

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN

VOUCHERS FOR INCUBATORS AND ACCELERATORS

NOTICE No. 17/C16-i02/2023

2nd Notice of the Open Call for Tenders under the measure “Vouchers for Incubators and Accelerators”



Agência para a Competitividade e Inovação, I.P.



**STARTUP
PORTUGAL**



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1. Framework

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis was accompanied by a sharp global economic downturn. This was caused, in part, by restrictive measures imposed by individual states in order to safeguard public health. In addition, the asynchronous manner in which the disease impacted different countries also caused severe disruptions in major global supply chains.

As a response to this economic contraction, the European Union developed an ambitious public investment programme called Next Generation EU that, in turn, is embodied in the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), which consists of approximately EUR 16.3 billion in non-refundable grants for Portugal, as well as EUR 5.9 billion in loans.

The RRP encompasses a broad spectrum of measures and reforms that focus on the dimensions of Resilience, Climate Transition and Digital Transformation. In this context, Component 16 – Companies 4.0, integrated in the Digital Transition dimension and in which this Notice is included, strives to create the conditions for intelligent, inclusive and sustainable growth, inducing a new specialisation and internationalisation profile of our economy, presupposing efficient support for entrepreneurship.

The implementation of the "Vouchers for Incubators and Accelerators" measure contemplates a total budget of EUR 20 million, and seeks to create conditions in which incubators/accelerators can invest in their development, namely technological development, have more resources at their disposal and be more up-to-date in their knowledge and capabilities, particularly in supporting startups with digitally-based business models.

As the intermediary beneficiary, the Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, I.P. (IAPMEI) launches the present Notice of Application (AAC) regarding the measure "Vouchers for Incubators/Accelerators". This Notice of Application (AAC) is framed within the [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021](#) and the [Plan for Recovery and Resilience of Portugal](#) in its Component 16 – Companies 4.0, in the Digital Transition dimension, also following [Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022](#) of 1 April, which approved the Regulation of the Incentive Scheme "Companies 4.0".

2. Contribution to the Objectives of the RRP

Component 16 directly contributes to the objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, which strive to respond to the current challenges of the economy. These challenges cover multiple sectors, of public and private nature, such as education, social security, justice or the digital empowerment of companies in general.

The measure "Vouchers for Incubators/Accelerators" is part of the above-mentioned component. Knowing that incubators/accelerators play an important role in raising the level of success of startups (the survival rate after 24 months of incubation is 86%), and that more and more startups have digital-based models, services and products, it is important to invest in increasing resources and in the qualification of technicians and directors of these structures, as well as in their own digital transition.

Therefore, these conditions will allow incubators and accelerators to better support the incubated startups, namely in regards to reception and follow-up conditions in their programmes. In this domain, the available investments should also allow a greater focus on startups that have solutions and business models with a strong digital focus (products and/or services), so they can also be catalysts of the digital transition process advocated in this component.

The specific objective of this tender is thus to grant support to simplified projects that foresee the creation or development of incubation services provided by the beneficiaries, according to the terms defined in this Notice.

3. Geographical area of application and sectoral scope

Under the terms of Article 3 of [Ministerial Order 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#), this Notice applies to the entire national territory, including the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores.

The sectoral scope of the Notice is the one defined in Article 4 of [Ministerial Order 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#).

Please note that all applications submitted to this Notice must be written in Portuguese.

4. Typology of operations

Existing or future projects may be supported, whose aim is to develop incubation and/or acceleration services in the areas of entrepreneurship and innovation, essential to the launch and acceleration of startups, such as:

- **Support Ignition or Acceleration Programmes:** Support the reinforcement of the action of incubators and accelerators and their qualification in human resources, management and technology, in order to be able to provide accompanied support in the development of startups, through financial support for the development of ignition and acceleration programmes, in partnership with higher education institutions, incubators, companies, and national and international investor groups;

- **Support Qualification:** To support the qualification of beneficiaries, namely in their technological dimension and in the support of digital-based business models, strengthening the network of incubated startups and the expansion of the contact network with mentors, companies, investors, higher education institutions, and research or technological innovation centres;
- **Support HR Reinforcement:** Support the recruitment of new qualified human resources on a permanent basis, thus reinforcing the number of qualified workers in incubators and accelerators.

Thus, and in accordance with the objectives defined in the RRP for this measure, the support of beneficiaries (incubators/accelerators) in the scope of this Notice should focus on investment projects, namely in technological areas, including equipment and infrastructures, and in updating knowledge and qualification.

5. Conditions for the Eligibility of Operations

In addition to the eligibility criteria for projects defined in the Regulation of the Incentive Scheme "Companies 4.0" approved by [Article 8 of Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#), the projects must be promoted by entities that develop or intend to develop incubation and/or acceleration services in the areas of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Projects should identify actions and good practices that encourage the participation of the under-represented gender.

6. Eligible Entities

The eligible entities or beneficiaries of this Notice are the organisational structures, of any legal nature, framed within the Regulation of the Incentive Scheme "Companies 4.0", approved by [Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#), with physical presence and that typically correspond to the designation "Incubators, Accelerators or Structures that support startups" with the mission or purpose of accompanying and supporting the growth of startups, namely through the development of qualification activities, awareness-raising, mentoring, networking, support in the implementation of scalable projects and/or support in raising capital to finance their activities and operations.

7. Expenditures

7.1. Eligible expenditures

The following are considered eligible expenditures:

- i. Costs related to technical staff¹ directly allocated to the implementation of the project, whose competences/strengths should be evidenced within the scope of the notice and correspond to a [minimum qualification level VI \(NQF\)](#), up to 75% of the total eligible costs;
- ii. Expenditures related to accreditation or technological certification of human resources;
- iii. Acquisition of Specialised External Services, such as support services for the digitalisation of business processes, marketing services, product and service development, consultancy and other specialised services to pursue the objectives of the project;
- iv. Acquisition or operational leasing of equipment, as well as software licensing or subscription costs, intended for the activities to be developed within the scope of the project and reimbursable during its execution period;
- v. Costs related to the protection/valuation of intellectual property rights;
- vi. Indirect costs.

The estimated indirect costs are calculated on a simplified cost basis, based on the application of a flat rate of 15% of the costs with human resources.

7.2. Non-eligible expenditures

The following are considered non-eligible expenditures:

- i. Normal operating costs of the beneficiary, not foreseen in the contracted investment, as well as maintenance and replacement costs, and costs related to periodic or continuous activities;

¹ The cost of the base monthly salary plus social contributions borne by the promoter entity, including holiday and Christmas bonuses, during the implementation period of the project, related to the recruitment of new technical staff and/or to the total or partial imputation of technical staff of the beneficiary entity, are considered eligible expenditures. The salaries of partners/managers/administrators are not considered eligible expenditures.

- ii. Investments arising from obligations that are a result of concession agreements or contracts with the State or compliance with legal obligations applicable to the proposed activities;
- iii. Cash payments, except in situations where this proves to be the most common means of payment, depending on the nature of the expenditures, and provided that the unit amount is less than EUR 250;
- iv. Expenditures paid under contracts concluded through intermediaries or consultants, where the amount to be paid is expressed as a percentage of the amount financed by the RRP or of the eligible expenditures for the project;
- v. Acquisition of second-hand goods;
- vi. Value Added Tax (VAT), recoverable or not by the beneficiary;
- vii. Acquisition of vehicles, aircrafts and other transport equipment;
- viii. Interest and financial charges;
- ix. Working capital;
- x. Acquisition of real estate, including land;
- xi. Leasehold and rights of use of property;
- xii. Standard advertising;
- xiii. Preparation of applications.

The declared expenditures that are not considered adequate are also not considered eligible, taking into account their reasonability in view of the market conditions, and the evidence of the costs presented and described in the investments approved in the RRP.

The acquisition of solutions or components of technological solutions originating from specific suppliers will not be favoured, and "technological neutrality" should be maintained.

8. Duration of the Project

Projects have a maximum duration of eighteen months from the date of signature of the Acceptance of Terms. The implementation of projects must begin no later than three months after the communication of the decision to grant support, and must be completed no later than 30 September 2025.

9. Date of Eligibility for Expenditures

Expenditures incurred following the date of submission of the application are eligible, however, the project cannot have already begun at the date of submission.

10. Form of Support

The support to be granted will take the form of non-refundable funding.

11. Indicative allocation

The RRP budget allocated to this Notice is EUR 10,000,000 (ten million euros).

12. Financing Rate

The amount of funding to be granted under this Notice is established at the minimum and maximum thresholds of EUR 30,000 and EUR 150,000.

The funding to be granted to the selected applications must be confirmed through the undertaking of eligible expenditures of an equal amount, corresponding to a financing rate of 100%, and beneficiaries must comply with the legal provisions applicable to public procurement when this is necessary to achieve the objectives of the project.

The amount of funding will be allocated under the “de minimis” aid framework, Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013 of 18 December, with a maximum limit of EUR 200,000 over 3 financial years per single company.

13. Payment to Beneficiaries

Regarding the expenditures referred to in Section 7.1, the payment methodology is as follows, and the support payments may be processed through:

- i. Initial pre-financing advance of up to 1/4 of the total amount to be financed;
- ii. Semi-annual payments (every six months), with a maximum individual amount of 1/4, calculated on the basis of the amount of the incentive, minus the amounts established in i) and iii) of this Article;
- iii. Final payment of the remaining amount, to be submitted up to 90 days after the physical and financial conclusion of the project.

The project must be implemented within a maximum of 18 months, but no later than 30 September 2025.

The amount of funding received and not justified, with the undertaking of eligible expenditures within 18 months from the date of signature of the acceptance of terms, will be subject to return

within 30 days under penalty of being recovered by IAPMEI.

The objectives set out in the application, in terms of implementation and results, referred to in Section 18 of this Notice, are subject to contractualisation and monitoring.

Following a results-oriented approach, the implementation of the project will include the collection of necessary and disaggregated information that allows the assessment of indicators until its completion, when the achievement of the objectives and underlying conditions for approval will be assessed.

This way, the beneficiaries must commit to submit, at the end of the project, a report identifying the progress achieved with the incubation/acceleration, presenting the incubation services provided to startups and implemented during the project, and containing information in order to evaluate the services provided, namely in terms of training, qualification, provision of equipment and funding support.

The total or partial non-compliance of the project's results indicators, according to Section 18, may lead to the reduction or revocation of funding.

IAPMEI may define, in a Technical Guideline, the specific conditions to be observed in the foreseen payment modalities.

14. Deadlines and Procedures for the Presentation of Applications

The submission of applications occurs through an electronic form, available starting **30 November 2023**, and which can be accessed on the [IAPMEI](#) website and/or on the [Startup Portugal](#) website.

In order to submit the application, it is essential that the beneficiary has concluded their registration and authentication at [Balcão dos Fundos](#).

In this reserved area, the beneficiary must confirm and complete their data characterisation, which will be used in the applications to this Notice.

Taking into account the selection criteria established in Section 15.2 of this Notice, the deadline for the submission of applications will remain open until the reception of applications have reached the determined limit, according to the budget allocation defined in Section 11.

The reception of applications may be suspended before reaching the aforementioned budget limit, through a prior notice to be published on the websites of the RRP, IAPMEI, Startup Portugal and the Portugal Digital Mission Structure, at least 3 business days before the suspension date.

Under this measure, in the event of eligibility, each applicant may only submit one application.

15. Admission, selection and decision regarding applications

15.1. Entities involved in the assessment

The selection process is carried out on a quarterly basis, taking into account the date of receipt of the applications (quarterly cut-offs). Alternatively, the period in question begins when the call for tenders is closed, given that the budget allocation has been exhausted.

The applications from each quarterly cut-off are analysed by Startup Portugal, designated Managing Entity of the "Entrepreneurship" Measure, under the terms of Order no. 10452/2023 of 12 October, which made the 2nd amendment to Order no. 12619/2021 of 27 December, which constitutes the Coordinating Committee for Component C16 of the RRP, known as Companies 4.0.

The assessment process in each cut-off is based on the selection criteria referred to in Section 15.3 of the Notice, up to the limit of the budget allocation defined in Section 11 of the Notice.

The proposal for a reasoned decision on the support to be granted to the applications is submitted by Startup Portugal to the Entrepreneurship Monitoring Group of the Coordinating Committee of Component C16 of the RRP.

The decision regarding project funding is made by IAPMEI within 90 business days following the date of each quarterly cut-off. Alternatively, the period in question begins when the call for tenders is closed, given that the budget allocation has been exhausted. This deadline is suspended when the applicant is requested to provide any clarifications, information or documents, which can only occur once. The non-submission by the applicant of the requested elements, within 10 business days, will result in the withdrawal of the application.

Following notification of the proposed decision, candidates may comment on the terms of the decision within a maximum of 10 working days from the date of notification of the proposed decision, in accordance with the legal terms set out in the Code of Administrative Procedure,

namely in regards to any intention to reject the application and the respective grounds.

Any proposed decisions to which contrary allegations are presented will be reviewed by Startup Portugal and resubmitted to the Entrepreneurship Monitoring Group of the Coordinating Committee of Component C16 of the RRP. The final decision will be issued by IAPMEI within 40 business days following the date of submission of the claim.

IAPMEI will notify the applicants of the final decision within 5 business days following the date of the decision.

15.2. Criteria for the Selection of Applications

Under the provisions of the Regulation of the Incentive Scheme "Companies 4.0", approved by Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022 of 1 April, the selection of operations to be financed will occur according to the following selection criteria:

- A. **Relevance of the project in relation to the objectives of the measure**, through the presentation of investment projects in development, namely technological, with the goal of updating its knowledge and capacity to provide incubation/acceleration services in the areas of entrepreneurship and innovation;
- B. **Capacity of the beneficiaries to implement**, supported by a management team with the appropriate technological and management skills;
- C. **Impact of the project on the competitiveness of the beneficiaries**, through the project's contribution to the differentiation of the beneficiaries in relation to the market in which they operate.

Applications will be analysed on the basis of the assessment of the aforementioned criteria, as follows:

- **Compliant:** the proposal addresses the criteria clearly and comprehensively;
- **Non-compliant:** the proposal does not address the criteria or cannot be assessed due to incomplete information or significant gaps and shortcomings.

Projects that have been classified as "compliant" with all assessment criteria will be selected.

15.3. Admission and Selection Process of the Applications

The process of admission and selection of applications will be carried out in one single phase,

where the following elements will be considered:

- The verification of the framework in Sections 4, 5 and 6;
- The assessment of merit, based on the criteria defined in Section 15.2 and the respective valuation, by the monitoring group referred to in Section 15.1.

Only applications that ensure compliance with the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, not including activities that cause significant harm to any environmental objective within the scope of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU Taxonomy Regulation), as per the list of excluded activities in Annex I, are admissible.

16. Acceptance of the decision

The formalisation of the granting of support or its acceptance and the assumption of the implementation obligations by the beneficiaries is carried out through the signing of an Acceptance of Terms.

The Acceptance of Terms, when duly signed by the beneficiaries, produces the effects of a written contract.

Whenever possible, the signature of the Acceptance of Terms or Contract should be electronic, using the citizen card, the digital mobile key, or the professional attributes certification system (SCAP).

17. Obligations of the Beneficiaries

In addition to the obligations foreseen in Article 18 of [Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#), the beneficiaries are subject to the following obligations:

- Communicate the change of bank account;
- Perform the Central Registry of Effective Beneficiary (RCBE) and provide the code in the application.

18. Results Indicators

Pursuant to Article 17 of [Ministerial Order no. 135-A/2022 of 1 April](#), the objectives to be contracted with the beneficiary are directly correlated with the results indicator defined by the promoting organisations, using the following results indicator for this purpose:

Number of startups incubated, considering ex ante and ex post evaluation;

- Number of services provided or mediated to startups, per type, as defined in Section 4 of this Notice, per beneficiary.

19. Compliance with applicable legal provisions

Public Procurement

Whenever applicable, public procurement rules will be fully complied with when contracting the supply of goods or the provision of services from third parties.

Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality

Compliance with national and community legal regulations, applicable to the promotion of gender equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination must be ensured.

Processing of Personal Data

All personal data will be processed in accordance with [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016](#), regarding the protection of individuals in terms of the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data and which repeals Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of 25 May 2018.

Publicising the Support

The information, communication and advertising requirements concerning the source of funding, as set out in Article 34(2) of [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021](#), which established the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, and in accordance with [Technical Guidance No. 5/2021 of Recover Portugal](#), must be complied with.

Mitigating the Risk of Double Financing

Compliance with the applicable national and EU legal regulations regarding the mitigation of the risk of Double Financing must be ensured, in accordance with the provisions of [Technical](#)

Guideline no. 11/2023 of Recover Portugal.

Mitigating the Risk of Conflict of Interest

Compliance with the applicable national and EU legal regulations regarding the mitigation of the risk of Conflict of Interest must be ensured, in accordance with the provisions of Technical Guideline no. 12/2023 of Recover Portugal.

20. Dissemination of Results, contact points and other information

Access to information and clarifications can be obtained through:

- IAPMEI – Recovery and Resilience Plan;
 - Email: info@iapmei.pt
 - IAPMEI Helpline: 808 201 201 or 213 836 237
- Startup Portugal
 - Email: vales.incubadoras.prr@startupportugal.com

This Notice is available on the following websites:

- Startup Portugal: www.startupportugal.com
- IAPMEI: www.iapmei.pt
- Portugal Digital Mission Structure: www.portugaldigital.gov.pt
- RRP: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/candidaturas-prr>

President of IAPMEI

Luís Filipe Pratas Guerreiro

Annex I

List of activities excluded under the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle:

- i. Fossil fuel related activities including downstream uses, with the exception of projects, within the scope of this measure, for the production of electricity and/or heat and related transmission and distribution infrastructures using natural gas, which meet the conditions set out in Annex III of the Technical Guidelines for the application of the 'do no significant harm' principle (2021/C58/01);
- ii. Activities covered by the EU Emission Trading System (ETS) that achieve projected greenhouse gas emissions no lower than the applicable benchmarks. In cases where the supported activity achieves projected greenhouse gas emissions that are not significantly below the applicable benchmarks, it should be explained why higher values cannot be achieved. The benchmarks are those set for free allocation to activities covered by the Emission Trading System as foreseen in the Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/447 of the Commission;
- iii. Activities related to waste landfills, incinerators and mechanical and biological treatment plants;

This exclusion does not apply to:

- Actions within the scope of this measure in facilities dedicated exclusively to the treatment of non-recyclable hazardous waste or to existing facilities where the actions under this measure aim to increase energy efficiency, capturing exhaust gases for storage or re-use, or recovering materials from incineration ashes, provided that the actions under this measure do not increase the waste-processing capacity of the facilities or the service life of these facilities and that this is proven at the unit level;
 - Actions under this measure at existing mechanical and biological treatment plants where the actions under this measure aim to increase energy efficiency or conversion into separate waste recycling operations for composting and anaerobic digestion of bio-waste, provided that the referred actions under this measure do not increase the waste processing capacity of the facilities, nor the service life of these facilities, and that this is proven at the unit level.
- iv. Activities where long-term disposal of waste may cause damage to the environment.

The specifications should also require that only activities that comply with applicable EU and national environmental legislation can be selected.