

Regional Program NORTH-EAST 2021-2027 Romania

The exercise of Impact Evaluation (with RCT) on Digital transformation of SMEs call of proposals

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The policy

a. What?

Priority 2, RP North-East 2021-2027 - A more digitalized region

Specific Objective a (ii) - Reaping the benefits of digitalisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public services

Operation – **Digital transformation of SMEs oriented towards increasing digital intensity**

b. Why?

RO digital performance on 27th place in EU DESI index (2022); integration of digital technology in RO enterprises is ½ of EU average; less than ½ of RNE SMEs have an internet page

Challenges: limited capacity to operate on-line procurement/sales, to valorise on-line marketing opportunities and to exploit the total benefits of an investment in digitalisation

By 2030 ¾ of SMEs should be able to use cloud computing, big data and AI systems, and **more than 90% should have a basic level of digital maturity(2030 Digital Decade)**

c. How

ERDF financial allocation - **51.39mil.Eur**, 2 calls of proposals, **the first call 25.50mil Eur**

the program contribution to the project financing is max 90% of the eligible value of the investment between min 15,000 to max 100,000Eur

Selection mechanism:

- **competitive call** with first **submitted - first contracted** principle
- **on-line submission** process through MySMIS on-line application
- applications that fulfil **administrative compliance, eligibility** criteria and receive a score of at least 70 points (out of 100) in **technical and financial evaluation**. **Projects implemented by SMEs located exclusively in North-East Region**

d. The purpose

Investments for equipment and services, to be used for: developing internet pages, digital promotion, hosting cloud type services, e-invoicing, e-commerce, digitization of communication with the consumer and/or client, development of digital mail-rooms, digitization of data collection, etc (according to the EU Digital Intensity Index)

Expected results

a. Outcomes

Number of companies receiving grants – 400 and Value of digitalized services for SMEs – 27.76 Mil.Euro

Other outcomes: number of digitalized services, number of equipments installed, number of digital products developed, number of networks developed

b. Results

Number of companies with increased digital maturity - 400

c. Effects

Business development: improved management of the company production, processes and resources, increased promotion and client management, increased access to new markets and profitability

More skilled workforce attracted and retained, **increased number of ITC companies** in RNE

d. Assumptions

SMEs have the interest and capacity to prepare and run a digitalization project, the offer for ITC services and solutions is large and visible, **EC and national AA accepts the MARP proposal to run the call with CRT**

Impact evaluation CRT exercise

- Treatment group: aprox. **200 SMEs receive funding and support services** (training, matchmaking with champions, text before invest service)
- Comparison group: aprox. **200 SMEs receive only funding**
- Control group – aprox. **400 eligible SMEs**

Policy maker expectations based on the analysis of the:

- statistical data evolution (NIS, DESI)
- official reports (EC Country Reports, evaluations on similar programs)
- qualitative data collected from regional stakeholders (surveys, focus groups)

Evaluation performed with support of external researchers

- connected with implementation process (**what and how the program was implemented**), check the logic of the intervention
- analysis of the context evolution & influences, nonintended supplementary results
- good understanding of ERDF regulations, accommodated in the research methodology
- MARP increased awareness on the added value of this IE RCT
- accessible costs

Thank you!
Any questions?

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