English version

Guidelines

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS for EU + CH based companies

For Private-Sector Development Partnerships to Promote Skills Development and Employment in Syria

Implementation Country: Syria
Submission Deadline: [23 December 2026]
Submission Email: syria-private-sector@giz.de,

Subject line for applications: Call for Applications – Europe-based Company – [Company Name]

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full form
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CET	Central European Time
DPP	Development Partnership with the Private Sector
EU	European Union
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
STEP	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Employment Promotion in Syria
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Section 1: Introduction

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Employment Promotion in Syria (STEP) programme is a four-year initiative running from 2026 to 2030. It is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Union (EU) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

STEP is launching this special Call for Applications for private-sector partnerships to promote employment and economic recovery in Syria.

The Call invites **companies established in the European Union (EU) and Switzerland (CH)** to propose initiatives that address concrete business and labour-market needs in Syria while generating measurable development benefits.

The proposed partnerships are expected to combine companies' business interests with development objectives, including workforce development, skills transfer, innovation and improved job quality of Syrian enterprises, aiming at sustainable employment promotion.

Particular emphasis is placed on initiatives that establish meaningful and sustainable cooperation between European companies and Syrian companies and/or public vocational education and training providers.

Section 2. Background

Syria's economic recovery requires strong links between private-sector demand, investment and skills development. Companies often have specific needs for qualified workers, technical expertise and new technologies, while vocational education and training and other labour-market institutions need stronger links to changing market requirements.

GIZ Syria therefore seeks to engage companies that can contribute business expertise, technical know-how, technology and training capacities. Through public-private development partnerships, companies can address concrete business needs while contributing to employment creation, skills development and the strengthening of Syrian enterprises.

The partnerships may involve cooperation with Syrian companies, vocational training centres, technical institutes, universities, private training providers, employment service providers, chambers, business associations, industry organisations and other relevant institutions in Syria.

Depending on the proposed initiative, cooperation may focus, for example, on workforce development and upskilling, technology and knowledge transfer, innovative training models, enhancement of the work environment, safety at work or linkages to green or digital technologies and skills. Partnerships shall demonstrate a clear link between the proposed business activities and the expected development benefits in Syria.

Section 3: Guidelines for applications

Objective of the Call

The objective of the Call is to identify European (EU + CH) companies that are willing and able to jointly implement innovative, demand-oriented measures in Syria (selected governorates below) that:

- create new employment opportunities;
- strengthen market-oriented vocational education and training;
- develop skilled workforce in line with the needs of the companies and the wider labour market;
- support sustainable business investment with additional employment effects;
- promote technology, knowledge and innovation transfer;
- enhance the work environment, esp. for vulnerable groups;
- strengthen cooperation between businesses and vocational training providers;
- contribute to Syria's economic resilience and sustainable economic development.

The proposed initiative must be based on a clearly identified business need and demonstrate a credible and measurable development impact.

Applicants should demonstrate the business rationale for the proposed activities, the expected employment and/or skills-development effects, the proposed implementation arrangements and the sustainability of the results. Moreover, the public benefit beyond the business interest must be clearly demonstrated.

Who Can Apply?

The Call is open to **privately owned, profit-oriented companies legally established and operational in a Member State of the European Union (EU) or in Switzerland (CH).**

To be eligible to apply, an applicant must meet **all** of the following minimum requirements:

- be privately owned and operate on a for-profit basis;
- be legally established and operational in an EU Member State or Switzerland;
- have been legally established and operational for a sufficient period to provide **two most recent audited annual financial statements**, or equivalent independently verified financial documentation;
- have an annual turnover of at least **EUR 100,000**;
- employ at least **five full-time equivalent (FTE) employees**;

- demonstrate sufficient financial capacity and liquidity to implement the proposed project and provide the required company contribution;
- possess the necessary technical, managerial and human-resource capacity to implement or effectively oversee the proposed activities;
- have appropriate compliance, risk-management and integrity structures;
- comply with applicable national and EU legislation and relevant regulatory requirements;
- commit to internationally recognised human rights, labour and social standards;
- have no relevant record of fraud, corruption, serious professional misconduct or other integrity-related violations that would prevent participation in the Call;
- be willing and able to cooperate with GIZ and, preferably with Syrian companies, vocational education and training institutions, universities, training providers, employment services or other relevant local partners; and
- demonstrate the ability to implement or effectively oversee the proposed activities in Syria.

GIZ may request additional documentation or information to verify compliance with the above eligibility requirements during the eligibility screening, due-diligence, technical assessment or project-preparation process.

Important: Meeting the minimum applicant eligibility requirements does not guarantee selection for funding. Eligible applications will be subject to technical assessment, due diligence, applicable approval procedures and the availability of funds.

Project Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for support, the proposed project must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

- **is implemented in one or more of the following Syrian governorates: Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Lattakia, Tartous, Dara'a, Aleppo, Raqqa.**
- addresses a clearly demonstrated business and labour-market need;
- generates a direct or indirect contribution to employment, income generation, employability, workforce development, skills development or job quality;
- is economically and technically viable;
- has clearly defined and measurable objectives and expected development results;
- demonstrates a credible pathway towards sustainable results;
- demonstrates the additionality of GIZ public co-financing, including a clear explanation of why the proposed activities would not be undertaken, or would be

undertaken on a substantially smaller scale or with reduced development impact, without public support;

- includes an appropriate company contribution in accordance with the applicable cost-sharing requirements;
- complies with applicable laws and regulations;
- complies with relevant GIZ environmental, social, labour and human rights standards;
- includes appropriate measures to identify, prevent and manage relevant implementation risks; and
- is capable of completion within a maximum implementation period of 30 months.

Projects should be designed so that key activities and results can be sustained, scaled or replicated beyond the period of GIZ support.

Project eligibility is separate from applicant eligibility. An applicant may meet all minimum requirements as a company, but its proposed project may nevertheless be considered ineligible if it does not meet the project eligibility requirements set out above.

Project Duration and Size

The implementation period for a supported private-sector development partnership is between 12-30 months. Projects should be designed so that the proposed activities and results can realistically be achieved within this timeframe.

GIZ may provide public co-financing of up to 50% of eligible project costs. The GIZ contribution will amount to at least EUR 40,000. The participating company must contribute at least 50% of total eligible project costs. The company contribution may consist of financial contributions and, where permitted under the applicable rules, eligible in-kind contributions.

The final financing structure, project budget and eligible cost categories will be agreed during the detailed project preparation and contracting process.

Which Project Activities Will Be Supported under the Call?

The Call is sector-neutral. Proposed activities must demonstrate a clear contribution to employment, income generation, employability, workforce development, job quality or skills development.

Supported activities may include:

- investments generating additional employment opportunities;
- recruitment and workforce-retention measures;
- company-based vocational training;
- upskilling and reskilling programmes;

- structured on-the-job training;
- workplace-based learning;
- apprenticeship, traineeship and internship schemes;
- training for current and prospective employees;
- supervisory and management training for enhanced quality of jobs;
- development of occupational and technical skills; and
- training-of-trainers initiatives.

Partnerships may include cooperation with:

- vocational secondary schools
- vocational training centres;
- technical institutes;
- universities;
- private training providers;
- employment service providers;
- chambers and business associations;
- industry organisations; and
- other relevant labour-market actors.

Possible activities include development or adaptation of demand-driven curricula and training programmes, practical training opportunities, workplace-based learning, occupational profiles and training standards, and training and mentoring of instructors and workplace supervisors.

The Call particularly welcomes activities that promote:

- inclusive and diverse workforce and work environments;
- labour force participation of vulnerable groups, e.g. people with disabilities;
- women's economic empowerment;
- social cohesion aspects at the workplace;
- transfer of technology and technical know-how;
- introduction of green and digital production or service processes;
- digitalisation of business and training processes;
- development of innovative products or services;

- cooperation between European and Syrian companies;
- long-term technical cooperation; and
- sustainable knowledge-transfer mechanisms.

Implementation in Syria: Supported projects must be implemented in Syria (in one or more of the above-stated Syrian governorates)

European applicants are encouraged to identify and work with suitable local partners, including Syrian companies, vocational schools, training centres, universities and technical institutes, private training providers, industry associations, employment services, business organisations and other relevant local institutions.

In the case of a cooperation, the proposal shall explain how responsibilities, resources, knowledge and expertise will be shared between the European applicant and local implementation partners.

Which Costs Are Eligible for Reimbursement under the Private-Sector Development Partnership Projects?

The partnerships will be implemented on a cost-sharing basis.

GIZ may provide public co-financing of up to 50% of eligible project costs. The participating company is expected to finance at least 50% of total eligible project costs.

Potential company contributions may include:

- cash contributions;
- staff time;
- trainers and technical experts;
- equipment and tools;
- facilities and training premises;
- production sites;
- consumable materials;
- technical assistance provided by the company; and
- other eligible in-kind contributions.

The valuation and eligibility of in-kind contributions will be subject to the applicable GIZ rules and agreed during project preparation.

The final list of eligible costs and the applicable reimbursement rules will be confirmed during project preparation and contracting.

Private-Sector Development Partnership – Expected Indicators

Applicants are expected to define and formulate the objective of the project such that it describes the development objective and not the commercial benefit for the private partners.

Furthermore, applicants are expected to specify results and realistic, measurable indicators.

Depending on the nature of the project, relevant indicators may include:

- number of new jobs created;
- number of trainees transitioning into employment;
- employee retention rates;
- number and share of women employed;
- number of young people employed;
- number of returnees employed; and
- number of persons with disabilities employed;
- number of employees and/or trainees participating in training;
- number of people completing training measures;
- number of people achieving pre-defined competencies;
- number of training programmes or modules developed or updated; and
- number of instructors, trainers or supervisors trained;
- adoption of new technologies;
- strengthened local supply chains;
- continuation of training programmes after project completion;
- long-term employment effects;
- sustained partnerships between the company and a public vocational school or training centre;
- potential for replication in other regions or sectors.

Applicants should provide a realistic baseline, target and measurement method for key indicators wherever possible.

Applications will be assessed in particular on the expected development impact, additionality of public support, business case and sustainability, relevance of skills development, innovation and transfer potential, quality of partnerships, feasibility and the credibility of the proposed results framework.

Section 4: Call and application process

The selection process for private-sector development partnerships under the STEP programme will be conducted through a competitive, **two-stage application process**, followed by due diligence, final approval and contracting.

The process is designed to identify projects that demonstrate a clear business rationale, strong development impact, additionality of public co-financing, implementation feasibility and potential for sustainable results.

GIZ reserves the right to adjust the indicative timeline, request additional information, conduct interviews or introduce additional assessment steps where required.

Overview of the Application and Selection Process

The application process will consist of the following steps:

Process Steps	Indicative Timeline
Publication of the Call for Applications and application templates	30 October 2026
Deadline for Submission of Concept Notes	23 December 2026
Eligibility screening and assessment of Concept Notes	February 2027
Notification of shortlisted applicants	February 2027
Full Project Proposal development and project preparation	May 2027
Full proposal assessment and, where applicable, applicant interviews	May/June 2027
Final selection and approval	June 2027
Due diligence, administrative and legal checks	May/June 2027
Contracting	June/July 2027
Expected project start	July-Sept 2027

The above timeline is indicative and may be adjusted by GIZ depending on the number and quality of applications, the complexity of the proposed projects, the progress of the assessment and approval processes, and the availability of funds.

Launch of the Call and Submission of Proposals

GIZ will launch the Call for Applications through the designated communication channels and will make available the relevant application templates and guidance documents.

Interested companies must submit a Concept Note / Expression of Interest using the official GIZ template by the deadline specified in the Call.

Language of the Application

All applications and supporting documents must be submitted in **English**. Documents originally issued in another language should be accompanied by an English translation.

The Concept Note should provide sufficient information to enable GIZ to assess the applicant's eligibility and the initial quality and relevance of the proposed project.

The Concept Note should, at a minimum, address:

- the applicant's legal status, ownership structure and business activities;
- the applicant's relevant technical, managerial and financial capacity;
- the business and/or labour-market need to be addressed;
- the proposed project and its main activities;
- the expected employment, skills-development and other development results;
- the proposed implementation approach and, where already identified, Syrian implementation partners;
- the estimated project budget and proposed financing structure;
- the applicant's expected contribution;
- the additionality of GIZ support;
- the expected sustainability of the results; and
- the potential for scaling, replication or longer-term cooperation.

Applications must be submitted electronically in accordance with the instructions provided in the Call documentation.

Applications received after the stated deadline will not be considered.

Eligibility Screening

Following the submission deadline, GIZ will conduct an initial eligibility and completeness screening.

The screening will assess whether:

- the applicant meets the minimum applicant eligibility requirements set out in Section 3;
- the proposed project meets the minimum project eligibility requirements;
- all mandatory documents have been submitted;
- the proposed project falls within the scope of the Call;
- the proposed financing structure complies with the applicable requirements; and

- the application has been submitted within the specified deadline.

GIZ may request clarification or additional documentation where necessary to determine eligibility or completeness.

Only applications that meet the applicable minimum eligibility requirements will proceed to the technical assessment.

Assessment of Proposals

Eligible Concept Notes will be assessed against the Selection Criteria set out in this Call.

The assessment will consider, among other aspects:

- expected development impact;
- additionality of public co-financing;
- business rationale and sustainability;
- relevance and quality of skills and workforce development;
- innovation and technology or knowledge-transfer potential;
- quality and relevance of the proposed partnership;
- feasibility of the proposed intervention;
- potential for scaling and replication; and
- quality and measurability of the proposed results.

GIZ may establish an appropriate evaluation mechanism, including an internal or external evaluation committee or independent experts, depending on the requirements of the Call and applicable programme procedures. The proposals will be assessed against objective and pre-defined assessment criteria. GIZ will establish a shortlist of applicants whose proposals demonstrate the strongest overall potential for achieving the objectives of the Call.

Submission of a proposal does not create any entitlement to proceed to the next stage or to receive funding.

Shortlisting and Full Project Proposal Development

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage 2 – Full Project Proposal Development.

During this stage, GIZ will work with shortlisted applicants to further develop and refine the proposed project.

This may include:

- clarification of the development objective and expected results;
- refinement of the intervention logic and results framework;

- development of measurable indicators and means of verification;
- further assessment of the business and labour-market need;
- clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the applicant and Syrian implementation partners;
- refinement of the implementation methodology and workplan;
- development of the detailed budget and financing plan;
- clarification of the company's contribution;
- assessment of sustainability and scaling potential;
- identification and mitigation of environmental, social and other implementation risks; and
- preparation of the documentation required for subsequent assessment and contracting.

GIZ will provide guidance and technical support during this stage. Such support does not constitute a commitment to fund the proposed project. The applicant remains responsible for the accuracy, completeness, feasibility and quality of the final proposal.

Submission and Assessment of Full Project Proposals

Shortlisted applicants will be required to submit a Full Project Proposal and the accompanying documentation by the deadline communicated by GIZ.

The Full Project Proposal will be assessed against the applicable technical and selection criteria.

The assessment may include:

- review of the technical proposal and results framework;
- assessment of the detailed budget and financing structure;
- assessment of the company's contribution and additionality of public support;
- assessment of implementation capacity;
- assessment of the proposed partnership and governance arrangements;
- assessment of risks and mitigation measures;
- assessment of sustainability and scaling potential; and
- verification of the proposed development results and indicators.

GIZ may invite shortlisted applicants to an interview or clarification meeting to discuss the proposed project, implementation arrangements, budget, risks and expected results.

Following the assessment, a final selection recommendation will be prepared in accordance with the applicable GIZ decision-making procedures.

Final Selection and Approval

Final selection of projects will be subject to:

- satisfactory technical assessment;
- satisfactory applicant eligibility;
- satisfactory due diligence and integrity assessment;
- satisfactory administrative and legal checks;
- compliance with applicable GIZ, donor and programme requirements;
- confirmation of the proposed financing structure;
- availability of funds; and
- the required internal approval processes.

GIZ reserves the right not to select an application, even where the application meets the minimum eligibility requirements, if the proposal does not achieve a sufficient assessment score or if other applicable selection, compliance or funding conditions are not met.

Due Diligence and Administrative, Legal and Compliance Checks

Before a partnership agreement is concluded, the selected applicant will undergo the applicable commercial, administrative, legal, compliance and integrity checks.

The due-diligence process may include verification of:

- legal registration and ownership;
- management and governance structures;
- financial capacity;
- audited financial statements and turnover;
- compliance and integrity systems;
- sanctions and exclusion risks;
- relevant litigation or regulatory matters;
- environmental and social risks; and
- other information relevant to the proposed partnership.

The applicant must provide all information and supporting documentation reasonably required by GIZ for these assessments. GIZ may discontinue the process if the required checks cannot be satisfactorily completed.

Contracting

Following successful completion of the technical assessment, final approval and due diligence, GIZ and the selected applicant will proceed to contracting.

The partnership agreement will define, as applicable:

- the project objectives and expected development results;
- activities and implementation arrangements;
- roles and responsibilities of the parties;
- project duration;
- total project budget;
- GIZ contribution;
- company contribution;
- eligible costs and cost-sharing arrangements;
- payment and financial reporting arrangements;
- monitoring, reporting and verification requirements;
- risk-management measures;
- environmental, social, labour and human rights requirements;
- sustainability and exit arrangements; and
- applicable compliance, audit and termination provisions.

The project may commence only after the applicable contracting requirements have been fulfilled and the partnership agreement has entered into force.

Interested companies are invited to submit a complete application. All documents must be submitted electronically by [23 December 2026, 23:59 CET] to:

syria-private-sector@giz.de

Please use the following subject line:

Call for Applications – Europe based company – [Company Name]

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Mandatory Documents

Applicants must submit the following documents:

1. Completed compliance and integrity declarations (using the official GIZ templates provided with the Call documentation).
2. Completed and signed Project Concept Note using the official GIZ template (mandatory).

   Use of the official template is mandatory. Free-format concept notes will not be accepted. This structured format is designed to facilitate consistent and transparent assessment.
3. Official proof of the applicant's legal registration or incorporation in an EU Member State or Switzerland.
4. Current extract from the relevant official company/business register (or equivalent official document).
5. The two most recent audited annual financial statements, or equivalent independently verified financial documentation.
6. Evidence of annual turnover of at least EUR 100,000 (may be covered by the financial statements above if clearly stated).
7. Confirmation of at least five (5) full-time equivalent (FTE) employees.
8. Brief company profile, including main business activities, relevant experience and organisational capacity (this may be integrated into the official Project Concept Note template where indicated).
9. Information on the proposed Syrian partner(s), where already identified (to be included in the official Project Concept Note template).

Data Protection

Personal and company information submitted during the application and selection process will be processed for the purposes of:

- assessing eligibility and applications;
- conducting due diligence and integrity assessments;
- preparing potential development partnerships;
- concluding and administering partnership agreements; and
- monitoring and evaluating supported activities.

Information will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection requirements and GIZ policies.

Further information on data processing will be provided as part of the application process.

Contact

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Summary of Key Eligibility and Funding Conditions

Requirement	**EU-Based Applicants**
Applicant type	Privately owned, for-profit company
Location	European Union or Switzerland
Project location	Syrian governorates: Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Dara'a, Raqqa, Lattakia, Tartous
Audited financial statements	Previous two years
Minimum annual turnover	EUR 100,000
Minimum full-time employees	5
Public co-financing provided by GIZ	Up to 50% of eligible project costs
Minimum GIZ contribution	EUR 40,000
Company contribution	Minimum 50% of total eligible project costs
Project duration	Between 12-30 months
Main focus	Employment, skills development, business development, technology and knowledge transfer
Selection	Eligibility screening → technical evaluation → full proposal → due diligence → contracting