Global Gateway

JOINT INNOVATION FACILITY (JIF)

ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA

OVERVIEW

The JIF Circularity Call is a collaboration between **Project SPARK** and **SWITCH-2-CE in East and Southern Africa**, combining complementary approaches to strengthen circular businesses and Africa–Europe partnerships. The Call falls under the SWITCH-2-CE ESA Financing Facility, implemented by Expertise France and GIZ on behalf of the European Union. The Facility aims to improve access to and use of financing for circular economy businesses and business models in the region, providing catalytic financial instruments tailored to the needs of different private sector segments.

The Joint Innovation Facility (JIF) Circularity Call aims to address these challenges by connecting African circular businesses with European partners to develop commercially viable partnerships and joint ventures that will contribute to the transition to a circular economy by introducing or expanding circular business activities. We will create opportunities to develop, test and scale solutions with strong commercial potential.

Building on the JIF approach developed through SPARK, the initiative is expected to combine catalytic funding, technical expertise, business partnerships and market connections to create pathways for promising circular solutions and strengthened cooperation between African and European companies.

The JIF Circularity Call focusses on two priority value chains:

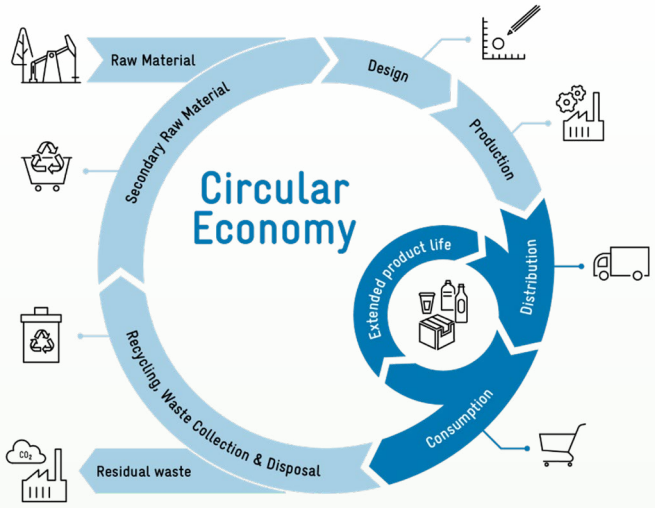
- **Plastic Packaging & Plastic Waste**
- **Electronics & E-Waste**

The call welcomes upstream, midstream and downstream solutions, with a particular interest in encouraging upstream and midstream approaches (see box 1).

The JIF Circularity Call is being developed through collaboration between Project SPARK and the EU Global Gateway programme SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa (SWITCH-2-CE), bringing together complementary approaches to strengthen circular businesses and Africa–EU partnerships.

Project SPARK is a regional initiative implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), that strengthens African innovation ecosystems and supports research-based, climate tech and gender-responsive innovation, including improved access to finance, markets and strategic partnerships.

The SWITCH-2CE in ESA programme aims to foster an inclusive transition to a circular economy in the ESA region. This initiative promotes green and circular business models to mitigate climate change, improve resource efficiency, and create economic opportunities, with a focus on the value chains of plastics and electronic waste. The programme is co-funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in partnership with Expertise France.



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Box 1: Understanding Upstream, Midstream and Downstream Circularity Approaches

Upstream: approaches that intervene at the design and production stage of the product, with the aim of preventing waste and reducing resource use at source. This can include design for durability, repair and reuse, material reduction, and the use of recycled inputs.

Midstream: approaches focusing on the use phase, seeking to keep products and assets in use for longer and/or increase their intensity of use. Examples include reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing and other lifetime-extension or circular-use models.

Downstream: approaches that address products and materials after use or at end-of-life. This can include collection and sorting, recycling, material recovery and other solutions that recover value from waste and return materials to productive use.

german cooperation DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

SPARK

France EXPERTISE FRANCE GROUPE AFD

COMESA

WHAT JIF CIRCULARITY CALL FOCUSES ON

We are inviting joint project proposals from Africa-EU consortia that:

- Aim to introduce circular business activities or further develop and scale existing circular business models in the priority value chains, with an established commercially viable business model, demonstrated revenue generation, potential for regional growth and replication, and a clear opportunity to benefit from an Africa–EU partnership built on a shared long-term commercial vision.
- Require strategic funding for the introduction or scaling of circular business models, and demonstrate commitment to the project's success, including contribution of own resources.
- Consist of **two or three partners** forming a consortium collaborating across Eastern and Southern Africa and the **EU** and are led by an **African for-profit company** with at least 3 years in operation.
- Demonstrate a shared long-term commercial vision and clear added value from this Africa–EU business collaboration, with the ambition to establish sustainable business partnerships beyond the grant period.
- Are led by committed and capable teams, with a track record and technical and operational capacity required to innovate or scale.
- Prioritise gender responsiveness.

The African partner(s) must be from one of the following SWITCH-2-CE priority countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Zambia.

The European partner(s) must be based in one of the 27 EU Member States.

WHAT JIF CIRCULARITY CALL OFFERS

GRANT FUNDING

JIF provides non-dilutive funding of between 100.000 to 200.000 EUR provided through a milestone-based grant structure. Funding supports:

- Integration or expansion of circular business activities within existing companies.
- Market entry and expansion into new markets in Sub-Saharan Africa and the EU.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Tailored support to circular economy businesses to improve business models, investment readiness, and scaling potential.

ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIONS

Networking and peer learning opportunities across Africa and Europe will be provided, which includes access to:

- Investors and funding partners
- Innovation hubs and accelerators
- Corporates and market actors
- Research and innovation networks across Africa and Europe

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

A consortium should consist of:

LEAD PARTNER:

African for-profit company – These are legal entities formed under state law to conduct business activities with the primary goal of generating profit.

2ND PARTNER:

EU for-profit company- These can be more mature start-ups, innovative SMEs as well as larger companies.

3RD PARTNER:

Applied research organisation - These entities often are universities, research centres, nonprofit institutes or government affiliated centres that conduct systematic, problem-oriented research aimed at addressing specific societal, industrial or technological challenges.

Non-profit organisation - A nonprofit organisation is an entity that is created and operated for charitable or socially beneficial purposes rather than making a profit.

Public sector entity – These include government ministries, public agencies, local authorities and other government-affiliated institutions responsible for developing and implementing public policies, programmes and services.

For-profit company from the EU or Africa - These are legal entities formed under state law to conduct business activities with the primary goal of generating profit.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications to the Joint Innovation Facility Circularity Call are open from **2nd November 2026 to 28th February 2027** via the good grants platform.

Applicants must submit their pre-screening application by **29th January 2027** at the latest to allow sufficient time for the assessment and, if successful, a minimum of two weeks to complete and submit the full grant proposal by **28th February 2027.** The application process consists of the following steps:

PRE – SCREENING

- Interested consortia are invited to submit a short project summary and respond to brief pre-screening questions. As part of the pre-screening, a high-level commercial viability assessment will be carried out to assess operational, financial, governance, and compliance capacity in line with the selection criteria.
- Only applicants who successfully pass the pre-screening stage will be invited to submit a full grant proposal.
- Pre-screening applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

GRANT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

- Consortia whose project idea passes the technical assessment will be invited to submit a full grant proposal.
- Proposal requirements will be aligned with the eligibility and selection criteria outlined in the call documentation to ensure consistency and transparency throughout the evaluation process.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION CRITERIA

To be considered for funding through the Joint Innovation Facility (JIF) Circularity Call, applicants must meet the following minimum eligibility requirements, organized under four core pillars. Applications that do not fulfill these requirements will not be shortlisted.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Aligning with JIF's Circularity Call objectives:

- **Africa–Europe collaboration:** Strengthening long-term commercial partnerships between African and EU businesses.
- **Circular impact:** Demonstrating clear potential to accelerate the transition to circular economy by reducing material resource consumption through circular business models and deliver improvements beyond business-as-usual practices in the local market.
- **Replicability potential:** demonstrating clear potential for the circular solution or business model to be replicated in other markets, sectors or contexts.

CIRCULARITY

The proposed solution must meet the following circular eligibility requirements:

a) Circular economy activities:

The project must address at least one of the following four circular economy activity categories. The Harmonized Circular Economy Finance Guidelines provide the underlying definitions of the four circular economy activity categories. Applicants must ensure that their proposed solutions align with these definitions:

- Circular design and production (upstream approaches)
- Circular use (midstream approaches)
- Value recovery (downstream approaches)
- Circularity-enablers (e.g. virtual marketplaces, digital tools and applications, data repositories that facilitate circular business activities. Consultancy services are excluded)

The call welcomes **upstream**, **midstream** and **downstream solutions**, with a particular interest in encouraging innovative upstream and midstream approaches (please refer to box 1 for definitions).

b) Priority value chains

- Projects must focus on one of the following two priority value chains:

  PLASTIC PACKAGING & PLASTIC WASTE

  ELECTRONICS & E-WASTE

- Projects should clearly demonstrate how they will contribute to circularity within the selected value chains and identify the circular economy activities they address. They should also clearly outline how impacts will be measured, using both qualitative descriptions and quantitative indicators.
- The project must not introduce material risks to other environmental or social objectives.

PARTNERSHIP & TEAM

a) Consortium Formation

- Consortium of 2-3 partners, **led by an African for-profit entity partnering with an EU-for-profit** registered entity. Existing and new joint ventures are allowed to apply.
- Commit a **minimum 50% co-financing contribution** including a minimum cash contribution of 25%. Higher commitment to cash contribution is encouraged.
- Any partner receiving funding must have **generated revenue in the past 12 months of at least 50% of the funds requested by JIF**.
- Demonstrate a clear partnership objective (e.g. jointly improving or extending a product/service/process, enter a new market, scale across borders) and demonstrate mutual value of partnership and local ownership.
- **Provide a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** or **Letter of Intent (LoI)** signed by at least the lead and second consortium partners, clearly outlining partnership roles and collaboration intentions. If a third partner is involved, a Letter of support is required as a minimum.

b) Lead Partner legal & Operational requirements

The lead applicant must:

- **Be legally registered as a private venture entity with a minimum of 3 years of operation.**
- Provide a registration certificate, business license, MoU (Memorandum of Incorporation), valid tax compliance certificate, legal directors and ownership documents, and evidence of physical presence.
- Provide reviewed and/or **audited financial statements** for the past **2 years** with audited being preferred.
- Have an **operational accounting system** and provide access screenshot thereof
- **Company organogram** specifically for the **finance** and **procurement departments**.
- Possess internal policies:
  - Procurement Policy
  - Finance Policy
  - Documented Internal and external Controls / Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Applicants must demonstrate the ability to manage donor funding, including:
  - Prior experience with grants or donor-funded programs (preferred but not mandatory).
- A non-disclosure agreement (NDA) must be signed and submitted.

c) Team

The team must demonstrate:

- Technical and operational capacity required to lead the introduction or the further development of the circular business model, and ensure completion of milestones and project's success
- **Clearly defined roles and responsibilities**
- Including time commitments to the project.

Applicants will be asked to submit:

- **Team profiles** summarizing experience and capabilities
- Gender-centered and **women-led ventures** are especially encouraged to apply.

BUSINESS MODEL

The solution must:

- **Market demand:** Demonstrate a clear market need and sufficient market potential for the proposed circular economy solution.
- **Commercial viability:** Build on an existing, tested solution or business activity and demonstrate an established or emerging commercially viable business model.
- **Growth and scaling:** Present a clear strategy and realistic pathways for growth and replication, including cross-border market expansion where relevant.
- **Long-term sustainability:** Demonstrate how the partnership will support the commercial integration or scaling of circular business activities and sustain operations beyond JIF funding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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