

## Request for Concept Notes

### Building Green Skilled Workforce for Competitiveness and Growth in the Textile and Apparel Industry in the Eastern Partnership Region

#### 1. Background

RECONOMY is an inclusive and green economic development program of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), implemented by the HELVETAS Swiss Development Organization. In partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), HELVETAS Swiss Development Organization is leading a regional inclusive and green economic development program, RECONOMY, in 11 countries in Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova), and the Western Balkans (Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The main phase for the Eastern Partnership region runs from January 2023 to December 2026.

**RECONOMY Program is implementing the “Circular Business Models and Resource Efficiency for Competitiveness and Growth in the Textile and Apparel (T&A) Industry” project in the EaP Region.** The project focuses on Circular Business Models and Resource Efficiency of the T&A Industry, aiming to enhance the wage and self-employment of women and young people, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones, through improved competitiveness and growth of the sector. This goal will be achieved through:

- (i) Enhanced growth and green/sustainable job creation by the private sector in the T&A industry in the EaP region (Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine),
- (ii) Improved access to green job opportunities and services in the T&A Industry in EaP region,
- (iii) Improved green/sustainable skills of women and young people, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones.

The design of the project is built on the learnings from the pilots implemented during the inception phase, as well as the general market systems analysis and sector selection exercise that took place during the inception phase.

The fashion industry is one of the largest industries in the world, the sector serves as one of the significant sources of employment for women in the region (currently 120,000+ people are involved in 4 pre-selected EaP countries, and most of them are female). MSMEs in the sector are spread geographically, offering opportunities in the secondary cities. The recycling industry as a secondary market also opens significant potential for the employment of disadvantaged groups.

The fashion industry in the Eastern Partnership is an export-oriented sector with a mixed structure of key destinations of exporting: EU holds a leading role for Moldova (over 80%) and Ukraine (over 60%), while in Armenia EU-oriented export prevails in the category of high-value products and Russia remains to be the main destination for lower quality mass production. Turkey is a key trade partner for Georgia, although, at a later stage, Turkish companies further process Georgian products and integrate them into EU value chains<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> “SME Development and DCFTA in Georgia: Textile and Apparel”; EU4Business

There are a number of key trends in the region that act as potential drivers of change within the sector. As above, momentum toward a green economic transition is important and influences the trade dynamics acting as a driver for shifts within the industry.

The shortage of green skilled/professional workforce in the T&A industry in the EaP (Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine) region can be considered one of the main challenges. As global demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products surges, the EaP countries find themselves struggling to meet the escalating need for skilled professionals equipped with knowledge and competencies in sustainable practices and eco-friendly technologies in the T&A industry. Green skills intensity needs to increase in every sector, especially in T&A sector and country to build the supply needed and meet the demand required to achieve climate goals.

Skills mismatch between the supply, demand, and growing trends in the market remains one of the key constraints in the textile and apparel industry in the Eastern Partnership countries in general. Applying the sustainability and circular economy principles in the fashion industry requires a combination of green skills covering different stages of the product life cycle: resources and materials skills (e.g., sourcing the production with eco-friendly or used materials); eco-design strategies (e.g. design for modularity, design for reuse, design for maintainability, etc.); manufacturing and recycling skills; retail and consumption skills (marketing of sustainable textiles and apparel and recycling opportunities). Gaining the ‘deep skills’ required for circular interventions relies on strong cooperation between employers and educational institutions and knowledge exchange on circular business models.

Lack of awareness and relevant skills of the workforce hinder the potential of companies to transition towards a circular economy. These skills are missing or underrepresented in the current supply of formal and non-formal educational opportunities in the EaP region, although integration of sustainability and circularity in the curricula is mentioned as a priority area in the sectoral strategies and roadmaps of the target countries. The fashion industry, being an important source of employment in the targeted EaP countries, shares the common problems and similar systemic constraints setting the barriers to inclusive and green development.

## 2. Objective

***RECONOMY seeks Concept Notes that propose innovative initiatives that can transform the T&A industry in the EaP region into a model of sustainability and green production through enhancing and strengthening green skills in the T&A industry among women, youth, and the most disadvantaged and excluded ones in EaP countries (Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine).***

*An overall objective of the project is to enhance the wage and self-employment of women and young people, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones, through improved competitiveness and growth of the sector.*

Through *these innovative initiatives*, we aim to achieve three specific objectives:

1. Equipping women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones in the T&A Industry with practical/technical green/sustainable skills and knowledge required to operate in an environmentally responsible manner
2. Strengthening women in SMEs in the process of transition to Green

3. Supporting women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones to get decent and green jobs in the T&A industry

To ensure the market relevance of the offers, RECONOMY aims to promote structured and frequent dialogue between sectoral associations, training providers, and businesses so that they learn from each other's good practices.

### 3. Procurement Process

This solicitation is the first step of a competitive two-step process.

**Step One:** The applicants shall submit a Concept Note, where the proposed innovative initiative should comply with the goals outlined in section 2. Objective.

The applicants are allowed to submit **only 1 (one) Concept Note**. RECONOMY shall review the Concept Notes submitted by applicants and will assess them based on evaluation criteria and the other provisions set out in this Request. The Concept Notes shall be short-listed, and the RECONOMY Program will select a maximum of 5 (five) concept notes.

**Step Two:** RECONOMY will invite selected applicants to expand their concept notes into a project (business model, sustainability, outreach, etc.).

### 4. Eligibility for Participation

#### 4.1 Eligible Applicants

Participation is open to all companies, organizations, firms, and institutions **with proven experience in Textile and Apparel and/or Skills Development**, that are legal entities registered according to the legislation in force, in at least one of the EaP countries: Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

#### 4.2 Exclusion Criteria from Participation

Applicants shall be excluded from taking part in the procurement procedure if they and/or their individual owners meet at least one of the **Exclusion Criteria** described in Annex 1.

### 5. Instructions on Concept Notes

#### 5.1 Content and Form of the Concept Notes:

Applicants should submit a Concept Note based on the form provided by RECONOMY. Please fill out the **Concept Note Form – Textile and Apparel** enclosed in this Request. Applicants must fill out all sections of the form.

## 5.2 Duration of the activities' implementation:

Applicants should submit Concept Notes with activities that do not exceed a 12-month time frame for their implementation.

## 5.3 Funding limits:

RECONOMY Program will provide financial support of up to 30,000 CHF per Concept Note, which should be used only for the implementation of activities. The rest of the other costs (rent, salaries, utilities, etc.) should be provided by the applicant's own resources.

## 5.4 Language of the Concept Notes: ENGLISH

# 6. Application Procedure

## 6.1 Selection Criteria:

The eligible applicants meeting the following criteria are invited to submit a Concept Note:

- Experience of at least 3 years in Textile and Apparel and/or Skills Development,
- Experience with other partners in implementing projects and /or various initiatives is desirable,
- Organizational, financial, and professional capacities to implement the innovative initiative.

## 6.2 Submission of Concept Notes

Concept Notes should be delivered in **pdf format** to the email: [reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org](mailto:reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org), with the subject line "Green Skilled Workforce in TA - RECONOMY Program", by **3 November 2023**.

# 7. Evaluation

Concept Notes shall be evaluated on the basis of their completeness, compliance, and responsiveness to the objective and other provisions of this Request. Shortlisted applicants may be invited for an interview where certain aspects of their submitted Concept Notes may be discussed prior to confirmation of being selected for the second step of the procurement process.

## 7.1 Awarding Criteria

Concept Notes will be evaluated based on the **Best price – Quality ratio** criteria as follows:

- A. Quality of Concept Note - 70%
- B: Financial offer – 30%

## 7.2 Evaluation Criteria

<b>A. Quality of Concept Note Criteria</b>		<b>Max Points (70)</b>
<b>A1. The innovativeness of the initiative</b>		
A1.1	Degree of innovation	15
A1.2	The impact on the industry sector (number of companies or people reached)	15
A1.3	Sustainability vision	15
<b>A2. Implementation of initiative</b>		
A2.1	Clarity, planning approach, expected results	15
<b>A3. Organizational and professional capacities to implement the initiative</b>		
A3.1	Experience and Qualification of the team assigned to	5
A3.2	Proven experience in implementing various initiatives with other partners	3
A3.3	Demonstrated track record of successfully integrating gender and social inclusion principle	2
<b>B. Financial Offer Criteria</b>		<b>Max Points (30)</b>
B.1	Feasibility of the implementation cost of the initiative	10
B.2	The rates of implementation cost are well aligned with the regional/national market rates	10
B.3	Financial capacity of the applicant and matching funds provision	10

Shortlisted Concept Notes will be selected based on the total score attained.

To be shortlisted the Concept Notes should pass the minimum score of 50% of the quality score of 70 points. The Concept Notes that do not pass the minimum quality score are not considered eligible for further consideration, and their financial offers will not be evaluated.

## 8. Confidentiality

RECONOMY acknowledges that the information received from Applicants under this Request for Concept Notes may be of a confidential nature. RECONOMY shall use the same degree of care with Applicant's confidential information as it uses to protect its own confidential information.

## 9. Further Information

Any clarifications or questions regarding this Request for Concept Notes shall be sent to the email address [reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org](mailto:reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org) no later than 7 working days before the closing date.

The applicants can expect to receive information about the decision on their expressions of interest by **20 November 2023**.