

EIS – Everywhere International SMEs

Action Plan for Alentejo by

Partner organisation	ADRAL – Alentejo Regional Development Agency
Other partners / players involved (if relevant)	CCDR – Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional (Commission for Regional Development and Coordination of Alentejo)
Country	Portugal
NUTS2 region	Alentejo
Contact person	Alexandra Correia
email address	alexandra.correia@adral.pt
phone number	+351266769150

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1. Policy context

1.1 Aim of the Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Operational Program Alentejo 2020,
Priority Axe 1.: "SME Competitiveness and internationalization" (ERDF)

Priority Investment 3.2.: "Development and implementation of new business models for SMEs, especially as regards the internationalization"

Specific Objective "3.2.1. - "Strengthen business capacity for internationalization, promoting increased exports and the international visibility of the Alentejo Region"

1.2 Peer Review Summary of reviewed measure

The Alentejo covers an area of 31,604 km², the estimated population was of 724,391 inhabitants in 2015, representing 7% of the total, population density of 22.9 inhab/km² (2015), being the national value of 112.1 inhab/km². Administratively, the Alentejo is composed of 5 sub-regions (NUTS III): Alentejo Litoral, Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central, Baixo Alentejo and the Lezíria do Tejo.

The development of accessibility and connectivity infrastructure contributed to the reinforcement of the importance of geo-economic positioning of Alentejo in the context of national and international economic relations. The Alentejo is today a region more open to the outside, and functionally with conditions for the attraction and location of investment and business, intensifying economic relations and strengthening the integration in wider markets.

In the European context, the Alentejo Region presents a standard of living, measured by GDP per capita, considerably lower than the EU average. Environmental quality, above the national average and competitiveness and cohesion rates below the national value.

Privileged geostrategic positioning as Europe's Atlantic Port, with the potential for uses and activities of transport and logistics.

With 78,102 enterprises (INE, 2015) that correspond to 7% of the national total and employing 183,788 people, 5.3% of the national total, the corporate structure is characterized essentially by micro enterprises (97.2% of the total), 71.65% of individual companies, and just 28 big companies.

Exporting profile of the region relies heavily on the valorisation of activities of exploitation of their natural resources and activity generated by the industrial

complex of Sines. Concentration in a few countries and a few difficulties in expanding the influence of companies across national borders.

Business dynamics in new productive sectors, with emphasis on the aeronautical industry and energy, the exploitation of water and existing solar resources in the territory. Investments in the aerospace industry (EMBRAER) with potential for streamlining and complementarity with other specialized activities of industry and services and investments in photovoltaic plants to take advantage of the solar potential. EFMA (artificial lake of Alqueva) as catalyst for the modification of the regional model of agriculture and rural development process inductor sustained on multifunctionality of agricultural space. Quantity, quality and diversity of resources to leverage offers differentiated and unique tourist experiences, primarily in aspects of the enjoyment of nature, culture and gastronomy.

Economic policy in Portugal in recent years has been focusing effectively (through technical and financial support) in the internationalisation of SMES. The years of deep crisis that lived in Portugal "forced" SMEs to find their way to foreign markets. This need was stimulated and supported by the Government's economic policies.

A large share of the financial resources provided for under the partnership agreement with the European Union (Portugal 2020) and in particular of the Regional Operational Programme of Alentejo 2020, is aimed at enhancing the competitiveness and internationalisation of the economy and in particular for SMEs.

There is no entity or regional mechanism of coordination of public policies supporting the internationalisation of SMEs in Alentejo region, not even in the country. There are several entities that act in this area, each of which makes an "effort" to be complementary to the other. However, in terms of types of support/funding programmes is there some linkage to be complementary and comprehensive.

The addressed measure in the Peer Review is based essentially in the areas related to the international competitiveness of the region and with the productive structure, minimizing existing constraints. The objective is to give individual support to companies to design and develop their internationalization strategies, and to support collective actions performed by public or private bodies with specific competence in the field of business development (such as development agencies and associations). This actions aim to improve the regional conditions relating to internationalization of collective interest, as the access to markets or the promotion of the visibility and international recognition of the value of regional products and services. It is intended that the E. U. support will contribute to determining forms to support a regional integrated strategy of internationalization, reversing the position of fragility still evidenced by the region. The actions will be preferably centred in the areas of activity with potential for internationalisation, identified in the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy or in areas associated with binding national strategies, with regional representation, as is the case with the "green economy" or the "sea economy".»

The support services addressed to the measure were:

Collective Actions support system -Internationalization

With the objective to support the collective scope projects aimed at the promotion of inter-enterprise cooperation and representation in international networks, particularly with regard to:

- Internationalization collaborative processes, knowledge sharing and capacity building for internationalization (e.g. partnerships with counterparts – business associations, chambers of Commerce and industry – whose outputs creating scripts, manuals, information);
- International promotion of integrated regional offer of goods and services;
- Research, knowledge and access to new markets with a view to international recognition of goods and services produced in the region;
- Participation in international networks of distribution;
- International campaigns of promotion of regional products (e.g. olive oil, wine, wild resources, Alentejo).

Simplified project of internationalization (Voucher Opportunities of Internationalization)

The streamlined designs of internationalization are a simplified instrument to support small business initiatives for SMES, limited to companies that have not started internationalization process. It aims, in particular, support for the acquisition of consultancy services in the field of market research.

In simplified designs is used a mechanism of accreditation of service providers, as a tool of transparency and promoting the quality of the service provided.

The voucher can last one year and the maximum amount is 10.000,00€ (co-financed in 75%).

SI Internationalization – Individual Projects

Incentives for individual projects promoted by small and micro businesses, aiming at the promotion of the international presence with success, by supporting:

- Development of business plans oriented for international markets;
- Actions aimed at knowledge and access to new markets (including e.g. the participation in fairs and the development of promotional material);
- Development of digital channels and selecting the markets/non-traditional segments, particularly bearing in mind the priorities of Smart Specialization Strategy.

The minimum amount per project is 25.000,00€ and one project per company.

A summary of the combined SWOT:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>S1 Flexibility in the support activities for beneficiaries</p> <p>S2 National framework</p> <p>S3 Complementary of measures Range scope of potential support for SME</p> <p>S4 Market access - Local</p> <p>S5 Lots of resources / enough financial resources</p> <p>S6 Easy of building businesses</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>W1 Insufficient coordination between stakeholders</p> <p>W2 Lack of an effective regional structure</p> <p>W3 To many agencies - unclear for the SME</p> <p>W4 Lack of measurement and monitoring</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>O1 More networking activities will stimulate better exports</p> <p>O2 Improve measurement metric Awareness of large number of SME export potential</p> <p>O3 Communication of offer - collective to large base of companies</p> <p>O4 Client engagement</p> <p>O5 Portugal may focus more on Portuguese speaking markets to promote their exports</p> <p>O6 More initiation on the first 2 steps of the 6 steps model</p> <p>O7 More refined targeting of the measures to the subsequent steps of the internationalization model</p> <p>O8 Good link with national agency - ensure long term support</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>T1 Limited EU funding in the next programming period</p> <p>T2 Complex landscape - SME don't engage</p> <p>T3 Effort is misdirected for companies</p> <p>T4 Sustainability of results due to very small size of regional companies</p>



The Peer review take place during 2017, and involved many regional stakeholders (NERE, NERBE, NERSANT, NERPOR, ANJE, AAEL, IAPMEI). The regional workshops and meetings took place in the headquarters of CCDRA – Commission for Regional Development and Coordination of Alentejo (the CCDRA President is the President of the responsible body organization for the Alentejo 2020 program), and the CCDRA and Alentejo 2020 teams had been involved since the beginning of the project in all the learning process.

All the stakeholders participated and validate the Alentejo peer review, and all of them will be involved in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Through the Peer Review Process, the identified areas for improvement are:

1. Improve the coordination between different levels (local, regional and national);
2. Improve the articulation between the stakeholders at a regional level;
3. Identify support services that fulfill the first and second steps of the 6 steps model;
4. Improve the measurement and monitoring of outputs and outcomes.

2. The Link of Alentejo Region 's Action Plan with the GlobaleIS Tool

Alentejo consider the EIS project not only as an opportunity of interregional experience exchange and shared learning within the Action Plan development, but also a major opportunity of implementation of jointly developed actions with comparison of results and impact on the SMEs as beneficiaries. That's why Alentejo is as task leader one of the main drivers in the development and implementation of the Joint Action within the EIS project.

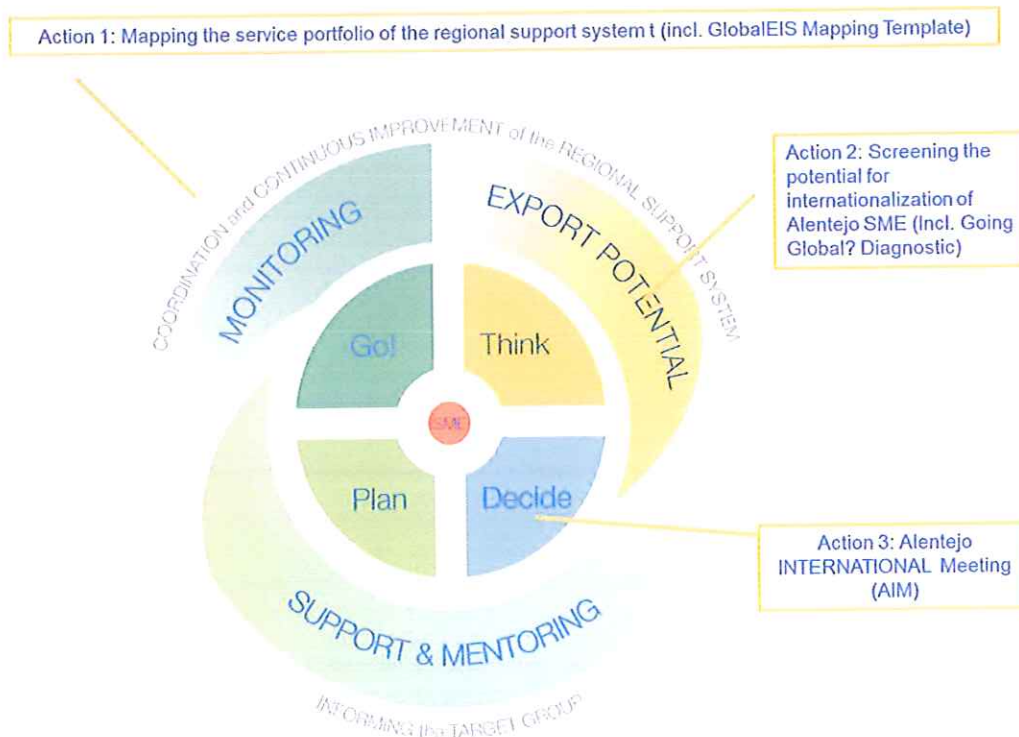
The Joint Action is the individualisation of the standardised GlobaleIS Tool by transformation its overall approach, checklists and policy recommendations into Alentejo region specific actions.

The Action Plan of Alentejo Region includes two instruments, which were elaborated in parallel to the GlobaleIS Tool development in several workshops of Staff Exchanges, with the contribution of EIS partner's regions, Alentejo, Donegal, Hampshire and Koprivnica.

The 2 instruments are:

- GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic interview guideline for screening the internationalisation potentials of regional SMEs,
- Template for mapping the service portfolio of the regional support system (GlobaleIS Mapping Template),

The link of the individual actions of Alentejo's Action Plan with the GlobaleIS Tool and the above mentioned instruments is indicated in the GlobaleIS wheel:



3. Action 1: Mapping the services portfolio of SME internationalization support

3.1 The Background

Following the 4th Interregional Learning Workshop, where the Alentejo Policy Instrument was reviewed, some of the main weaknesses identified were:

- Insufficient coordination between stakeholders
- Lack of an effective regional structure
- To many agencies - unclear for the SME

The Alentejo Peer Review revealed that there is a lack of coordination between stakeholders due to the fact that there is no entity/space, or regional mechanism of coordination of public policies supporting the internationalisation of SMEs in Alentejo region. There are several entities that act in this area, each of which makes an "effort" to be complementary to the other.

This situation shows that it will be useful to improve the articulation between stakeholders.

It is important to make the portfolio of offered services transparent for the target group of SMEs and the services providers and to match this mapped service portfolio with the full pathway to internationalisation.

3.2 Action

3.2.1 Objectives

- Improve the articulation between the stakeholders at Alentejo Region (Incl. Mapping the service portfolio of the regional support system (Incl. GlobaleIS Mapping Template) that ensures:
 - Improve the transparency of the support services offered for the SME internationalization process in the region;
 - Improve the access for SMEs to the required services;
 - Improve the collaboration between stakeholders.

3.2.2 Target group

- Support Services Providers / Stakeholders

3.2.3 Content

As the Regional Stakeholder Group of the EIS project has proved as a useful platform for the exchange, coordination and the improvement of the system of SME internationalization support in Alentejo, the members decided to continue with their

quarterly meetings after phase 1 of the EIS project as articulation platform, accompanied by the mapping of existing support services

Regarding the objectives described this activity will include the application of the instrument of the EIS Joint Action.

Mapping incl. application of the GlobalEIS Mapping Template

A first mapping of the current support services from local, regional, national and European level in terms of internationalisation of the regional SMEs was already done within the Alentejo Peer Review following the Six Step Model for Internationalisation. These mapping results will be taken as point of departure for this more detailed mapping.

The detailed overview over existing services and target groups will facilitate the definition of the roles of the public service providers, help to integrate private support services into the full service portfolio and avoid unnecessary competition among public services providers.

The mapping will apply the GlobalEIS Mapping Template of the Joint Action and gather the following information as a minimum:

- title of the service;
- WHO is the provider of the service?
 - Organisation,
 - Address (in case of branch offices also more addresses)
(location of provider is important in case of large and rural geographic areas),
 - Contact person and contact details,
 - Web link to more detailed information;
- WHAT is the service about?
short textual description with key words,
no categorization of service by pre-defined service types;
- Link to single steps of the GlobalEIS Tool:
 - Shaping and Informing the target group,
 - Screening of internationalization potentials of SMEs,
 - Support and Mentoring SMEs in FOCUS
 - WHAT,
 - WHERE,
 - HOW,
 - Support and Mentoring SMEs in TIMING,
 - Mentoring and monitoring SMEs in GO INTERNATIONAL.

- Target group / type of SME:
 - SMEs with comprehensive international experiences,
 - SMEs with few experiences/"one time export",
 - SMEs with no internationalisation experiences,
 - SMEs with high internationalisation potentials like Growth Companies or Born Global,
 - SMEs with some internationalisation potentials,
 - Groups of SMEs like being part of an international supply chain or cluster,
 - Public sector, coordination of support services.

3.3 Partners/Players involved

ADRAL will be the leadership of the implementation of this action with the collaboration of the stakeholders:

- CCDRA
- Business Associations
- IAPMEI

3.4 Timeframe

Activity	Date
Collecting the data information	Jan/Jun 2019
Finalize the mapping	Jul/Set 2019
Presentation and divulgation	Oct/Dec 2019
Monitoring and Evaluation	Jan/Oct 2020

3.5 Costs

Costs will be related to Human resources, organization and hosting of the meetings. The human resources will be provided by ADRAL and stakeholders teams. Costs with organization and hosting of meetings: 4.000,00€

3.6 Funding sources

Funding will come from ADRAL, stakeholders, and from Alentejo 2020 Operational Program. Priority Axe 1.: "SME Competitiveness and internationalization" (ERDF)

Priority Investment 3.2.: "Development and implementation of new business models for SMEs, especially as regards the internationalization"

Specific Objective "3.2.1. - "Strengthen business capacity for internationalization, promoting increased exports and the international visibility of the Alentejo Region" – Collective Actions System – Internationalisation.

3.7 Impact expected

Will be used the Indicators chosen from the GlobalEIS Monitor:

Satisfaction of intermediaries with communication/collaboration/coordination among each other:

- Increase the transparency of the support Services.

Number of SME participating in/attending specify individual services:

- Increase the articulation between the stakeholders.

Satisfaction of regional SME with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation:

- Number of SME that access the support services (20).

4. Action 2: Screening SMEs' potential for internationalisation

4.1 The Background

Following the 4th Interregional Learning Workshop, where the Alentejo Policy Instrument was reviewed, some of the main weaknesses and threats identified were:

- Lack of an effective regional structure
- Complex landscape - SME don't engage
- Effort is misdirected for companies
- Sustainability of results due to very small size of regional companies

In the Alentejo Peer Review it became clearly that there is a lack of support services in the first step of the GlobalEIS Tool, in particular the systematic screening of the internationalisation potentials of regional SMEs.

The introduction of a systematic screening of the potential for internationalisation will help to explore Alentejo's potentials for internationalisation in the best way and to ensure best match between services offered and the SME potential.

4.2 Action

4.2.1 Objectives

Screening SMEs' potential for internationalisation is a pro-active initiative of the regional support system of Alentejo with the aim, not only to enable internationalisation activities for high potentials, but for all kind of regional SMEs with ambitions to go international.

Screening of SMEs' potentials for internationalisation System for the SME in Alentejo ensures:

- systematic identification and effective exploitation of SMEs' internationalisation potentials;
- improved knowledge about SMEs' internationalisation capabilities and their needs for external support in their internationalisation activities among public service providers and policy makers;
- support better focussed on SMEs' capabilities and needs leading to better results in business support services in Alentejo;
- more SME aware of the potential of internationalization;
- more SME involved in the process of internationalisation;
- more "value for money" of the EU funds (SME internationalisation);

4.2.2 Target group

- SMEs in Alentejo
- 5 municipalities (one of each NUT III)

4.2.3 Content

This is a pilot action which will follow the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic approach as part of the EIS Joint Action. Will be used the EIS assessment questionnaire - GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic (done with EIS partners) – Annexe 1

Having been identified as weakness the lack of regional screening, in order to test the value of the instrument for the region, we chose to implement a pilot action supported on the instruments developed by EIS project partnership, namely the EIS assessment questionnaire with the guideline (Annexe 1) developed by the EIS partners regions Alentejo, Donegal, Hampshire and Koprivnica.

A guideline for a screening interview tool facilitates the analysis of the competences and potentials of regional SMEs, which want to go international / to expand their internationalisation activities, in a standardised and structured way. Such a standardised analysis allows the public support system to identify those SMEs which actually belong to the target group of public support services and to define an individual customised road map (measure plan) for each screened SME to prepare its internationalisation activities.

The screening interview is taking place on-site of the SME and lasts up to 4 hours, depending on the size of the company, the potential for internationalisation and the envisaged internationalisation activities as well as the development of rough measure plan for next steps. If the interviewed company has no internationalisation potential at all the interview can be very short.

In the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic there are questions that are considered optional parts of the guideline, and others that are considered standard.

We select from the questionnaire the questions (optional) we thought the more pertinent for Alentejo region.

The Integration of the GOING GLOBAL Diagnostic, into the support system for SME internationalisation in Alentejo is organized as a pilot action, and it will be implemented in 7 steps:

1. Selection of 4 municipalities and identification of the SME existing there (average of 5 SME in each municipality).
2. Preparation of the interviewers with the required skills.
3. Face-to-face interviews with the selected SMEs.
4. Analysis and midterm evaluation of pilot results.
5. Decision about continuation with GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic.
6. In case of positive evaluation: Mainstream of GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic in coordination with the municipalities of the region and the stakeholders
7. Finding funding for assessment activities for the next period.

4.3 Partners/Players involved

These institutions will be involved in the development and implementation of the action with ADRAL as leadership.

- ADRAL
- CCDRA
- Business Associations
- IAPMEI
- Municipalities (4 municipalities to be selected, 1 in each sub-region NUTIII)

4.4 Timeframe

Activity	Date
Selection of 4 municipalities and identification of the SME existing there (average of 5 SME in each municipality).	January - March 2019
Preparation of the interviewers with the required skills.	February - March 2019
Face-to-face interviews with the selected SMEs.	April - September 2019
Analysis and midterm evaluation of pilot results	October - December 2019
Decision about continuation with GOINGLOBAL? Diagnostic.	December 2019
In case of positive evaluation: Mainstream of GOINGLOBAL? Diagnostic in coordination with the municipalities of the region and with the stakeholders	January 2020 on
Finding funding for assessment activities for the next period.	January - March 2020

4.5 Costs

The prevision of the costs is: 20.000,00€

4.6 Funding sources

Alentejo 2020 Operational Program. Priority Axe 1.: "SME Competitiveness and internationalization" (ERDF)

Priority Investment 3.2.: "Development and implementation of new business models for SMEs, especially as regards the internationalization"

Specific Objective "3.2.1. - "Strengthen business capacity for internationalization, promoting increased exports and the international visibility of the Alentejo Region" – Collective Actions System – Internationalisation.

4.7 Impact expected

Will be used the Indicators chosen from the GlobalEIS Monitor:

Number of SME participating in/attending – specify individual service:

- Number of SME screening (20)

Increased awareness of regional SME about internationalisation opportunities:

- Number of SME that start an internationalisation process (10)

5. Action 3: Alentejo INTERNATIONAL Meeting (AIM)

Alentejo INTERNATIONAL Meeting for SME is a meeting/faire where Alentejo companies and foreign buyers meet in order to find commercial opportunities.

The organizer selects and invites foreign buyers who are interested in Alentejo products or technologies, and organizes B2B meetings during the event. This will be for many SME the first contact with internationalisation opportunities.

5.1 The Background

Following the 4th Interregional Learning Workshop, where the Alentejo Policy Instrument was reviewed, some of the main weaknesses and threats identified were:

- Lack of an effective regional structure
- Complex landscape - SME don't engage
- Sustainability of results due to very small size of regional companies
- Insufficient coordination between stakeholders

This action had been enriched by the learnings occurred during the 2 staff exchange realized in Emilia-Romagna and Central Denmark Region. In Emilia-Romagna we learned and are planning to adapt de "International Club" they usually organize inside the FARETE event. In CDR we had contact and learn with the sectorial event they organize in the drinks sector that is similar with "International Club". We learned with the 2 regions, that it is must more efficient to involve all the SMEs that are interested (in the case of Central Denmark in a specific sector) in internationalisation of their products/services in the same event, instead of organizing many and small events. For the case of Emilia-Romagna Region, the International club in FARETE shows to be very useful for SME, because most of them (as it is in Alentejo) are very small, and they don't have the capacity to find new markets alone. Another aspect that we think was very interesting and useful was the fact of doing the international club in a event that already exists, they only improve the event, introducing the internationalisation dimension on it. We think it can be successful in Alentejo, because we have small companies and not so many. With the Central Denmark Region, we learn that this kind of event, for a smaller region, can be more successful if we start doing this with a specific sector inside an event that already exists and had many visitors. They are doing this inside a regional faire focusing the internationalisation dimension in the subsector they thought has more potential for it, the beverage companies. We learned with both experiences and took what we thought (and discuss with the regional stakeholders) could be a contribution to improve the internationalisation process for small companies in Alentejo.

5.2 Action

5.2.1 Objectives

Strengthen the cooperation and coordination between the stakeholders in order to carry on a joint internationalization action with SMEs', the event will allow to 1) define a common strategy with the stakeholders and 2) internationalize through a

rendezvous between producers, suppliers and buyers interested in products of excellence in the region. By performing specific B2B meetings, appropriate environment to promote exchange of experiences, products show, and international dissemination, participants will have the opportunity to contact directly with the producers, meet the various offers and/or participate in workshops and direct contact with the products.

Organization and implementation of a ALENTEJO INTERNATIONAL MEETING for SME, that ensures:

- improved the articulation between stakeholders;
- involvement of more SME in the process of internationalisation;
- more results in the international contacts;
- more "value for money" of the EU funds (SME internationalisation);
- that promote a better knowledge/contact of the markets;
- that stimulate the collective approach of the SME internationalisation process.

5.2.2 Target group

SMEs in Alentejo

5.2.3 Content

With the objective to improve the coordination between the stakeholders and stimulate the engagement of the SMEs', is propose a joint action with the stakeholders to implement a regional faire/meeting where regional SMEs' and foreign buyers meet in order to find commercial opportunities. Having as a support the range of products of excellence of Alentejo, mainly in agro food sector, the actions consists in:

- a) To highlight the event, it will run in parallel with one of the biggest fairs in the region, as an international space of the faire;
- b) Selects and invites foreign buyers who are interested in Alentejo products,
- c) Organize B2B meetings, visits to the producers, demonstrations and tastings, during the event.

This will be for many SMEs' the first contact with internationalisation opportunities.

5.3 Partners/Players involved

These institutions will be involved in the development and implementation of the action with ADRAL as leadership.

- ADRAL (coordinator)
- CCDRA
- Business Associations
- AICEP

- Embassys
- ACOS (responsible for the faire that already exists, and a partner for the organisation of the event).

5.4 Timeframe

Activity	Date
Identification and selection of the SME (at least 30)	January - December 2019
Preparation of the event	June 2019 - March 2020
Implementation	April 2020
Monitoring and evaluation of results	April - September 2020

5.5 Costs

The preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation cost are 250.000,00€

5.6 Funding sources

The funding for this action will be part of a proposal under Alentejo 2020 Operational Program - Priority Axe 1.: "SME Competitiveness and internationalization" (ERDF)

Priority Investment 3.2.: "Development and implementation of new business models for SMEs, especially as regards the internationalization"

Specific Objective "3.2.1. - "Strengthen business capacity for internationalization, promoting increased exports and the international visibility of the Alentejo Region" – Collective Actions System – Internationalisation, and part from the stakeholder's budget.

5.7 Impact expected

Will be used the Indicators chosen from the GlobaleIS Monitor:

Number of new markets entered by beneficiaries of internationalisation support:

- Number of SME involved in the internationalisation process

Increased export value (€) of beneficiaries of internationalisation support:

- Increase exportations.

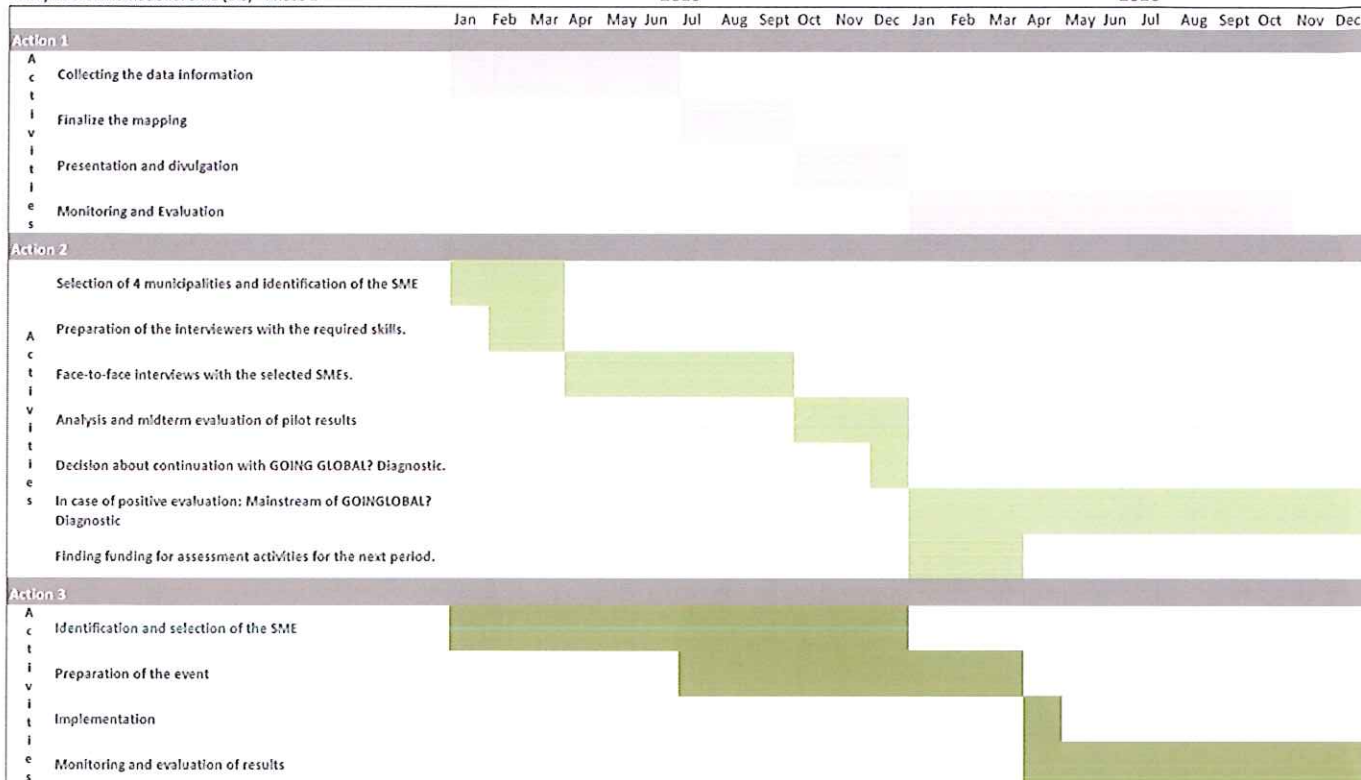
6. Timeframe overview

Action Plan Implementation for Alentejo

Everywhere International SME (EIS) - Phase 2


2019

2020



7. Signature

Date: 30/12/2018

Signature: 

Stamp of the organization (if available):

