

ESPA 2021–2027
“THESSALY” 2021–2027

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: Smart Entrepreneurship Growth in the Region of Thessaly

ACTION SUMMARY

The action “Smart Entrepreneurship Growth in the Region of Thessaly” is part of the “Thessaly” Program under SPA 2021–2027, Priority 1 “Enhancing the competitiveness of the economy,” specifically under Specific Objective RSO1.3: “Strengthening sustainable growth and SME competitiveness and job creation in SMEs, including through productive investments (ERDF).” It supports new and start-up very small, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) implementing investment plans in the Region of Thessaly, provided they meet all formal eligibility criteria. The action aims to promote the production of innovative products and services, increase exports, create jobs, and improve business competitiveness by supporting investment priorities identified through the Regional Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) for Thessaly. The action will be implemented by the Special Managing Authority of the “Thessaly” Program (SMA) with the Intermediate Body (IB) being the Directorate of Development Planning of the Region of Thessaly.

TOTAL BUDGET AND ALLOCATION

The total public expenditure for the action amounts to €20,000,000.00, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national funds.

ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

Eligible for public funding are existing very small, small, and medium-sized enterprises. “Existing” refers to businesses registered with the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (AADE) before 01/01/2023.

The proposed investment plan must relate to at least one eligible NACE code (KAD) listed in the call, covering a wide range of sectors including food, textiles, cement, metals, machinery, electronics, furniture, jewelry, industrial installations, construction, commercial representation, tourism and agritourism, publishing, software, telecommunications, IT, architecture, R&D, advertising, professional and scientific services, veterinary services, creative arts, cultural activities, recreation, and wellness.

TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Basic Eligibility Criteria

- The enterprise must operate in Greece and invest exclusively in the Region of Thessaly.
- Must have started before 01/01/2023 and have at least two full fiscal years (2023 & 2024) with submitted and cleared E3 & N forms.
- Only one application per VAT number (AFM).
- Must have at least one eligible NACE code (primary or secondary) in 2024 from Annex III.
- The investment must relate to an eligible NACE code in which the business is active or commits to be active by the first disbursement request.

Financial Criteria

- Investment budget must be \geq minimum threshold and \leq highest turnover (Code 500 E3) of 2023 or 2024, increased by 40%.
- Proof of available funds to cover $\geq 25\%$ of expenses is mandatory.
- Must qualify as a Very Small, Small, or Medium Enterprise under EU law.
- Compliance with De Minimis Regulation (EU 2831/2023): total aid \leq €300,000 over a rolling 3-year period.

Permitted Legal Forms

- All company and cooperative forms listed in the call (S.A., Ltd., P.C., G.P., L.P., Social Cooperative Enterprises, Civil and Agricultural Cooperatives, etc.).

Accounting & Licensing Requirements

- Must maintain single or double-entry books (Law 4308/2014).
- Must operate legally with license or exemption/start-up documentation.
- Must submit land use certification and space availability for construction/expansion.

Exclusion of Double Funding

- Expenses must not be funded or approved under another action.
- Only complementary financial tools (loans/guarantees) are allowed, respecting accumulation rules.

Environmental & Social Commitments

- Compliance with climate resilience technical guidelines (2021/C 373/01).
- Assurance of:
 - Fundamental rights (EU Charter)
 - Gender equality & non-discrimination
 - Transparency & accessibility for persons with disabilities
 - Sustainable development & environmental compliance

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

- Mandatory interventions to ensure accessibility in infrastructure, services, and digital environments.

Special Conditions for New Enterprises

- Investment must not be completed before application.
- Registration in the Beneficial Owners Registry (Law 4557/2018), if required.
- Must not be bankrupt, under liquidation, forced administration, or subject to recovery orders.
- Compliance with health & safety laws, no exclusion grounds (Law 4488/2017).
- For fisheries/aquaculture: no violations (EU Regulation 508/2014).
- No receipt of rescue/restructuring aid or full repayment/completion thereof.

Other Obligations

- Implementation site cannot be the beneficiary's residence.
- Electronic submission of application with full documentation.
- Minimum score of 50 in evaluation criteria (Annex IV).

ELIGIBLE EXPENSE CATEGORIES

Personnel Costs

- Full salary cost for newly hired staff (up to 20% of budget and €30,000 total – max 2 FTEs, €15,000/FTE)

Equipment, Vehicles & Instruments

- Must cover at least 15% of budget
- Environmental protection & energy-saving equipment
- Circular economy equipment & photovoltaic systems (up to 25%)
- Other business equipment (up to 5%)
- Digital office equipment
- Production & mechanical equipment
- Electric vehicles (up to 40%, max €100,000 total, €50,000 per vehicle)

Buildings, Land, Facilities & Surroundings

- Construction, facility layout, and landscaping (up to 70%)

Service Provision Costs

- Application submission (€1,500 max)
- Implementation consulting (up to 4%, €5,000 max)
- SaaS, cloud computing, etc. (up to 20%)
- Product/process development studies (up to 10%)
- Certification (up to 3 certificates, €10,000 total, €5,000 per certificate)
- Packaging, labeling, branding design (up to 7%, €15,000 max)
- IP, patents, know-how transfer (up to 10%)

Software Costs

- Programs and licenses (up to 10%, €20,000 max)

Indirect Costs (Mandatory Category)

- Calculated at 7% of eligible direct costs (EU Regulation 1060/2021, Article 25)

EXPENSE ELIGIBILITY PERIOD

- Start: August 7, 2025 (action specialization approval date)
- End: 24 months from final approval notification, absolute deadline: December 31, 2029
- Expenses incurred or contracted before 07/08/2025 or after the deadline are ineligible
- Each expense must be clearly linked to an eligible investment NACE code

BUDGET

Funding applications from €50,000 to €425,000 are eligible. Public funding covers *70% of the approved budget*.

IMPLEMENTATION DURATION

Maximum duration for completing the investment plan is *24 months* from the electronic notification of final approval (evaluation result or appeal result).

APPLICATION PERIOD

- Start: November 27, 2025 at 13:00
- End: January 30, 2026 at 15:00 Applications must be submitted *exclusively online* via the Integrated Information System for State Aid Management (IIS-SAM). Evaluation will be *comparative*.