



IP4SME

Your path towards IP valorisation

**Boosting the use of Intellectual Property with an
action specifically designed for Innovative
European SMEs – IP4SME**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The present document provides a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) related to the action known as “**Boosting the use of Intellectual Property with an action specifically designed for Innovative SMEs**”, hereinafter referred to as “**IPA4SME**”. The list of questions is preliminary and the document will be continuously updated throughout the life span of the action. The present document will contribute SMEs to solve common doubts regarding the program and/or its application process. More information on IPA4SME can be found in the Guide for Applicants as well as on the IPA4SME webpage (<http://ipa4sme.eu/>).

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO IPA4SME ACTION

1. What is IPA4SME?

IPA4SME represents the materialisation of **the IP and better access to IP for innovative SMEs COSME project 2019-2021** of the European Union carried out by a consortium composed of CARSA (Leader and Coordination Centre), the University of Alicante and Gopacom.

2. What is the aim of IPA4SME?

IPA4SME, as part of the initiatives to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union, is an action that **aims to extend SMEs international opportunities and innovation prospects in the Single Market and beyond supporting highly innovative SMEs with the potential for exploiting their intellectual property**. The action is focused on those which have been awarded with the Seal of Excellence (SoE) provided by the framework programme Horizon 2020. Moreover, IPA4SME aims to provide SMEs the opportunity to integrate and develop IP strategies which fit their contexts and needs, based on their competencies and capabilities.

3. Why is intellectual property (IP) important for SMEs?

Intellectual Property (IP) as a corporate strategy is a crucial factor in order to provide SMEs the opportunity to return their investment on innovation as well as to run global businesses extending their scope from local to international; IP provides SMEs the required tools to increase their revenues, their competitiveness, to extend their capabilities and competences, to enlarge their market opportunities and to enhance their protection mechanisms towards global competitors regarding ideas, products and services. Therefore, IP is a key issue for



promoting innovation and creativity, developing employment, and improving business growth and sustainability in the short, mid and long-term among SMEs.

4. Who does IPA4SME target?

IPA4SME targets both EU SMEs and SMEs from COSME member states that hold a Seal of Excellence (SoE) from the H2020 SME Instrument program. Though for the moment, only companies incorporated in the 11 countries mentioned in the Guide for Applicants are eligible for Service 1 described below, it may target other innovative SMEs from COSME member states that volunteer to perform those IP pre-diagnostic services.

5. What does IPA4SME provide eligible SMEs?

IPA4SME provides financial and expert support for IP protection and valorisation services to SMEs.

6. What Services can SMEs apply for in IPA4SME?

IPA4SME has been designed to help SMEs exploit the potential of their IP, as well as their capabilities and competences taking into consideration their context, needs and requirements. The three services SMEs can apply for are the following:

- Service 1: Pre-diagnostic services (IP scanning) – **Discover your value**
- Service 2: Financial contribution for the costs of EPO fees – **Safeguard your future**
- Service 3: Financial contribution for the costs of external legal advice by IP attorneys – **unlock your potential**

7. What type of support does Service 1 provide?

Service 1 is focused on providing **comprehensive IP pre-diagnostic (scanning) services to booster SMEs' IP capabilities and competencies free of charge**. An IP Pre-diagnostic service provides SMEs the opportunity to work with a qualified expert in the field of IP and Business Strategy in order to identify both the advantages and potential opportunities of using intellectual property, as well as to identify their main limitations and areas of development to strengthen their competencies in the field of IP and foster their business competitiveness.

8. What type of support does Service 2 provide?

Service 2 provides financial aid to cover 75% of SMEs' patent application fees before the European Patent Office (EPO), up to 2 500 EUR per application. SMEs will have the opportunity through the action TYPE 2 to obtain financial support to cover up to a maximum of 5 patent application fees; the aid can be totally requested in one of the cut-off dates or partially among the 9 cut-off dates foreseen within the action.

9. What type of support does Service 3 provide?

Service 3 provides partial reimbursement of the costs of hiring an IP attorney (Professional Representative) in the field of external legal advice entitled to act before the EPO for the purposes of either preparing the filing for a European Patent or to discontinue an initial idea of patent application. The aid will cover 50% of the costs incurred, up to a maximum of 2 000 EUR per eligible SME per patent application process.

10. What are the requirements for the IP attorneys mentioned in Service 3?

The IP attorneys (professional representatives) chosen by SMEs for the purposes of either preparing the filing for a European Patent or to discontinue an initial idea of a patent application must fulfil the criteria displayed in EPO's regulation in order to be entitled to act before the EPO. Information regarding EPO's regulation and criteria for IP attorney acknowledgment can be found using the following links:

<https://www.epo.org/applying/online-services/representatives.html>

<https://www.epo.org/service-support/useful-links/attorneys.html>

11. Can SMEs receive reimbursement for IP attorney fees under Service 3 even if no patent application is submitted?

Yes. If an IP attorney recommends that the SME not proceed with the patent application process the fees can be reimbursed. The decision to cease the patent application process must be briefly explained in the documentation provided by the SME prior to reimbursement. More specifically, reasoning will be given simply by choosing one of the 3 options provided in Annex I: Model statement of discontinuation of Patent Application Process within the "Guide for Beneficiaries"

12. What is the maximum amount a SME can perceive among IPA4SME support actions?

SMEs may receive up to a total of EUR 15.000 from IPA4SME, regardless the type of services granted. Please see the Guide for Applicants for more information regarding the limits on specific service types.

13. When does IPA4SME start?

The IPA4SME action started 1st February 2019. Its Open Call has been launched 26th April and will be officially open on May 6, 2019.

14. When will IPA4SME end?

IPA4SME is planned to last 3 years so end date is 30th January 2022. There are 9 planned cut-off dates for the IPA4SME Open Call during that time. A tentative calendar of the cut-off dates can be found in the “**Rules for Implementation**” on IPA4SME webpage (<http://ipa4sme.eu/library>) or through the Electronic Submission System (<https://ipa4sme.ems-carsa.com/call/detail/3> selecting the tab “**Supporting Documentation**”).

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

16. Who is eligible to participate?

In order to be eligible to participate in any of the three types of services foreseen within IPA4SME, applicant SMEs must fulfil the following requirements:

- ✔ Be a **holder of a Seal of Excellence (SoE)** awarded in the context of the H2020 SME instrument. The SoE must have been awarded to the SME during the last 3 years prior to the cut-off date.

- ✔ Be incorporated in the EU or a COSME member state¹.
- ✔ Meet the EU definition of an SME: Employ fewer than 250 persons and have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euro, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euro."
- ✔ **To be eligible for Service 1**, SMEs must be incorporated in one of the following EU Member States:

- 📍 Austria
- 📍 Denmark
- 📍 France
- 📍 Germany
- 📍 Greece
- 📍 Ireland
- 📍 Italy
- 📍 Latvia
- 📍 Netherlands
- 📍 Spain
- 📍 Sweden

17. Where can SMEs submit their applications?

Applications must be submitted electronically through the IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS). SMEs can access the system using the following link: <https://ipa4sme.ems-carsa.com/>. SMEs must register and provide all the information requested in the application form.

18. What is the IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS)?

The IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS) is a cloud-based platform tool developed by CARSA in order to facilitate the application process of SMEs to the IPA4SME program.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/27019>

Moreover, the platform is an innovative mechanism to manage all the processes related to the Calls.

19. How can SMEs register on IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS)?

In order to register on the IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS), applicants can access the EMS registration page here: https://ipa4sme.ems-carsa.com/user/new_external. Once the registration is confirmed, applicants will have the opportunity to start with their applications. Further information about EMS works and how applications can be submitted can be found in the “**Electronic Submission System - Manual**” here: <https://ipa4sme.ems-carsa.com/call/detail/3> selecting the tab “**Supporting Documentation**”.

20. How long does the application process take?

The whole process, from registration to submission, should not take more than **20 minutes**.

21. How many steps does the IPA4SME application process have?

The application process is divided in three steps which are:

- **Application Form (Step 1)**: Applicants must provide the information requested in the application form on the IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS).
- **Upload documents requested (Step 2)**: Applicants must upload all the required documents:
 - The Seal of Excellence (SoE) certificate in pdf format
 - The Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) corresponding to the proposal awarded with the SoE in pdf format.
- **Comply with declarations (Step 3)**: Applicants will need to confirm that they comply with the following declarations by clicking on the corresponding boxes in EMS:
 - Declaration (I) that the applicant company employs fewer than 250 persons, that in the preceding year the annual turnover did not exceed 50 million euro, and/or that the annual balance sheet total did not exceed 43 million euro.

- Declaration (II) of agreement to the terms and conditions of participation (rules for implementation) to the IPA4SME project
- Declaration (III) of agreement to share information about the SMEs between the Coordination Centre, EASME, the European Commission and the EUIPO, for the purpose of the evaluation of this action.

Once the 3-step process has been completed, applicants will have the opportunity to conclude the application process. The EMS platform will not allow the submission of applications if any of the aforementioned data is missing or if any of the 3 Steps has not been completed.

23. In what languages is the IPA4SME application form available?

The Application Form is accessible in a total of ten languages. These languages correspond to the countries eligible for Service 1 (IP Pre-diagnostic).

- Danish (Denmark)
- Dutch (The Netherlands)
- French (France)
- German (Germany and Austria)
- Greek (Greece)
- English (Ireland)
- Italian (Italy)
- Latvian (Latvia)
- Spanish (Spain)
- Swedish (Sweden)

24. Can applicants access the application form template before starting the application process?

Yes. The application form template is available as Annex I in the “**Guide for Applicants**”, available here: <https://ipa4sme.ems-carsa.com/call/detail/3> selecting the tab “**Supporting Documentation**”.

25. Can applicants modify their applications once they have been submitted?

Yes. Applicants have the option to start and save as many draft versions of their applications as they wish (including the possibility of uploading documents several times) before the cut-off date. The data and documents contained in the **last submission will be the used for the eligibility check, evaluation and ranking once the cut-off date is reached.**



26. Can applications be submitted without using EMS?

No. **Only applications submitted via the IPA4SME electronic submission system (EMS) will be eligible.** Applications sent via the IPA4SME project Website or sent to any member of the consortium in any way will be considered as “not submitted”.

27. How can applicants verify that their application was submitted correctly?

Once applicants have finalised and submitted their application in the electronic submission system (EMS) platform, they will receive an acknowledgement of receipt via email.

28. Who is required to provide a completed Financial ID Form?

Only SMEs which have been granted Service 2 or 3 will need to provide a Financial ID Form. The Financial ID form template is available here:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/fich_s_ign_ba_gb_en_0.pdf

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

29. How applications are evaluated?

Once a cut-off date has been reached, all applications will be check for eligibility. All applications which meet the eligibility criteria will be evaluated.

30. What are the IPA4SME evaluation and selection criteria?

Eligible applicants will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- ✔ Applicants will be ranked according to the points received in the H2020 SME Instrument report (ESR) that corresponds to the application awarded with the aforementioned SoE.
- ✔ Support actions will be awarded to the highest in rank until the planned budget is exhausted.



- In case two or more applicants have received the same amount of points in the H2020 SME Instrument ESR, preference will be given to SMEs that have not yet been awarded with support from IPA4SME.
- ✔ Among remaining candidates, preference will be given to the companies that have been incorporated more recently. Between companies with the same date of incorporation preference will be given to those with fewer employees.

31. Why might applications be deemed ineligible for IPA4SME support?

Applications will be ineligible (not considered in the selection process) for any of the following reasons:

- Applications which do not meet the eligibility criteria described in question 16
- Any application that was not submitted through the IPA4SME EMS platform

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO CONTACT DETAILS AND OTHER ENQUIRIES

32. Who should SMEs contact if they need help with the application process or more information regarding IPA4SME?

The IPA4SME Coordination Centre has put at the disposal of potential applicants the following email accounts for support:

calls@ipa4sme.eu Communications with SMEs involved in the submission of applications, beneficiaries of support actions and technical support queries.

helpdesk@ipa4sme.eu General inquiries and communications with the Coordination Centre. This account will be the primary point of contact for SMEs with Centre once the company is a beneficiary.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Project Coordinator

