



Call for Expressions of Interest: Capacity building programme for one Circular Economy Business Support Organisation (CEBSO) in East Africa.

EU Circular Economy Resource Centre (EU CERC)

BEL23009

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1 Context

1.1 The EU Circular Economy Resource Centre

The EU Circular Economy Resource Centre (EU CERC) is a five-year initiative (2024-2029) funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, and implemented by Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, and Enabel, the Belgian Development Agency.

The establishment of the EU Circular Economy Resource Centre (EU CERC) reflects the EU’s growing commitment to play a leading role in shaping the global sustainability agenda and to work with partners around the world to promote the circular economy transition.

By 2050, the world is projected to consume resources as if it had three planets, underscoring the urgency of adopting more sustainable practices. Circular economy plays a vital role in driving business innovation, creating quality jobs, strengthening economic resilience, and protecting the environment. As highlighted in the Global Gateway strategy, European Green Deal, the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), the Clean Industrial Deal, and the Circular Economy Act, circularity is a key EU priority and its adoption depends on coordinated action throughout global value chain. Therefore, strong international collaboration, aligned incentives, and mutually beneficial partnerships are essential for the circular economy to advance quickly on a global scale. The European Union is committed to working with partners worldwide, sharing expertise and resources to accelerate the transition toward circularity together.

In this perspective, the EU CERC was created with the objective **to promote the uptake of sound circular economy policies and business models, based on peer-to-peer exchanges and partnerships between stakeholders from the EU and partner countries**. It seeks to complement and add value to existing initiatives to accelerate the circular transition.

The EU CERC operates through three interlinked labs. **Enabel is leading the Business Lab** in close collaboration with **the Knowledge and Policy Labs, led by Sitra**:

The Knowledge Lab captures and **consolidates EU circular economy know-how from the perspective of partner countries** and makes it accessible through a dedicated knowledge platform and helpdesk. It facilitates dialogue, exchange of experiences, good practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches, which supports partner country stakeholders in addressing specific challenges across diverse contexts.

The Policy Lab provides support to partner countries **in developing and strengthening their policy and regulatory frameworks for the circular economy**. Through peer learning, technical assistance, exchange of best practices, and acceleration programmes, it helps inspire the creation of gender-sensitive circular economy policies and regulations.

The Business Lab supports partner country **businesses and business support organisations in their transition to circular models**. It promotes peer-to-peer exchanges, conducts circular economy business scans, delivers train-the-trainers sessions, and supports circular city mapping and investment readiness. It also showcases innovative circular solutions, with particular attention to women and youth entrepreneurs, through annual business awards.

The EU CERC supports partner country stakeholders located in the following regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood. **EU partner countries** are countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA), as defined by the OECD DAC¹, and with no or limited EU sanctions imposed.

Initial sectoral priorities of the EU CERC, aligned with the Global Gateway strategy, include:

- Materials: critical raw materials, bio-based materials
- Product value chains: Electronics & ICT, Batteries, Machinery & equipment
- Infrastructure: Buildings and construction

The activities of the **Business Lab** are structured around two key results:

- **Result 1:** To strengthen circular business development services and support systems available to private sector stakeholders in partner countries and across global and regional value chains.
- **Result 2:** To improve access for private sector stakeholders in partner countries to information on circular economy finance, and to promote and celebrate circular economy initiatives.

This call for Expressions of Interest falls within the first result of the Business lab, which focuses on building stronger circular business development services and support mechanisms for private sector stakeholders in partner countries and across global and regional value chains.

1.2 Call for Expressions of Interest

As part of its commitment to strengthening the circular economy ecosystem in East Africa and supporting the integration of circular businesses in global value chains, the EU CERC Business Lab is launching a Call for Expressions of Interest (EoI) to select **one organisation** — referred to as a Circular Economy Business Support Organisation (CEBSO) — based in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, or Uganda, that provides business support services in the field of the circular economy.

The selected CEBSO will benefit from:

- A tailor-made capacity building program on circular economy services and operational capacity, informed by EU experience and knowledge and adapted to local context
- Exchange of expertise and best practices through selected experts
- Visibility and networking opportunities within the international circular economy ecosystem.

The CEBSO selected under this call for expressions of interest, may also, under certain conditions, be considered for a follow-up phase dedicated to the development of a business support program for circular businesses. Should this possibility arise, the selected CEBSO's capacities (institutional, organisational, technical and

¹ See the latest list here: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/dac-list-of-oda-recipient.html#asterisk>. Out of the 141 ODA countries, Iran, North Korea, Belarus and Syria are excluded due to EU sanctions. Additionally, the following territories are not considered as countries: Wallis and Futuna, Saint Helena, Niue, Montserrat and Tokelau.

financial) will be evaluated to see whether it meets the minimum criteria set by Enabel's internal and external legal framework. The aforementioned criteria will only be shared and made available by Enabel once a decision on the opportunity of the follow-up phase will be taken.

2 The Capacity Building Program

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the capacity building program are two folds:

- To improve the quality and relevance of circular economy services provided by the selected CEBSO, enabling circular businesses to expand market access including within global circular economy value chains.
- To strengthen the organization capacity of the selected CEBSO for effective and sustainable operations.

By the end of the program, the CEBSO :

- Is able to provide a clearly defined and improved portfolio of circular economy services tailored to circular business needs.
- Has improved its internal processes, management tools and business model, enabling more effective and sustainable operations.

2.2 Content

The support will be delivered in two phases:

- Phase 1 – Organisational and capacity assessment:
This phase consists of a thorough review of the CEBSO's operational capacities, as well as an analysis of its knowledge and the quality of available services to circular businesses.
- Phase 2 - Tailor-made capacity building programme:
Based on the findings of the assessment, a customised capacity building programme will be developed and delivered to improve the quality and relevance of circular economy services provided to circular businesses, and to strengthen the organizational capacity of the CEBSO for effective and sustainable operations.

2.2.1 Phase 1 – the Organizational and capacity assessment

- **Duration:** maximum 10 days
- **Focus areas:**
 - Assessment of organizational strengths and areas for improvement, both in terms of circular economy service offer, as well as operational and financial capacity.
 - Identification of organizational and circular economy knowledge needs, both inside the organization and in the broader circular economy ecosystem.
- **Format:** online and/or on-site exchanges with selected experts.

2.2.2 Phase 2 – Tailor-made capacity building program

- **Duration:** maximum 15 days
- **Focus areas:**

- Personalized coaching and support from sector-specific experts on circular economy business services and operational and financial capacity.
- **Possible formats (to be defined based on needs):** one-on-one coaching sessions, targeted group sessions to address common challenges among practitioners, self-paced learning activities, practical field exercises to apply new knowledge and/or intermediate sessions to reinforce learning over time.
- **Schedule and pacing:**
 - Schedule and delivery format (online/offline) will be jointly agreed between the selected CEBSO and the selected experts.
 - Designed to be flexible and responsive to the CEBSO's pace and capacity.

2.3 List of potential expertise covered by selected experts

Here is a potential list of expertise, subject to availability, that selected experts can offer to the CEBSO through the capacity-building program. The organizational and capacity assessment conducted in Phase 1 will enable experts, together with the selected CEBSOs, to identify and prioritize the specific areas of support for the capacity-building program in Phase 2.

The list of potential expertise and thematic areas that selected experts can provide to the CEBSO is organized according to the specific objective:

Objective 1: To improve the quality and relevance of circular economy services provided to circular businesses

- ✓ Circular economy expertise: integrating circularity into business models, understanding the different types of models (such as circular design, optimal use and value recovery models), reviewing and refining business plans (e.g. using circular business model canvas), identifying circular opportunities across value chains.
- ✓ Sector-specific circular economy expertise, informed by EU technology and expertise, in priority sectors: critical raw materials, bio-based materials, electronics & ICT, batteries, machinery and equipment, buildings and construction.
- ✓ Circular economy market access and trade facilitation, including opportunities within the EU market: developing targeted support services that enable businesses to enter and compete in circular value chains. This includes: market intelligence and analysis for circular products and services, compliance advisory services and trade facilitation services such as matchmaking and partnership development to facilitate connection between local businesses and EU potential partners and buyers.
- ✓ Circular economy access to finance: supporting in developing funding strategies, preparing financial due-diligence materials (ensuring financial models and documentation meet investor requirements), reviewing financial documents, preparing investment pitches, conducting investor outreach and structuring deals, including with international financial partners.
- ✓ EU circular economy regulations and compliance: providing guidance on relevant EU Circular Economy Action Plan measures affecting exporters (e.g. eco-design, extended producer responsibility schemes, etc), assessing businesses current alignment with EU requirements and identification of regulatory gaps, supporting in developing actionable compliance plans to meet EU circular economy standards, and monitoring of EU regulations and directives to help businesses anticipate changes in EU market regulations.
- ✓ Partnership development and stakeholders' engagement: conducting circular economy ecosystem analysis (competitor and peer mapping), identifying and strengthening key partnerships in circular economy ecosystem including with EU partners, identifying

investment partners for circular businesses, monitoring circular economy policy instruments at local and international level.

- ✓ Circular economy business development: (re)defining the service offer of the CEBSO, key performance indicator (KPI) framework development to track circular impact and business progress.
- ✓ Tools, infrastructure and digitalization: establishing knowledge management systems (e.g. toolkits to standardize/personalize service delivery), developing monitoring and evaluation tracking systems, using digital tools for service delivery, ensuring inclusive and participatory approaches (e.g. gender equality in circular economy).

Objective 2: Strengthen the organizational capacity of the CEBSO for effective and sustainable operations

- Strategic and organisational development: clarifying organisation purpose and impact, strengthening governance structure, and supporting strategic planning and execution.
- Business model and financial sustainability: designing funding model/income sources, enhancing financial management and planning.
- Operations and internal systems: optimizing internal workflows and decision-making processes, strengthening risk management practices.
- Human resource management: developing talent management strategies (e.g. career development pathways and training opportunities, including in circular economy) and leadership capacity.
- Communication and outreach: building brand identity and narrative, implementing strategic communication among beneficiaries, partners and funders.

2.4 Indicative timeline

Object	Deadline
Information session online on EoI	13/01/2026 at 10:00, Brussels time
Sending questions on the EoI	13/01/2026 at 23:55, Brussels time (mandatory deadline)
Publication of answers to questions on the EoI	16/01/2026
Reception of applications to the EoI	27/01/2026 at 23:55, Brussels time (mandatory deadline)
Motivation interview with the top 3 shortlisted applicants	27/02/2026
Communication of results to applicants	06/03/2026
Phase 1: Organizational and capacity assessment	March – April 2026
Phase 2 : Capacity building program	May-June 2026 (flexible timing)

3 Who can apply?

3.1 Admissibility criteria

Applicants must respond to the following admissibility criteria:

- be a legal entity; and

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- be either one of the following:
 - a public entity²
 - a non-profit private entity
 - a foundation; and
- be a Business Support Organisation³; and
- be created and established in: Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania or Uganda⁴ ; and
- Already be active, or demonstrate a clear willingness to develop expertise, in the circular economy within at least one of the following priority sectors: critical raw materials, bio-based materials, ICT and electronics, batteries, machinery and equipment, or buildings and construction.
- Demonstrate a **minimum of three (3) years** of local expertise and experience in managing and delivering quality business support services to small and medium-sized enterprises. This criterion will be assessed based on the detailed information provided in the application file on Submit Enabel under section “Technical capacity and experience in business support and circular economy”.
- Demonstrate **initial experience** in supporting businesses engaged in circular economy approaches. This criterion will be assessed based on the detailed information provided in the application file on Submit Enabel under section “Technical capacity and experience in business support and circular economy”.
- Provide audited financial statements for the most recent two (2) years.

Please note : potential applicant may not participate in this call for expressions of interest, nor may they be the beneficiary of the capacity building program if they are in one of the exclusion situations described in Annex C of these guidelines. In Annexe D ("declaration on honour"), the applicant must declare that it is not in one of these situations.

4 Application procedures

4.1.1 Where and how to submit applications

Eligible applicant must apply on Enabel Submit through the following link: <https://submit.link/4nl>. A confirmation e-mail will be sent upon receipt of the submission. The applicant will not be able to apply after the set deadline as the link will automatically stop functioning.

Application files sent by other means (for example by fax, post, e-mail or hand deliveries) will be rejected.

Applicants must ensure that their application file is complete. Incomplete files may be rejected.

4.1.2 Deadline for applications

² A 100% public entity, with no private capital.

³ To be demonstrated through the statutes/articles of association that business development service delivery is amongst the primary objectives of the entity.

⁴ The organisation's articles of association must show that this latter was created in accordance with the national law of the country concerned and that its registered office is situated in an eligible country (i.e. Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda). Any organisation created and/or established in a different country than Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda or Tanzania may not be considered a local eligible organisation

The deadline for applications is **Tuesday 27 January 2026 at 23:55, Brussels time**, as substantiated by the website server. All applications submitted after the deadline date and time will be rejected.

4.1.3 Further information on applications

An information session on this Call for Expressions of Interest will be hosted online on the **13 January 2026 at 10:00 Brussels time**. Please register at the following link: [here](#).

In addition, applicants may send their questions by e-mail, until **13 January 2026 at 23:55, Brussels time**, to eucerc@enabel.be, with the following subject: “**Call for Expressions of Interest – CEBSO East Africa**”.

Questions will be answered at the latest **by the 16 January 2026**. The contracting authority will not be obliged to provide clarification on questions received after this date.

Answers to these questions and other important information communicated during the evaluation procedure will be published in due course on the Enabel website. As such, regular consultation of this website is recommended in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

In order to ensure the equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the admissibility of applicants.

5 Evaluation and selection of CEBSO

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the help, where applicable, of external evaluators. All applications will be evaluated according to the criteria described below.

If the examination of the application shows that the applicant does not satisfy the admissibility criteria described in point 3.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

The contracting authority also reserves the right to request clarification if the information provided in the application file does not enable it to make an objective assessment.

The following elements will be examined:

Administrative and admissibility checks

- Compliance with the submission deadline. If the deadline date is not observed, the application will be automatically rejected.
- The application satisfies all the criteria specified in points 1 to 5 of the verification and evaluation grid provided in Annex B - Application file evaluation grid.

This includes the submission of annexes duly completed and signed and the submission of additional documents as follows:

- ☐ Annexe A1 or A2, according to the status of the CEBSO: Legal entity form, including its supporting documents
- ☐ Annexe D: declaration on honour
- ☐ Latest 2 years audited financial statements

Evaluation of application files

Applications satisfying the conditions of the first administrative and admissibility check will be evaluated for their relevance to the capacity building program.

The application file will be given an overall mark out of 100 in accordance with the breakdown specified in points 6 to 20 of the evaluation grid available in Annex B.

The evaluation criteria are the following:

A. Profile of the organisation

- Organisation's alignment with the objectives and sectoral priorities of the EU CERC Business lab.

B. Quality of technical support provided by the CEBSO

- Demonstrated ability to deliver effective business support to small and medium-sized enterprises, evidenced through past projects and measurable positive outcomes.
- Demonstrated ability to support businesses in implementing circular economy practices, evidenced through initial projects and measurable positive outcomes.
- Organisation's commitment and capacity to promote gender equality in its activities.
- Ability to track and evaluate the quality of its service provided.

C. Operational and financial capacity

- Organisation's capacity to build diversified and relevant partnerships with business support organisations and circular economy stakeholders, both at local and international level, including with European Union's stakeholders.
- Presence of skilled human resources within the organization capable of delivering business support services in the circular economy.
- Presence and adequacy of infrastructure (such as physical facilities, digital platforms, technical equipment, others) to deliver circular economy business support services.
- The organization demonstrates a viable business model with defined revenue streams.
- Audited financial statements for the past two years showing stable financial performance and the ability to sustain operations over time.

D. Motivation and expectations

- Organisation's motivation to participate to the capacity-building programme, and to clearly express what are the expected benefits for the organization.
- Organisation's ability to clearly identified and articulate its needs with regards to circular economy expertise and organisational capacity building.
- Clear articulation of the organisation's strategic priorities for the next 2 years with regards to circular economy.

E. Learning and integration capacity

- Organisation's capacity to incorporate learning outcomes from capacity building programmes into its operations, through a coherent strategic approach.
- Existence and effectiveness of mechanisms for knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning with national or international stakeholders, including with European Union partners.

The evaluation criteria are divided by headings and sub-headings. Each sub-heading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = very good.

After the evaluation of the applications, the contracting authority will send a letter via email, to all applicants, notifying them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether their application file has been evaluated and the results of this evaluation.

Interview

Only application files which have obtained a minimum score of 60 points out of 100 will be shortlisted. All shortlisted applications will be ranked from highest to lowest score, and the top 3 scoring organisations will be invited to a motivation interview as part of the final step of the selection process. A reserve list of the next three highest-scoring organisations will be maintained internally for a period of six months.

The interview will consist of a 45-minute discussion between the jury and the CEBSO to assess its motivation in participating in the capacity building program and evaluating the benefits of the program for both the organisation and its beneficiaries.

6 Glossary

- ❖ **Circular economy:** is a systems solution framework that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution. It is based on three principles, driven by design: eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials (at their highest value), and regenerate nature.
- ❖ **Circular Economy Business Support Organization (CEBSO):** is an entity—such as an incubator, accelerator, business association, industry association, chamber of commerce, non-for-profit association —that provides tailored support to circular businesses, which have developed solutions, technologies or services in the circular economy or to businesses willing to integrate circular practices into their business model.
- ❖ **CEBSO capacity building :** refers to the process of strengthening the institutional, operational, and technical capacities of a Circular Economy Business Support Organization (CEBSO) to effectively deliver quality support services to circular businesses.
- ❖ **CE business support services:** refer to services provided by CEBSOs that aim to support businesses to adopt, implement or scale circular economy business models and practices.
- ❖ **CE business models:** are models that favour solutions that minimize harm such as waste and pollution and circulate products and materials at their highest value. Business models can be classified under those three types:
 1. **Circular Design’ models :** Avoid or reduce resource consumption **before use** (refuse, rethink, and reduce).
 2. **‘Optimal Use’ models:** Extend the lifespan of product **during use** (reuse/maintain, repair),
 3. **‘Value Recovery’ models:** Recover and recycle materials that are no longer functional **after use** (refurbish, remanufacture, repurpose, recycle, recover).

7 Annexes

The following documents are annexed to the Call for Expressions of Interest:

- Annex A1: Private Company Legal entity file
- Annex A2: Public law legal entity file
- Annex B: Application file evaluation grid
- Annex C: Exclusion grounds
- Annexe D: Declaration of honour

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