



NEWS, LATEST, CURRENT TOPICS

INCENTIVES FOR SMES: QUALIFICATION OF SMES

“(...) calling for individual business training operations promoted by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises ("SME") (...), aimed at qualifying and digitising business models through the use of intangible competitiveness factors.”

On the 29th of May 2024, **Notice [MPr-2024-4](#)** was launched, **calling for individual business training operations promoted by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises ("SME")** in the NUTS II regions of mainland Portugal (North, Centre, Lisbon, Alentejo and Algarve), **aimed at qualifying and digitising business models through the use of intangible competitiveness factors.**

As the analysis and decision on applications is made in two phases, the second phase will be completed on the **30th of January 2025.**

The aim of this programme is to strengthen the sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs, as well as the creation of jobs in the same. To this end, support can be given to operations to upgrade and digitalise SME business models with the aim of adopting more advanced business strategies and increasing the capacity to integrate into global value chains, through the following domains:

1. Organisational innovation, management and logistics: in particular, the introduction of new work organisation methods, the strengthening of management skills, the introduction of information systems applied to new distribution and logistics methods, studies and projects, layout redesign and improvements, benchmarking actions, diagnosis and planning;

2. Digitalisation and digital transformation (including cybersecurity and data protection): creating and/or adapting business models by adopting digital practices and automating processes, investing in artificial intelligence (AI) applications, data collection, processing and analysis tools, digital transformation and tools and practices to guarantee data security, among others;

AUTHORS



CATARINA PEREIRA
Lawyer

3. Brand and design creation;

4. **Industrial property protection:** by registering patents, inventions, utility models and designs;

5. **Training for the development of products, services and processes;**

6. **Quality and certification:** namely through initial certification, certification of products and services with the obtaining of trademarks, as well as the implementation of total quality management systems;

7. **Transfer of knowledge and technology:** acquisition of consultancy and technical assistance services in the fields of knowledge transfer and certification of research, development and innovation management systems;

8. **Sustainability and eco-innovation:** incorporating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into companies - which includes, in particular, certifying systems, services and products in the environmental field, obtaining the Ecolabel and eco-management and auditing systems.

To be eligible, operations must fulfil certain eligibility requirements – such as **presenting a minimum total eligible expenditure of 200 thousand euros and an intervention in, at least, two immaterial domains of competitiveness, justifying the integrated approach supported by a strategic analysis of the respective company.**

- **Sectoral Scope:**

At sectoral level, operations in almost all economic activities (with the exception of financial and insurance activities, defence, lotteries and other betting games) which **aim to produce tradable and internationalisable goods and services** that create significant economic value for the target regions or contribute to their value chain will be eligible, provided they do not concern services of general economic interest.

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For this purpose, **tradable goods and services** will be considered to be those produced in sectors exposed to international competition and which can be the object of international exchange demonstrated through **exports, indirect sales abroad** (i.e. the sale of goods to customers on the domestic market which will be incorporated into other goods sold abroad), the **provision of services to non-residents**, and **import substitution** (i.e. increased production for domestic consumption of goods or services with a negative balance of trade).

- **Allocation and maximum co-financing rate:**

The overall budget for the respective funds is 18 million euros, whereby:

- the financing rate for eligible operations in the North, Centre, Alentejo and Algarve regions will be obtained by applying a rate of 50% to eligible expenditure;
- the financing rate for eligible operations in the Lisbon region will be calculated by applying a maximum rate of 40% to eligible expenditure.

Eligible costs are duly delimited in the respective Notice and must, in any case, be directly related to the development of the operation.

Payments to beneficiaries will be made by way of advance (initial advance of up to 10%, advance against invoice or advance against guarantee), reimbursement and/or final payment, under the terms provided by law.

It should also be noted that the aforementioned Notice does not include the eligibility of investments with any costs incurred prior to the date of the application. Hence, they should only be incurred after the application has been approved.

