



# Social Impact Prize – Call Regulations

*Scaling your impact by changing the system*

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## 1. Social Impact Prize: the Project

The **Social Impact Prize** is an international initiative promoted by **Ashoka** and **alcube**, aimed at identifying and supporting social enterprises in **shaping systemic change across the Mediterranean region**.

The Prize focuses on early-stage entrepreneurial initiatives that address complex social and environmental challenges by acting on root causes, reshaping systems, and enabling scalable and lasting impact. The programme combines financial support with capacity building, mentoring, and access to a strong international ecosystem of partners, investors, and changemakers.

The Social Impact Prize was created to support startup teams ready to embrace this complexity and turn their projects into **transformative, impact-first models** (see Glossary), with the potential to influence systems, markets, and narratives.

## 2. Who the Call Is For

This call is designed **for startups and early-stage ventures** that are building solutions with the ambition to generate **systemic change** (see Glossary) in the social or environmental domain.

The call is open to **early-stage ventures and entrepreneurial teams** operating in the Mediterranean area, including but not limited to Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey.

In particular, the call targets startups that:

- are led by an entrepreneurial team committed to growing an impact-driven venture;
- have developed a **Minimum Viable Product (MVP)** or are in an early validation phase;



- aim to generate **measurable social or environmental impact**, supported by an explicit approach to **impact measurement** (see Glossary);
- show potential for **scalability** and **frame change** (see Glossary) at system level.

### 3. Eligibility and Admissibility Conditions

Eligible organizations may be established under any legal form recognized in their country, or be structured informal groups with a clear entrepreneurial initiative, provided that they:

- operate through an **entrepreneurial approach**;
- generate value through **goods, services, or market-based mechanisms**;
- pursue **social impact as their primary purpose**.

### 4. How to Apply

Applications must be submitted exclusively through the online application form, which will be made available via a dedicated link on the Social Impact Prize website.

Applications must be completed and submitted by **23 March**. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Shortlisted startups may be asked to provide additional information or materials during the selection process

### 5. Selection Process

The selection process is designed to identify startups with strong impact ambition, learning capacity, and growth potential. It is structured in two main phases:

- **Phase 1 (mid-March, following the closure of the call)**

Initial evaluation aimed at assessing eligibility and alignment with the **Impact Principles** of the Social Impact Prize. Applications submitted by startup teams are reviewed to evaluate coherence with the Prize's impact ambition and principles.

Based on this assessment, up to **20 startups** are shortlisted and admitted to the **capacity building programme**.

- **Phase 2 (mid-May, after the completion of the capacity building programme)**

Second evaluation phase involving selected partners acting as part of the **Selection Committee**. Up to **5 finalist startups** are selected and gain access to tailored mentoring and participation in the final award event.

Between Phase 1 and Phase 2, shortlisted startups will be asked to **revise and resubmit their pitch deck**, integrating the feedback received during the capacity building programme.



- **Impact Principles and Selection Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated according to a set of **Impact Principles**, which guide the evaluation across all selection phases.

1. **Sustainability of the Service or Solution**

The extent to which the startup's core product or service demonstrates a credible path toward **financial sustainability** (see Glossary), enabling long-term impact without permanent reliance on grants.

2. **Scalability**

The potential for the solution to significantly increase its impact through growth, adoption, or influence, in line with the concept of **scalability** (see Glossary).

3. **Replicability**

The ability of the model to be adapted or replicated across different contexts, geographies, or populations, contributing to wider system-level effects.

4. **Systemic Change**

The capacity of the solution to influence **rules, practices, incentives, or power dynamics** within a system, contributing to **systemic change** (see Glossary) beyond isolated outcomes.

5. **Mindset and Frame Change**

The potential to shift narratives, behaviors, and decision-making logics through advocacy, awareness-building, or policy engagement, contributing to **frame change** (see Glossary).

## 6. What We Offer

The Social Impact Prize provides startups with a combination of **financial support, skills development, and ecosystem access**, designed to accelerate both impact and organizational growth.

Selected startups will benefit from:

- **The Prize:** a €20,000 grant awarded to the winning startup to support growth, experimentation, and impact development.
- **Capacity Building:** A structured learning programme supporting the 20 startups in strengthening their impact logic, business model, and financial sustainability.
- **Mentoring:** Tailored 1-to-1 mentoring sessions for the finalist startups with experts and partners, focused on each startup's specific strategic and operational needs.
- **Networking:** Access to an international ecosystem of impact investors, practitioners, institutions, and corporate partners, and opportunities for visibility, partnerships, learning, and potential co-investment.

## 7. Timeline and Key Dates

The Social Impact Prize unfolds through a structured yet flexible timeline. Dates indicated below are **indicative** and may be adjusted by the organizers. Any updates will be communicated in a timely manner to participating startups.



- **February – March** | Call for Startups  
Application phase for startup teams across the Mediterranean region.
- **March** | Selection Phase 1  
Review of applications and selection of startups admitted to the capacity building phase.
- **April – mid May** | Capacity Building Programme (online)  
Group sessions supporting startups in strengthening their impact model, business foundations, and systemic perspective.
- **Mid May** | Selection Phase 2 with Partner Evaluation  
Identification of finalist startups based on impact potential and scalability.
- **Late May – June** | 1-to-1 Mentoring  
Tailored mentoring sessions addressing the specific growth and impact challenges of finalist startups.
- **Mid June** | Final Event  
In-person event where finalist startups present their ventures and the winning team is announced.

## 8. Capacity Building Programme

The capacity building programme is designed to support startups in strengthening both **impact depth** and **financial sustainability** (see Glossary), with a strong focus on systems thinking and practical application.

The programme combines peer learning, practical tools, and expert inputs.

The capacity building programme will start with a **Kickoff & Startup Onboarding session**, currently scheduled for **8 April** (TBC - this date may be adjusted and will be confirmed in advance with the selected startups).

The programme will then focus on the following **macro thematic areas**, delivered through group sessions: **Systemic Change, Business Design, Impact Measurement, Economic & Financial Planning and Leadership & Governance**. Additional sessions or deep dives may be introduced based on the needs of the cohort.

Sessions will be delivered primarily online, combining peer learning, practical tools, and expert inputs.

## 9. Final Event and Mobility Contribution

The programme will conclude with a **final in-person event**, during which finalist teams will present their ventures and the winning organization will be announced.

The winner will be selected by a **mixed jury** composed of sector experts, practitioners, entrepreneurs, and representatives of the Prize's operating and management team.

A **mobility contribution** will be provided to finalist teams to support participation in the final event. The amount will be **commensurate with the distance** travelled and communicated in advance to selected teams.



## 10. Final Provisions

Selected startups are expected to **actively participate in the capacity building programme** and related activities. Participation in the programme is an integral part of the selection process and does not automatically guarantee access to the final phase.

The organizers reserve the right to modify the timeline, selection process, programme structure, and content, provided that any changes are communicated in a timely manner to participating organizations.

For further information, clarifications, or support related to the application process, interested startups are invited to refer to the official Social Impact Prize page or to contact the programme team:

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## Glossary

**SYSTEMIC CHANGE:** A fundamental shift in how a social system operates, addressing root causes rather than symptoms. Systemic change reshapes policies, practices, power dynamics, relationships, and mindsets to enable lasting and large-scale impact.

### Reference resources

- [Ashoka – What is Systems Change?](#)
- [Donella Meadows – Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System](#)

**IMPACT-FIRST MODEL:** An organizational or business model in which social or environmental impact is the primary objective, and financial sustainability is a means to sustain and scale that impact.

### Reference resources

- [Social Value International – Principles of Social Value](#)
- [EVPA – Impact Measurement and Management](#)

**TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL:** A solution that changes behaviors, incentives, norms, or rules within a system, enabling others to act and contributing to broader pattern change.

### Reference resources

- [OECD – System Innovation for Sustainability](#)

**SCALABILITY:** The ability of a solution to significantly increase its impact through replication, adoption, or influence, without a proportional increase in resources.

### Reference resources

- [Skoll Foundation – What Does Scale Really Mean?](#)

**FRAME CHANGE:** A durable shift in the underlying narratives, assumptions, and mental models through which a social problem is understood and addressed. Frame change occurs when a new way of interpreting a challenge becomes dominant—reshaping policies, practices, institutional behaviors, and cultural norms, and enabling systemic change over time.

### Reference resources

- [Ashoka – Frame Change and Systems Change](#)
- [Stanford Social Innovation Review – Changing the Narrative](#)

**EARLY-STAGE VENTURE:** An organization or startup with a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) that is testing assumptions related to impact, users, and sustainability.

### Reference resources

- [Ashoka – How We Select Social Entrepreneurs](#)
- [Nesta – From Idea to Impact](#)



**MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT (MVP):** The simplest version of a solution that allows teams to test hypotheses, learn from users, and demonstrate early value.

**Reference resources**

- [Eric Ries – The Lean Startup](#)
- [IDEO.org – Human-Centered Design Toolkit](#)

**ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:** An approach that recognizes that lasting change requires collaboration among multiple actors—communities, institutions, investors, businesses, and civil society.

**Reference resources**

- [OECD – Local Ecosystems for Social Innovation](#)

**ADDITIONALITY:** The extent to which an initiative generates impact that would not have occurred otherwise, particularly in underserved or high-risk contexts.

**Reference resources**

- [EVPA – Understanding Additionality](#)
- [OECD DAC – Additionality and Value for Money](#)

**IMPACT MEASUREMENT:** A learning-oriented process to understand outcomes and systemic effects, supporting reflection, adaptation, and strategic decision-making.

**Reference resources**

- [Social Value International – Guide to SROI](#)
- [OECD – Measuring Social Impact](#)

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:** The ability of an organization to maintain and grow its activities over time through reliable and mission-aligned revenue streams.