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Portugal 2030 updates the Annual Call Plan

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The Agency for Development and Cohesion updated the Portugal 2030 Annual Call Plan this week (14 September) — the official calendar that sets out, call by call, when each funding instrument opens for applications. The revision reshapes dozens of calls: some have been removed, others have received new funding allocations and new dates, and entirely new instruments have been introduced that were not included in the previous version of the plan.

For an SME, the most practical takeaway from this update is not simply that "more funding is available". It is that the funding architecture has changed: **applications that would have made sense under one call two months ago may now fit better under another**, with a different funding allocation and deadline.

Today's calendar is not yesterday's calendar. And it is today's calendar that determines whether an application gets submitted on time.

Artificial intelligence and ESG have entered business funding in force

The most visible development in this update is the Training in Artificial Intelligence for Businesses call (IAPMEI Invitation), under COMPETE2030: €80 million dedicated to preparing teams to adopt AI, **opening on 30 October and closing on 30 December 2026**. By far, it is the largest funding instrument ever dedicated specifically to this topic in Portugal.

At the same time, the ESG Vouchers — Integration of Environmental, Social and Governance Criteria in Businesses — are being introduced through a COMPETE2030 Simplified Project, with €4 million in funding (1 October to 30 November 2026). It is a small instrument in terms of funding allocation, but a significant one: for the first time, corporate sustainability has its own dedicated entry point, with a simplified application process, rather than requiring companies to fit ESG criteria into innovation or productive investment calls.

An SME already preparing a digital transformation plan now has, following this update, two routes that previously did not exist simultaneously: to fund AI training for its teams through the IAPMEI invitation, and to address separately, through a simplified voucher, the part of its strategy related to environmental and governance criteria — without having to force both elements into the same application process.

Internationalisation and innovation no longer fit within a single call

The largest confirmed call in this area in the latest update is SICE – SME Internationalisation – Joint Operations, with €51 million in funding (COMPETE2030, Lisboa2030 and Algarve2030), opening on 4 January and closing on 30 December 2027 — an unusually long application window. It is joined by SIAC – Internationalisation, now extended nationwide through COMPETE2030 (€30 million, 4 January to 31 March 2027), as well as a third, more immediate call, the AICEP Invitation 2027/2028 (€5.5 million, 30 September to 30 November 2026).

On the innovation side, SIID – Business R&D remains the main instrument for individual and co-promotion operations, now with €40 million available (COMPETE2030 and five regional 2030 programmes, 30 September to 31 December 2026). In Alentejo, two smaller and more recent SIID calls strengthen specific niches: Qualified Entrepreneurship and Knowledge-Linked Entrepreneurship (€2 million) and R&D Centres in a Business Environment (€500,000). In the Algarve, SICE – Productive Innovation – Contractual Investment Scheme has also been introduced, with no predefined fixed budget, designed to allow larger investment projects to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

This means that a company planning to enter a foreign market no longer has just one call to consider — it has, in parallel, a joint-operation route, a national individual route, and a more immediate route linked to AICEP.

Which one is the right fit depends on the business partner, the investment timeline and the legal structure of the operation - **and making that choice early can prevent an application from getting stuck halfway through under the wrong call**.

Decarbonisation has moved to a national scale. Defence remains on the agenda.

SIAC – Decarbonisation is no longer solely a regional call in the Algarve (which remains in place, with €500,000) and has gained a national version through COMPETE2030, with €25 million available between 1 October and 30 November 2026 — a significant expansion in scale that signals that the energy transition of SMEs is no longer being addressed on a case-by-case, region-by-region basis.

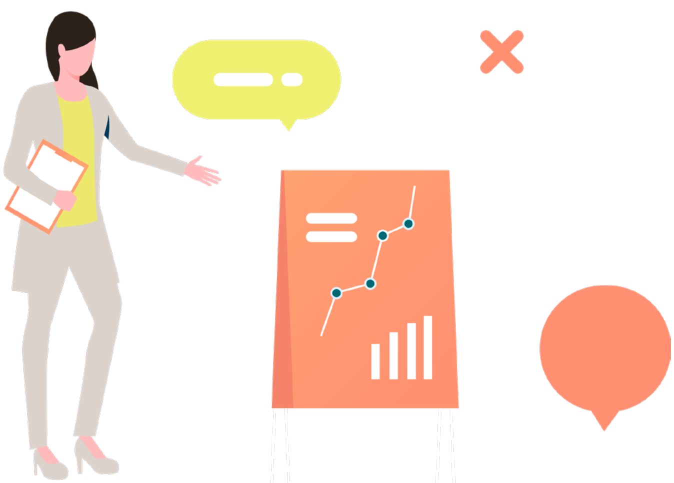
On the industrial defence capacity side, the Productive Business Investment (SI) – Defence in Alentejo call remains active, with €25 million in funding, now rescheduled to run from 21 September 2026 to 29 January 2027. In this update, it is the only call clearly identified with this specific objective (RSO1.7 – Defence Industrial Capabilities) among those that remain open or are due to open — suggesting that parallel calls in other regions have either already closed or are awaiting new scheduling.

For companies deciding whether to invest now or wait for an equivalent regional call, the practical message is: **national calls tend to come with larger funding allocations, but also greater competition.** The right choice depends on the project profile, not simply on the availability of funding.

Training teams remains the less visible side of funding

COMPETE2030 maintains four SIQRH - Business Training calls running simultaneously, now reorganised into two families: Clusters - Joint and Individual Operations (€25 million each) and the STEP variant - Joint and Individual Operations (€20 million each). Together, they total €90 million, all opening on 1 September and closing on 30 December 2026.

Also in the human resources area, three calls for the Recruitment of Highly Qualified Human Resources by SMEs remain available: in Alentejo, one for Low-Density Territories (€2.125 million, until 22 March 2027) and another for Other Territories (€1.4 million, until 22 February 2027); in the Algarve, a third call dedicated to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (€1.5 million, until 30 June 2027). This is direct support for the cost of hiring qualified professionals - not just for training them.



This group is complemented by a Executive Training call (€20 million, from 4 January to 31 March 2027) and a new Support for Self-Employment Creation call (€10 million, from 1 September to 30 December 2026) - as already mentioned, alongside the €80 million allocated to the Training in Artificial Intelligence for Businesses invitation.

It is common for a company to apply under an SICE or SIID call to finance an investment, only to realise later that the training needed to make that investment pay off is covered by its own dedicated call, with its own deadline - and that, if it is not included in the same funding cycle, the opportunity may have to wait until the following year.

How we can help

We track the Annual Call Plan update by update, not the version from six months ago, but the one currently in force, cross-referencing each new deadline with the investment plan and human resources structure of each client.

This means confirming, before any application is drafted, whether the call the company had in mind is still open, whether its funding allocation or deadline has changed, or whether it has been replaced by a different instrument — and identifying whether there are complementary calls for internationalisation, decarbonisation or training that should be applied for within the same funding cycle.

This update has changed what is available. What has not changed is that the difference still lies in knowing, in advance, what has opened and what has closed — rather than discovering it after the application is already underway.

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