

Request for Proposal

Implementing knowledge-sharing activities for quality Private Sector engagement in vocational education with S4J Partner providers

Location	Vlora, Berat, Elbasan, Tirana, Lezha, Shkodra and Korça regions
Type of Contract	Service Contract (output-based)
Services Requested	Implementing knowledge-sharing activities for quality Private Sector engagement in vocational education with S4J Partner providers.
Reference number	24-04-S4J
Issue date of the call	21 March 2024
Procurement Process	Request for Proposals One step process - only full proposals will be considered
Number of potential successful offerors	1 (one)
Eligible applicants	Registered entities
Submission Deadline	03 April 2024, 14:00
Deadline for submitting questions & receiving answers	Questions can be sent at al.info@swisscontact.org by 27 March 2024 end of business day. Answers will be provided by 28 March 2024 , end of business day.
Tentative starting date of service	10 April 2024
Estimated contract timeframe	10 April 2024 – 22 July 2024
Service providers report to	Deputy Project Manager and Portfolio Manager on MRM and Transferability
Package of Application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Registration to Albanian Authorities document /Company NUIS certificate (copy)/ Extract from NBC 2. Technical proposal 3. Financial proposal
Where to send applications	All offers will be submitted in hard-copy, sealed in a covering envelope which MUST contain the title of the applied call (as per instruction provided in this documents), to the Swisscontact Albania office: Rr. Skenderbej, Vila 49, Tiranë.

1. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

[Swisscontact](#) is an independent, non-profit Swiss foundation dedicated to promoting economic, social, and environmental development. Swisscontact's development work focuses on private sector-led, sustainable economic development with improved quality of life for all in developing and emerging countries. A key focus is to strengthen the skills of individuals and foster the competitiveness of companies.

[Skills for Jobs \(S4J\)](#) is a project mandated by the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** and implemented by [Swisscontact Albania](#). It is part of the Economic Development Domain of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Albania (2022-2025), with specific focus on promotion of employment opportunities and skills development.

The overarching goal of S4J is to contribute to an improved inclusive Albanian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system and increased competitiveness of the Albanian economy, by facilitating access to gainful employment and income for young women and men from diverse backgrounds, as VET providers transition into multifunctional centres. The project actively promotes modern teaching and learning practices through fostering work-based and blended learning, leveraging digitalization as an instrument. S4J supports VET institutions in strengthening their internal processes and management, while also collaborating with industries and national authorities to update and diversify the VET offer, ensuring they align with labor market needs.

The project is in its third phase, S4J 3, which started in July 2023 and will last until June 2027. During this phase, the project aims to create training and employment opportunities for up to 29,400 Albanian women and men, including youth and special needs groups. S4J will facilitate the horizontal transfer of key **innovation objects**/processes previously promoted in the project's previous two phases, expanding their reach to other VET providers and companies, through capacitated and empowered **transfer agents**. This phase will focus on further consolidating and documenting these innovations to facilitate scaling, transfer, and institutionalization within the VET system, both in the public and private sector.

To achieve its objectives, the project has two primary areas of intervention:

Component 1: Access to quality VET offer

Services and interventions in this component focus on strengthening VET providers by: promoting modernization of VET and integrating digital solutions in the vocational teaching process; improving planning, internal monitoring, and other quality development processes; strengthening the development unit (DU) and improving its service provision capacities; and, designing and developing models for continuous professional development (CPD) of VET staff.

Component 2: Private sector engagement in VET

Services and interventions in this component focus on consolidating and improving the participation of the private sector in the governance, design and delivery of VET programmes in partnership with VET providers by: strengthening the cooperation between VET providers and companies; promoting and consolidating regional networks of companies and supporting Business Membership Organizations (BMOs) to engage in skills development; increasing capacities of companies and VET providers to design and deliver quality apprenticeships and in-company work-based learning; capacitating companies to contribute to the identification of skills needs, design and delivery of new professional qualifications and curricula.

2. CONTEXT OF THE ASSIGNMENT/SERVICES REQUESTED

Private Sector Engagement (PSE) in Vocational Education and Training (VET) stands as an important pillar of the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2023-2030¹. Public vocational education institutions in Albania have made significant efforts to enhance their collaboration with private sector companies. This partnership offers students valuable opportunities to gain practical experience as an integral part of their education. In turn, the close interaction between educational institutions and companies plays a crucial role in facilitating a smoother transition for VET graduates as they enter the workforce.

Over the past seven years, the S4J project has actively supported 10 Vocational Education schools in engaging with the private sector, and this engagement has produced positive results for the Albanian VET system. Starting with just 6 partner companies in December 2016, by February 2024, S4J partner providers had expanded their partnerships to over 900 companies. Partner businesses now engage in VET delivery, typically for hosting apprentices, but also in an array of processes like participation in level exams, delivering guest lectures, and storytelling sessions, management board of schools, collaborating with other external projects, promotion of VET, sponsorships etc.

Of these partnerships, over 780 businesses were hosting more than 2,400 learners, including students in upper secondary education programs (grades 10 to 13)² and learners in post-secondary programs.³ S4J partner providers have been supported to implement long-term apprenticeship-like schemes inspired by the Swiss Model of Apprenticeships. During this period, partner schools have established processes and protocols to plan and deliver in-company, curriculum-based practical learning programs for students. In collaboration with companies, schools have designed and delivered long-term programs (year-round, 1 to 4 years), drawing inspiration from international apprenticeship models such as those outlined by the ILO's Framework for Quality Apprenticeships (2019)⁴ and the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (2017).⁵ The introduction of apprenticeships in the work processes of S4J partner providers brought about substantial disruptions, prompting close collaboration between S4J and partner providers to mitigate risks and improve work processes, to ensure that schools and companies were co-designing and companies were delivering apprenticeships of an ever higher quality and effectiveness. This collaboration has significantly contributed to the development of regulatory frameworks⁶ by national agencies to govern work-based learning in public Vocational Education providers.

Furthermore, VET offer is co-designed with the participation and input of companies at both frame curricula and applied curricula levels. S4J has facilitated since 2019 the mobilization of local networks through initiating Local Dialogue Roundtables for Skills Development. As a result of the information gathered from structured dialogue instruments developed, partner schools are updating their school-based curricula, aligning VET offer more closely with the current needs and opportunities in the labor market. Drawing on the feedback and insights provided by these companies, partner providers have decided to pause 8 programs while activating 11 programs

¹ ALB. Për miratimin e Strategjisë Kombëtare të Punësimit dhe Aftësive 2023-2030, planit të veprimit për zbatimin e saj, si dhe planit të zbatimit të garancisë rinore 2023-2024. Retrieved from:

<http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2023/03/24/173>

² Equivalent to levels 2-4 of the Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF).

³ Equivalent to level 5 of the AQF.

⁴ https://ilo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/41ILO_INST:41ILO_V2/1286136450002676

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_17_3585

⁶ https://akafp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Regulation-of-Professional-Practices-in-Business_1-1.pdf

in the last academic year. The programmes are designed to be delivered jointly with the companies, offering the practical learning part. Furthermore, the private sector is contributing through co-financing modalities for various needs of partner schools, for e.g., for labs, equipment, transportation of students etc.

In this context, S4J 3 focuses on consolidating the initiated innovation objects at both the provider and individual-company level by preparing VET institutions and companies to integrate the innovations throughout their organization – a process known as **vertical transfer** - and coaching these institutions to share and transfer the consolidated innovation processes to other selected providers and companies - **horizontal transfer**. Interventions implemented in this phase aim to build an enabling environment that promotes the **transferability** and long-term **sustainability** of these innovation processes within the Albanian VET system.

During February 2024, S4J facilitated workshops to validate protocols and fine-tune instruments used by selected partner providers, referred to as champion schools on innovation objects promoted by the project. Innovation objects related to Private Sector Engagement include: **1) Business relations and networks** (aiming to strengthen the cooperation between VET providers and companies); **2) Quality of work-based learning in companies** (aiming to increase capacities of companies and VET providers to design and deliver *quality apprenticeships* and other forms of in-company work-based learning); and **3) Diversification of offer** (aiming to capacitate companies to contribute to the identification of skills needs, design and delivery of new professional qualifications and curricula).

Now, champion partner providers are finalizing the review process and will soon begin using revised protocols and instruments across the board, marking the **vertical transfer** of Innovation Objects. As they prepare to share their good practices and offer institutional support to other VET providers during the upcoming **Skills for Jobs Winter School** in December 2024, S4J champion VE providers have committed to supporting other public VE providers in the horizontal transfer throughout the academic years 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027. This transfer involves the sharing of good practices from S4J Champion VE Providers to other institutions through knowledge-sharing interventions employing a facilitation approach.

Aligned with S4J phase 3 strategy, knowledge-sharing initiatives will be implemented from March to December 2024, fostering collaborative learning among peers. Champion partner providers and selected transfer agents will share insights and best practices related to specific innovations, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement in the Albanian VET system. The aim of these initiatives is to create an informal collaborative platform for peer-to-peer learning and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences to drive further innovation and improvement of VET innovations. By fostering a culture of peer-to-peer learning, these initiatives seek to enhance the capacity of all stakeholders involved in the VET ecosystem, including private sector partners and VET providers.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND OBJECTIVES

S4J seeks to engage an entity to **implement Knowledge-Sharing Activities for Quality Private Sector Engagement** in Vocational Education with S4J Partner Providers and Companies. The knowledge-sharing activities will involve **six champion schools** and their **company partners**: *Hamdi Bushati* (Shkodër), *Kolin Gjoka* (Lezhë), *Shkolla Teknike-Ekonomike* (Tiranë), *Tregtare* (Vlorë), *Kristo Isak* (Berat), and Vocational School Elbasan (Elbasan). Additionally, teachers, staff and company partners from the Technical Vocational School in Korça and Gjergj Canco School in Tirana will participate in these activities.

The project aims to engage, support and expose about 40 school staff (including principals, deputy principals, business relations coordinators, vocational theory teachers, vocational practice teachers/instructors, head of departments, and/or head of DU and DU coordinators), a minimum of 24 learners, and about 24 staff from 12 partner companies of S4J partner providers.

Registered entities/service providers are expected to provide **proposals** based on the following objectives:

- To design and support implementation of a *knowledge-sharing initiative* in the area of quality private sector engagement in VET (with a focus on work-based learning in companies, business relations and networks and offer diversification), featuring and benefiting S4J partner VET providers and their partner companies;
- To coordinate and support implementation of 6 study visits hosted by S4J champion partner VET providers and their partner companies, facilitated by the selected service provider;
- Provide technical assistance and build capacities among school staff and their selected partner companies to prepare and host these study visits;
- To showcase good practices in private sector engagement in VET through study visits;
- To document success stories/best practices to aid in the horizontal transfer efforts of the project.

Host Institutions: Selected VET providers will act as host institutions, including:

1. Hamdi Bushati School, Shkodër
2. Kolin Gjoka School, Lezhë
3. Technical Economic School, Tirana
4. Multi-Functional Centre: Vocational School Elbasan
5. Kristo Isak School, Berat
6. Tregtare School, Vlorë

Besides these schools and their partners, two additional partner VET providers and their partner companies will participate in the study visits, as a way of being exposed to the good practices showcased by S4J champion partner providers:

1. Gjergj Canco School, Tirana
2. Multi-Functional Centre: Technical Vocational School Korça

We provide here some guidance on the **Study Visits** to be organised: Each host school (and their partner companies) will organize at least a visit each, totalling a minimum of 6 study visits, from April 15 to June 14, 2024. The study visits are primarily intended for practical learning teachers (otherwise known as School Instructors), business relations coordinators and company-instructors (otherwise known as mentors) from other peer schools and companies. Other figures in the organogram of the school shall be involved as well, if and when it makes sense (depending on what a selected school will feature more in their showcase). Our expectation is that in one study visit, for the company-visit part, at least two companies host the respective groups. Therefore, at least 12 companies are hosting company visits in collaboration with their partner schools. From each school a minimum of 6 practical learning teachers is expected to engage in and benefit from the study visits. We expect that in-company instructors also participate in visits in other companies, in their regions of origin or other. Company visits to be organised (minimum 24) have an important capacity building element to it that should be foreseen in the proposal. Such capacity building shall be planned and organised jointly with partner VE providers to ensure some on-the-job training for relevant school staff (i.e. Business Relations Coordinators).

Topics to be covered during study visits:

1. Work-Based Learning (planning, implementation and evaluation)
2. Offer diversification at the provider level
3. Delivery of curricula at the provider level
4. Private sector participation in level exams
5. Promotion of VET
6. Career orientation
7. Sponsorships
8. Role of Managing Board (if applicable)
9. Joint projects

The proposals should cover an analysis and accordingly provide a proposal about which teachers, school staff and companies' staff are best positioned to engage and benefit and by doing so benefiting the most to the institutions/companies they come from for the three areas Skills for Jobs intends to cover through these study visits.

Documentation of successful stories is an important learning tool that serves the horizontal transfer efforts of the project. We expect the bidders to come with proposals on how to best achieve this objective.

Tasks

The primary role of the service provider under this assignment will be to **implement Knowledge-Sharing Activities for Quality Private Sector Engagement** in Vocational Education with S4J Partner Providers and Companies.

The range of tasks of the service provider will include:

- Conduct an analysis to identify the best-suited teachers, school staff, and company staff to participate in the study visits and propose a plan accordingly.
- Organize and facilitate study visits hosted by champion VET providers and their partner companies to showcase best practices in private sector engagement, with a focus in work-based learning.
- Develop and implement capacity-building sessions during the study visits to enhance the skills and knowledge of school staff and company instructors.
- Manage the logistics and coordination of participants, including school staff and company representatives, for the study visits.
- Document successful stories and best practices observed during the study visits to serve as learning tools for the horizontal transfer efforts of the project.

The final work-plan will be devised with the selected service provider.

Deliverables

No.	Deliverables	Deadline
1.	Detailed proposal (outlining the approach, methodology, and activities for implementing knowledge-sharing activities, including a detailed study visits' plan).	April 15, 2024
2.	Progress report (including documenting the implementation of knowledge-sharing activities, including achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement)	May 13, 2024 June 14, 2024
3.	Final report (including best practices report and summarizing the outcomes of the knowledge-sharing initiatives)	July 20, 2024

The service provider will report to the Deputy Project Manager and Portfolio Manager on MRM and Transferability, who will regularly communicate with the service provider and provide feedback and guidance on the performance and all other necessary support so to achieve the objectives, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to performance and quality of work.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The applicants shall:

- Be officially registered in the Albanian Authorities;
- Have least 2 years of working directly with the private sector development in Albania;
- Demonstrated experience in the education sector and training sector, particularly in vocational education and training (VET) or similar fields.
- Proven expertise in developing and delivering capacity-building sessions or training programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of educators and industry professionals.

5. DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED

The interested entities should send the application file as indicated in the cover page, containing:

1. **Copy of registration document/NUIS certificate/Extract from NBC**
2. **Technical proposal**

The technical proposals describing the planned support that will be given to S4J team in successfully delivering the services. The technical proposals must comply with the specifications required under the deliverables section:

- 2.1. *Entity profile;*
- 2.2. *CVs of proposed experts;*
- 2.3. *Approach and Methodology* to assure quality and timely outputs;
- 2.4. *Workplan and milestones*, describing the implementation of the tasks listed above.

3. Financial proposal

Financial Proposal must be disaggregated by tasks and itemized. Lump Sums will not be accepted. Please submit the financial proposal in an excel format, with an electronic copy in USB. Prices shall be provided in ALL or CHF and the total amount shall comprise VAT if applicable.

S4J VAT 0% registration in process: Swisscontact/Skills for Jobs is in the process of registering with the Regional Directorate of Taxes for VAT tax rate zero percent (0%) for services and goods provided to the project – estimated to be completed within March 2024 (well before contract signature). Please consider this fact when presenting your financial offer.

The application MUST contain all required documentation, otherwise may be automatically eliminated by Swisscontact without a further request for clarification and/or completion.

6. EVALUATION PROCESS

An evaluation panel, consisting of no less than 3 (three) members, will evaluate the applications as per the following criteria:

- **Technical proposal:** **70%**
 - Entity Profile 5%
 - CV of proposed experts 20%
 - Approach and Methodology 30%
 - Workplan and milestones 15%
- **Financial Proposal:** **30%**

Swisscontact reserves the right to cancel a bidding process, accept or reject bids without notifying the reasons to the bidders. It also has the right to ask one or more of the applicants for clarifications regarding the bid.

7. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTION:

The deadline of submission is **03 April 2024, 14:00**. Please note that in case your offer will be sent later than the deadline for submission, Swisscontact may decide to disqualify your submission and not consider this eligible for further phases of evaluation.

All applications will be submitted in hard-copy, sealed in a covering envelope, to the Swisscontact Albania office: Rr. Skenderbej, Vila 49, Tirane by the deadline above mentioned. The outside of the envelope must clearly note the Request for Proposal reference number and title: 24-04-S4J - Implementing knowledge-sharing activities for quality Private Sector engagement in vocational education with S4J Partner providers. All documents should be duly filled, signed and stamped.

The application MUST contain all required documentation, otherwise may be automatically eliminated by Swisscontact without a further request for clarification and/or completion.

8. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BIDDERS:

Any communication between SC-ALB and the bidders that might compromise the transparency and fairness of the bidding process must be avoided. Communication has to be documented in writing. The interested applicants can send their questions to al.info@swisscontact.org by *27 March 2024, EOB*. The deadline for submitting responses will be *28 March 2024, EOB*. Responses to requests for clarification by one bidder must be shared with all bidders in BCC mode of email or the response to be uploaded on the website.