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**What is a Social Innovation and
Social Entrepreneurship
Initiative?**

**PORTUGAL SOCIAL INNOVATION
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1. BACKGROUND

Portugal Social Innovation is a public initiative created in 2014, under the Portugal 2020 Partnership Agreement whose mission is to support **Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives (SISEI)**, as well as foster the social investment market.

This support takes the form of different, and complementary financing instruments aimed at promoting the development of social innovation and social investment in Portugal. Organisations can apply for regional or thematic calls that are opened under the Portugal Social Innovation Initiative.

For an **application** to be eligible for analysis under those financing instruments, it is necessary, among other formal requirements, for the **project submitted** to be a SISEI.

The purpose of this document is to present the **criteria** used by Portugal Social Innovation to determine whether a given project is a SISEI or not. Nevertheless, this is an **open concept** that reflects a dynamic social reality, since the criteria evolves as additional knowledge and experience justify adjustments in its structure or meaning.

2. WHAT IS A SISEI?

Under the Specific Regulation for the Social Inclusion and Employment Programme, in the framework of **Portugal 2020 Partnership Agreement with the European Commission**, Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives (SISEI) are defined as *“projects that promote innovative interventions differing from traditional ones in solving social problems, with high potential for impact and sustainability”*.

However, the operationalisation of this concept benefits from clarification and densification of such a general definition. So, within the scope of Portugal Social Innovation, a SISEI is defined as a project that addresses one or several social problems in an **innovative** and **efficient** way with the **aim of generating a positive social impact**.

Therefore, a SISEI should always be an attempt to **solve, mitigate** or **prevent** a social problem. Social Innovation occurs when the process of experimentation or implementation of a SISEI generates a positive social impact, i.e., when it **promotes the autonomy** and/or



improves the quality of life or in the perspectives of personal **development** of the members of one or several social groups. Social Innovation aims at **social change**. This change can have a broad impact on society as a whole or be focused on a specific social group. In any case, it entails a **transformation of life conditions, ways of living or life prospects**, with potential universal reach.

In short, a successful SISEI should **generate long term change**, a new solution to a social problem with **significant impact on the groups it targets**, with **efficient use of resources**. This new solution is the result of successful Social Innovation experimentation.

3. SISEI PROFILES

From the point of view of its **GOAL**, a SISEI can have a **preventive** or **corrective** approach, depending on whether it aims to prevent a social problem or to tackle an existing one.

From the point of view of its **TYPE** or methodology, a SISEI can be a **direct** or **indirect** intervention. A project with direct intervention means that it works directly with a target group in a vulnerable situation. A project with indirect intervention means that it contributes indirectly, through other organisations, people or projects, or by changing consumption habits and behaviours, to reduce vulnerabilities.

Given their cross-cutting and comprehensive nature, some **SISEI** may have both a **preventive** and **corrective profile** and act both **directly** and **indirectly**.

4. HOW TO ASSESS

In the case of **DIRECT INTERVENTIONS**, three requirements must be met:

1. Existence of a **SOCIAL PROBLEM00**

Q1: Is there an identifiable target group with a specific vulnerability (current or potential)?



A SISEI assumes that it is possible to identify the target groups of the project, are they a social group with clear boundaries or a group of citizens who share common living conditions or circumstances. In addition, the people who belong to that target group must share one or more conditions of current or potential vulnerability.

Examples: young people at school age who are out of the educational system; elderly people living in isolation; families at risk of poverty; people with disabilities in a situation of professional exclusion; institutionalised children; youth at risk of delinquency; deficit of citizenship skills.

2. An **INNOVATIVE** solution

Q2: Does the project present a solution that is different from conventional ones?

A SISEI assumes that the solution presented to respond to the social problem is different from the already existing conventional solutions, namely those provided by the Government or contracted with the Government; this difference must be based on an innovative product, service or methodology.

Examples: implementation of an entirely innovative solution; implementation of a differentiated solution that already exists in other territories; implementation of a differentiated solution already tried on a smaller scale in the same territory.

3. Potential of **SOCIAL IMPACT**

Q3: Does the project have the potential to positively influence the quality of life or the development prospects of the target group?

A SISEI assumes that the intervention can bring about an improvement in the current or future well-being of the people it addresses.

Examples: innovative intervention for the social integration of people with disabilities; innovative intervention for the development of skills that enhance employability or school success; innovative intervention aimed at improving the support and well-being of elderly people living in isolation.

In the case of **INDIRECT INTERVENTIONS**, the focus is to generate or amplify the potential for impact of direct interventions with:

4. Significant **SOCIAL IMPACT**



Q4: Does the intervention contribute, through other innovative organisations, people or projects, to reduce vulnerabilities?

In this case, the SISEI disseminates social innovation by focusing on other innovative organisations, people or projects and not directly on members of a specific social target group.

Examples: social innovation incubators; accelerators; projects aiming to scale-up based on replication or open source; participatory citizenship laboratories.

5. Broader SOCIAL IMPACT

Q5: Does the intervention have the potential to generate behavioural changes or promote changes in consumption habits and in the use of natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations?

In this case, the SISEI focuses on individual behaviour with the potential for a broader social impact.

Examples: projects that aim at changing perceptions and behaviours concerning the consumption habits that have direct impact on the exploration of critical natural resources

The above-mentioned questions consist of the minimum standard criteria for confirming a project as a SISEI within the scope of Portugal Social Innovation. If, for a given project, with direct or indirect intervention, the answer to the respective questions is affirmative, and it meets other complementary requirements when applicable, that project is considered an SISEI.

