented by International IDEA and funded by the European Union (EU). It addresses the growing pressures on the Assembly of Albania as EU accession negotiations progress and alignment with the EU acquis accelerates.

The project supports the Assembly of Albania and its supporting structures to exercise their legislative, oversight and representative functions more effectively throughout the EU accession process, with a particular focus on transparency, accountability, and meaningful civil society participation. It is focused to support Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff in improving legislative scrutiny and managing the increasing volume and complexity of EU related reforms, while also encouraging cross party dialogue and more consensus-based policymaking.

A core component of the project is stronger engagement between the Parliament, civil society, and the media. By improving access to information, supporting structured consultation mechanisms, and building the capacity of external stakeholders, the project promotes a more participatory and transparent legislative process and deepens public understanding of the EU accession process.

The project operates within Albania's active EU accession context and engages with the Assembly and its structures as well as with civil society organisations (CSOs). Its activities are aligned with the Assembly's Action Plan 2026–2030 and with relevant EU accession benchmarks.

This Call for Proposals supports the civil society dimension of the STEP-EU project by financially supporting CSO-led initiatives that strengthen the parliamentary dimension of EU accession.

The overall objective of the STEP-EU project is to strengthen democratic governance through enhanced civil society participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes in Parliament, in the framework of EU accession.

The project contributes to two **outcomes**:

- Outcome 1: The parliament exercises its legislative, oversight, and representative functions in a way that aims to be transparent, inclusive, gender-responsive, and accountable to all citizens, focusing on advancing the EU integration agenda.
- Outcome 2: Civil society and media utilize their increased capacities to more effectively participate in decision-making, inform the public, and promote transparency and accountability in Albania's EU accession process.

2 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CALL REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Objectives of the Call

This Call supports

i. CSO- and media-led initiatives that help civil society and media contribute more effectively to parliamentary processes, and reinforce the link between policy expertise, citizens' concerns, public-interest reporting and law-making in the Assembly of Albania.

ii. Structured and constructive engagement between the Assembly of Albania, its supporting structures, civil society and the media on EU accession.

Each proposal must address one lot and demonstrate a clear contribution to at least one of the two STEP-EU outcomes set out in section 1.2.

2.2 Areas of support

2.2.1 Lot 1 Analysis, research, legislative input, oversight and monitoring

Lot 1 aims to strengthen independent, evidence-based analysis, research, and monitoring that feed the public and the Parliament in legislative scrutiny and public oversight of the EU accession process, so to ensure evidence-based civil society participation in the law-making process itself, including participatory and structured written and oral input to public consultation processes, parliamentary committees, MPs and parliament staff on draft laws related to EU accession. Proposals should include one or more of the following types of activities. The list is indicative and non-exhaustive; other activities that contribute to the objectives of this Lot may also be considered.

- Policy analysis on the EU acquis and the harmonisation of technically complex negotiating chapters;
- Analysis and input to alignment of legislation and technically demanding policy areas, and ex-post review of approximated legislation;
- Monitoring and public reporting on the implementation of parliamentary recommendations in the negotiating positions and legislative approximation to the EU Acquis.

Proposals under Lot 1 should primarily target both the public and parliamentary structures such as parliamentary committees, Members of Parliament or parliamentary services, as well as other relevant institutions. Where possible, outputs should be aligned with key national strategic documents.

2.2.2 Lot 2 Citizen participation, inclusion and outreach

Lot 2 aims to expand citizens' understanding of, and participation in, Parliament's role in EU accession, and to strengthen the inclusion of under-represented voices with particular attention to women, youth, persons with disabilities, and minorities. Proposals should include one or more of the following types of activities. The list is indicative and non-exhaustive; other activities that contribute to the objectives of this Lot may also be considered.

- Structured dialogue between Parliament and organisations representing or actively engaging these groups, through which they can advocate their concerns and provide input or recommendations on key EU-related legislation;
- Dedicated engagement with women's organisations and networks working on gender equality and women's political participation to support their structured input into EU-related legislative and policy processes, including through awareness-raising on gender-sensitive aspects of EU accession chapters (such as gender equality, anti-discrimination, and social policy);
- Civic education and hands-on engagement that bring citizens, young people and local organisations into structured contact with Members of Parliament and the parliamentary administration, including innovative approaches for citizen participation;
- Regional citizens' events with Parliament, beyond the capital city;
- Public information campaigns on EU accession chapters and parliament's role;
- Accessible outreach and communication materials about the EU accession process, including videos, digital and visual content for public use.

Proposals under Lot 2 are expected to be implemented in cooperation with the relevant institutions and to reach the target groups.

2.2.3 Lot 3 Media and public-interest reporting on EU accession

Lot 3 aims to strengthen the capacity of local and national independent media organizations and journalists to produce accurate, accessible, public-interest reporting on Parliament's EU accession-related legislative and oversight work and to contribute to informed public debate on EU integration. Proposals should include one or more of the following types of activities. The list is indicative and non-exhaustive; other activities that contribute to the objectives of this Lot may also be considered.

- Public-interest reporting and multimedia content on Parliament's legislative and oversight work on EU integration, produced by local and national independent media organisations and journalists, including possible coverage of parliamentary committee work, scrutiny of draft laws aligning with the acquis, and tracking of Parliament's implementation of its EU-related commitments and recommendations;
- Strengthening the capacity of journalists and media organisations to accurately verify, track and report on Parliament's legislative and oversight work on EU integration;
- Formats and initiatives that support informed public debate on EU integration and create structured linkages between citizens, media and parliamentary proceedings such as public forums, explainers, data journalism, multimedia storytelling.

Lot 3 is open to Non-Governmental Media Organisations and to other CSOs demonstrating systematic work with independent journalists. Editorial independence must be guaranteed in all content produced.

2.3 Eligibility of applicants

All applicants must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be a non-profit, non-governmental organisation legally registered in Albania for at least 36 months before the submission deadline, and comply with Albanian legislation on non-profit organisations.
- Be directly responsible for preparing and managing the proposed project, rather than acting as an intermediary.
- Demonstrate relevant experience and a successful record of project delivery in one or more of the following: work with Parliament, policy research, parliamentary monitoring, civic engagement, European Integration process, inclusion of under-represented groups, community building, or independent journalism.
- Demonstrate the capacity to plan, budget, implement, monitor and manage the project, account for project costs and provide timely narrative and financial reports.
- Be financially stable, have verifiable financial management and internal control systems, and commit to the capacity assessment and due diligence process.
- Demonstrate commitment to gender mainstreaming, social inclusion and fundamental human rights, including equality, non-discrimination and human dignity.

Consortium lead applicants must also meet the following requirements:

- Demonstrate the capacity to guide and support their partners.
- Demonstrate the capacity to support the development of other CSOs, including local and grassroots organisations outside Tirana and organisations led by or representing young people, women, persons with disabilities and minorities.

Applicants must submit the evidence listed in section 4.1, including registration documents, financial statements for 2023, 2024 and 2025, and the most recent audit report where available.

2.4 Consortium requirements

A consortium must include one lead applicant and at least one partner organisation. The lead applicant must meet all the requirements in section 2.3 and is responsible for managing the grant, coordinating the consortium and reporting to International IDEA. Each partner must also meet eligibility criteria specified in section 2.3, must provide its registration documents and a signed partnership statement.

The application must explain each organisation's role, responsibilities and contribution to activities, results and the budget. The lead applicant submits one application package on behalf of the consortium.

The partner(s) must have a meaningful role in project implementation, both in terms of portion of activities and allocated budget, which shall not be less than 30% of the total budget.

2.5 Ineligible applicants and number of applications

The following are not eligible for grant funding: individuals; political parties; for-profit organisations; government institutions; and faith-based organisations.

An organisation may participate in only one application under this Call, whether as a lead applicant, partner or single organisation applicant. Each application must be submitted under one lot only.

2.6 Available funding and grant amounts

Grant type	Composition and location	Grant amount
Consortium grant	One lead applicant and at least one partner organisation (both registered in Albania)	Minimum budget EUR 50,000 Maximum budget 75,000
Single organisation grant	One eligible organisation based and working outside Tirana	Minimum budget EUR 10,000 Maximum budget 20,000

Across the three lots, the tentative allocation is to award a maximum of four consortium grants and a maximum of four single organisation grants, for a total indicative amount of up to EUR 385,000. These are overall limits for the Call. International IDEA reserves the right not to award all available funds.

No funding allocations are predetermined for individual lots. To the extent possible, International IDEA will seek to ensure diversity among awarded grants across the three lots and types of activities, seeking balanced distribution among lots and types of activity.

2.7 Duration, geographical coverage and inclusiveness

The anticipated start date is 1 March 2027. Projects may run for up to 12 months. The exact implementation dates will be confirmed in the grant agreement.

Projects must support the parliamentary dimension of Albania's EU accession process. Applicants must identify the locations where they will work and the groups and institutions they intend to reach, including any engagement outside Tirana.

International IDEA will seek to ensure substantial representation among awarded grants of initiatives prioritising minority rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability, as well as adequate representation of women’s organisations and/or initiatives supporting gender equality and women’s political participation.

2.8 Gender equality inclusion and human rights

Applicants must explain how gender considerations will inform the analysis, design, implementation and monitoring of their project. Proposals should identify barriers to participation, provide practical measures for equitable participation and consider how the project may affect women and men differently. Social inclusion and respect for human rights must inform all activities, including engagement with under-represented groups.

2.9 Capacity assessment

Applicants for Single Organizational Grants and partners in Consortium Grants must complete the Basic Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Annex B1), while lead applicants in Consortium Grants must complete the Full Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Annex B2), with all questionnaires fully completed and submitted together with the rest of the application package.

3 ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECTS AND COSTS

3.1 Eligible projects

To be eligible, a project must fall within the selected lot, contribute to at least one STEP-EU outcome, and meet the grant amount, duration and applicant requirements in section 2. The proposal must present a coherent set of activities, achievable results and a realistic implementation plan. Activities outside the scope of this Call will not be supported.

3.2 Budget structure and cost limits

The budget must be presented in EUR using the Cooperation Agreement Budget Template published with the Call. It must show quantities, units, unit rates and total costs, and be consistent with the activities and responsibilities described in the Application Form.

Direct costs must be grouped under the following four headings:

- Staff (Human resources) costs.
- Administrative and office costs.
- Activities.
- Reporting, evaluation, audit.

Human resources costs and administrative and office costs, taken together, must not exceed 40% of total budget. Indirect costs, also referred to as management costs, must not exceed 7% of total direct costs. The total grant requested, including indirect costs, must remain within the minimum and maximum amounts for the selected grant type.

Cofinancing is possible, but not required.

Costs must be necessary, reasonable and justified in relation to the activities and expected results. Applicants must explain the basis of their estimates and demonstrate value for money. The same expense must not be charged more than once or covered by more than one funding source. Final cost and reporting conditions will be set out in the grant agreement and General Terms for Cooperation Agreement.

Direct costs are eligible only where they:

- Are agreed by International IDEA, directly related to and necessary for the project, and specifically included in the approved budget;
- Are actually incurred during the project implementation period;
- Comply with the applicable procurement requirements and International IDEA policies; and
- Are identifiable, recorded in the grantee's accounts and supported by original invoices, receipts or other required payment documents.

Subject to these conditions and any specific restrictions in the grant agreement, eligible direct costs may include:

- Staff remuneration for full-time or part-time assignments to the project, at the organisation's normal rates, including related social security charges;
- Travel, daily subsistence and local transportation directly related to implementation, in accordance with applicable policies;

- Consumables, supplies, communication and postage directly attributable to the project;
- Costs of project activities, meetings and events; and
- Costs arising from specific requirements of the grant agreement, such as reporting, evaluation, or audit, subject to the exclusions below.

Indirect costs may cover organisational overheads and other costs supporting project implementation that cannot be directly identified with specific activities. They must be expressly included in the approved budget and must not duplicate costs charged under other budget headings. The agreed indirect-cost rate must not exceed 7% of direct costs. Indirect costs do not require separate expenditure justification in the financial report.

The following costs are not eligible:

- Duties, taxes and charges, including VAT, that are recoverable/deductible by the Organisation;
- In-kind contributions, including the provision of common office space or utilities without an actual expense borne by the grantee;
- Items already financed from other sources;
- Purchase cost of equipment and assets unless the asset or equipment is specifically purchased for the Project.
- Miscellaneous travel expenses, including payments for passports, visas, travel permits, vaccinations, medications and travel insurance;
- Currency exchange losses arising because the grantee's bank-account currency differs from the currency of the grant; and
- Bank charges on currency exchanges or other charges due on transfers or remittances to International IDEA.
- Debts and debt service charges, provision for losses, debts or potential future liabilities.
- Costs of purchase of land or buildings.

All expenditure remains subject to the grant agreement, its Special Terms and the General Terms for Cooperation Agreement (Annex A).

4 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

4.1 Required application package

Submit a complete package containing the following documents. The Application Form and the detailed budget must be separate, clearly labelled files.

Document	Requirements
Application Form	Complete the correct application form, as there are two different Application Forms: 1) for Consortium Grants; 2) for Single Organization Grants (simplified). Complete all applicable sections, including the applicant declaration and the checklist. For a consortium, include information on all partners.
Detailed budget	Complete the Cooperation Agreement Budget Template in EUR, showing unit rates, quantities and the four direct cost headings, plus any indirect costs.
Declaration on Honour	Complete and sign the Declaration on Honour on exclusion criteria and selection criteria published with the Call. Answer each question in accordance with the wording of the declaration.

Document	Requirements
Applicant registration documents	Court registration decision, statute and tax registration certificate (NIPT).
Financial statements	Applicant's financial statements for 2023, 2024 and 2025, prepared in accordance with Albanian legislation.
Audit report	Most recent audited financial report, where available.
Consortium partner documents	Registration documents for each partner and a signed partnership statement from each partner. A partnership statement is included in the Application Form for this purpose.

The application materials published with this Call comprise of the General Terms for Cooperation Agreement (Annex A), the Application Form (Annex B1 for Consortium Grants and Annex B2 for Single Organization Grants), the Cooperation Agreement Budget Template (Annex C), the Capacity Assessment Questionnaire (Annex D1 or D2), and the Declaration on Honour on exclusion criteria and selection criteria (Annex E), and. Applicants should also consult the questions and answers published for the Call.

4.2 Language and preparation

The application, budget and supporting documents must be submitted in English. For official documents issued in Albanian, provide the original together with an English translation (courtesy translations are also accepted). English is also the language of the grant agreement, reports and other grant-related documentation.

Use the Application Form to provide specific, verifiable information against each evaluation criterion. Retain the questions and section numbering and clearly mark sections that do not apply as not applicable. The budget and narrative must use consistent activity references.

4.3 Submission and deadline

Send the complete application package by email to tendersubmissions@idea.int. Submit the completed Application Form as a Word document and the detailed budget as a separate file in the format of the published budget template. Signed declarations and supporting documents may be attached as scanned PDF files.

Use the following email subject format: Reference No. 2026-11-103; Proposals for Lot (specify lot number) - [Full Name of your organization].

Applications must be received by **23:59 CET on 10 December 2026**. The deadline stated in the notice and any formally published extension apply to all applicants. Late applications will not be evaluated.

The submission mailbox provides an auto-response to acknowledge emails received. If an auto-response is not received within a few minutes, promptly please send an email to tender@idea.int and a text message prior to the submission deadline to this number **+46725375735**, identifying the Call reference and title, the sender's email address, and the date and time of submission. A request concerning an acknowledgement does not extend the submission deadline. Applicants remain responsible for ensuring that their complete package reaches the submission mailbox on time.

4.4 Questions and information session

Send questions to tender@idea.int by **24 November 2026**. Questions and answers will be published on www.idea.int for all applicants. Applicants should check the website regularly for clarifications, updates and any amendments.

An online question and answer session will be held through Microsoft Teams on 20 November 2026 at 10:00 CET. **Click here to join the meeting** (Meeting ID: 393 713 686 798 051 1; Passcode: xr6LV9ia). Recording of the session will be saved and shared on our website.

5 EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION

Applications will be assessed through an administrative and eligibility check, an evaluation of the narrative and budget, and a capacity assessment before grant award. The same published criteria and thresholds apply under each lot.

5.1 Administrative and eligibility check

International IDEA will verify whether the application was received on time, contains the required documents and information, and meets the applicant, partnership, selected lot, grant amount and duration requirements. An application may be rejected if requested information is missing or incorrect or if it does not satisfy the requirements of this Call. Applications that fail this stage will not proceed to scored evaluation.

5.2 Evaluation criteria

Eligible applications that successfully pass the preliminary organizational capacity screening will undergo further evaluation by the evaluation panel against the six criteria below. The maximum overall score is 100 points. Each criterion's maximum points correspond to its percentage weight.

Criterion	What will be assessed	Maximum points
Relevance of the proposal towards the objectives of the Call	Contribution to the Call objectives, selected lot and STEP-EU outcomes; connection to parliamentary processes and Albania's EU accession; relevance to target groups.	20
Quality of application	Problem analysis, expected results, intervention approach, coherence of activities with expected results, and activity plan. Feasibility, monitoring, risks and sustainability will be considered as part of the quality of the proposed intervention.	30
Relevant experience	Relevant organisational and team experience, previous delivery and results, and supporting evidence.	10
Organizational capacity	Management, governance, staffing, financial controls and reporting capacity. Where applicable, practical commitment to developing the applicant's capacity and supporting other CSOs, including consortium partners.	15
Cross-cutting elements (Gender mainstreaming)	Gender analysis, measures for equitable participation and benefits, and integration of gender considerations into implementation and monitoring.	5
Budget and Finance/Value for money	Consistency with the narrative and workplan; realistic and justified quantities and rates; cost-efficiency in relation to results; arithmetic accuracy and compliance with budget limits.	20
Total		100

5.3 Minimum scores

The first five criteria form the narrative assessment, with a maximum of 80 points. An application must score at least 56 out of 80 points (70%) in that assessment to proceed to the budget assessment.

The budget assessment carries a maximum of 20 points. An application must score at least 14 out of 20 points (70%) to proceed to capacity assessment.

Both thresholds must be met separately. Meeting both produces a combined minimum of 70 out of 100 points; a higher overall score cannot compensate for failure to meet either threshold.

The budget review will check the relationship between costs, activities and work inputs, the reasonableness of estimates, arithmetic accuracy, and compliance with the direct and indirect cost limits. Meeting the minimum scores does not guarantee a grant. Funding decisions remain subject to the outcome of capacity assessment, the funding and grant-number limits in section 2.6 and adequate representation as set forth in sections 2.6 and 2.7, as well as no objection by the donor.

5.4 Clarification and refinement of proposals

Before award, International IDEA may discuss proposals that meet the applicable minimum scores with the applicants concerned. Applicants may be asked to clarify or refine activities, methodology, outputs, timing or costs to address evaluation findings, avoid duplication, improve feasibility or strengthen complementarity with other STEP-EU activities and partners.

Any changes must be agreed with the applicant and must not fundamentally alter the nature or objectives of the project. International IDEA may proceed on the basis of a revised proposal where the requested adjustments have been satisfactorily addressed.

5.5 Final capacity assessment and grant preparation

Following final evaluation results, pre-selected applicants considered for funding will undergo a confirmation of their responses to the Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaires. Applicants must cooperate with the assessment and provide the evidence requested to confirm their initial responses. An applicant that does not meet the assessment requirements, or whose responses contain incorrect information, will not be offered a STEP-EU grant.

Following a successful proposal review and capacity assessment, International IDEA will verify the budget in detail. The narrative and budget may be adjusted by agreement to ensure consistency with the agreed activities and work inputs, correct arithmetic errors and address issues identified during the pre-award process. The final scope, activities and grant amount will be confirmed in the grant agreement.

5.6 Notification and award

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing after completion of the evaluation and grant award process. International IDEA is not obliged to select any proposal and reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, repeat the Call if minimum requirements are not met, or leave available funds unawarded.

5.7 Feedback and complaints

Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback, which shall be provided by the Evaluation Committee based on the assessments recorded in the Evaluation Report. Such feedback shall summarise common strengths and weaknesses of the respective application, shall not include individual assessments from individual evaluators, and shall be provided for information purposes only.

Complaints concerning the Call or selection process can be submitted in writing to both the Internal Auditor and the Executive Director of International IDEA through tender.complaints@idea.int. The complaint should identify this Call and explain the grounds for the complaint.

6 GRANT IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

The grant agreement and its General Terms and Conditions govern implementation and financial accountability.

Grantees must maintain appropriate financial and project records and provide timely narrative and financial reports. Consortium lead applicants remain responsible for consolidated management and reporting.

Grantees must acknowledge EU funding and ensure the visibility of the European Union and the STEP-EU project in all outputs, in line with the Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions. Media activities must also safeguard editorial independence.