PRESIDENZA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI
PALAZZO CHIGI

Department for the South

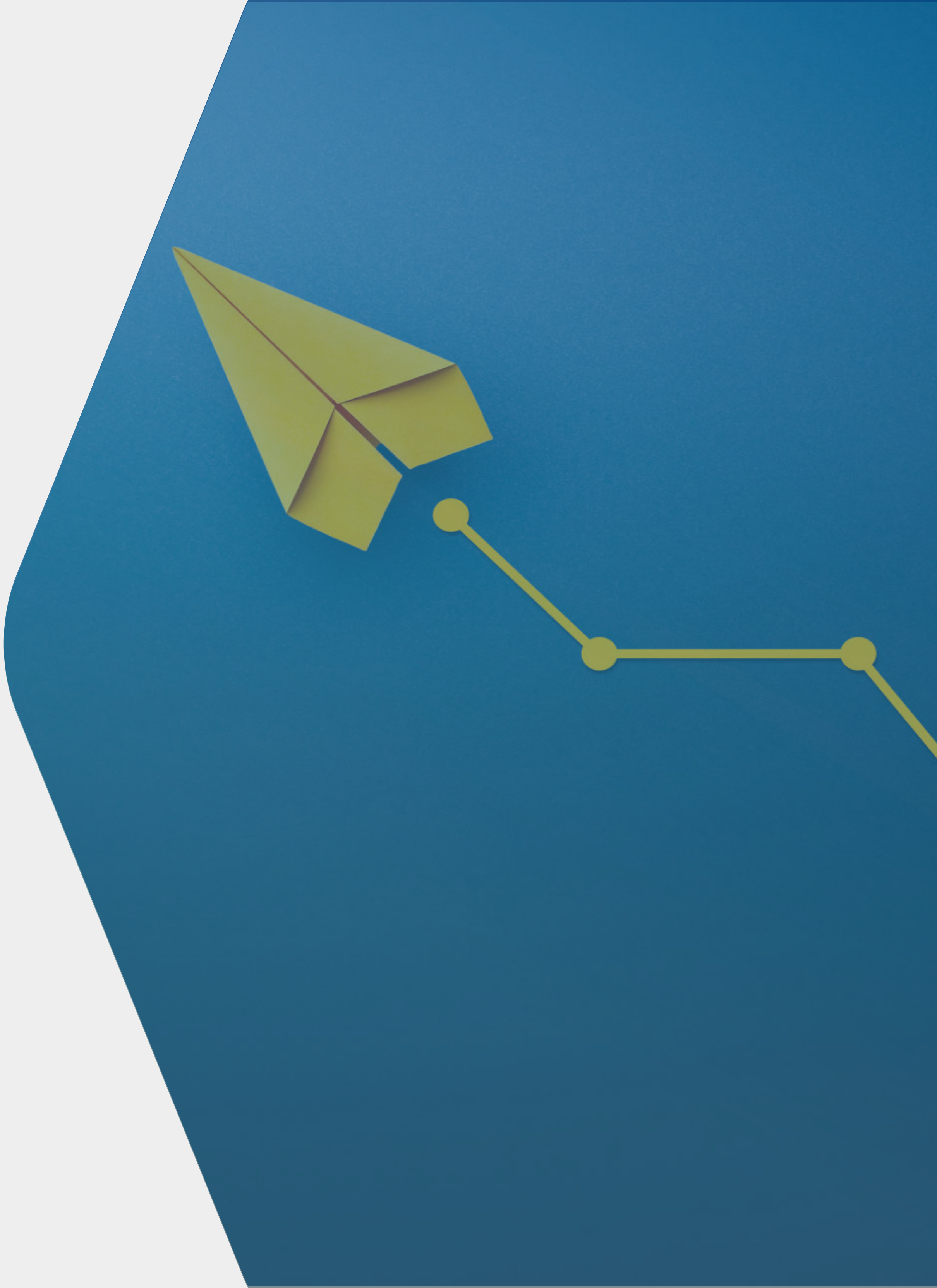
ZES unica

Guide for Investors

SOUTHERN ITALY'S "ZES UNICA" ("SINGLE SEZ"): EUROPE'S LARGEST SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE

Competitive advantages of the "ZES unica"

- **Significant tax incentives:** access to tax credits and benefits for productive investments.
- **Simplified authorization processes:** faster procedures for starting and expanding economic activities.
- **Privileged access to European and Mediterranean markets:** a strategic position for international trade.
- **Rapidly developing infrastructure:** advanced port and logistics networks, efficient rail and airport connections.
- **A strong industrial ecosystem:** presence of key sectors such as manufacturing, energy, logistics, automotive, and digital industries.



A strategic territory for investment and development

- **Total area:** 141,339 km^2, larger than 19 European Union countries.
- **Regions involved:** Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Marche, Molise, Puglia, Sicily, Sardinia and Umbria.
- **Population:** 22 million inhabitants, accounting for one-third of Italy's total population.
- **Annual GDP:** €530 billion, representing 24.9% of the national total.
- **Employment:** 9.4 million workers, over a quarter of Italy's total workforce.
- **Active businesses:** 2.2 million, including major industrial groups.

A driver for export and innovation

Export growth: €48 billion as of Q3 2025.
- Presence of mature, high-potential industrial supply chains.

Innovation and startups:
- Innovative SMEs number 1,430, representing approximately 70% of all innovative SMEs in Italy.
- Innovative start-ups total 3,795 as of the third quarter of 2025.

The Zona Economica Speciale ZES unica (Single Special Economic Zone SEZ is the largest in Europe, representing a strategic hub for investment, innovation and international logistics. Thanks to unique competitive advantages, the "ZES unica" offers a favorable environment for business growth and the attraction of new capital.

"ZES unica": a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean Sea
Thanks to its strategic location and the synergy between industry, logistics, and innovation, the "ZES unica" serves as a privileged gateway to global markets. It offers a concrete opportunity for businesses seeking to grow within a dynamic, competitive, and rapidly expanding ecosystem.

A concrete opportunity for businesses

The “ZES unica” is more than just a development area: it is a growth accelerator for companies looking to expand in a highly competitive environment.

A dynamic market with growing demand and expanding sectors.
A high-potential industrial ecosystem offering incentives for innovation and productivity.
A gateway to global markets supported by an advanced logistics network and strategic connections.

Why choose the “ZES unica”?

Advantageous taxation: incentives and benefits for new productive investments.
Simplified procedures: less bureaucracy and fast-track processes for permits and business setup.
Easier access to EU and national funding for innovative projects.
Strategic infrastructure: ports, airports, and logistics hubs to support bordless growth.

Investing in the “ZES unica” means gaining a competitive edge in an area with privileged conditions for growth, competitiveness and international trade.

Investing in Southern Italy today means accessing a growing market, with concrete incentives and a highly favorable business environment.
The “ZES unica” represents an unprecedented opportunity, thanks to a strategic plan integrated with key development tools such as the NRPP (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) and cohesion funds, ensuring a coordinated central approach while respecting territorial specificities.
Both new and existing businesses that choose to invest in the single Special Economic Zone of Southern Italy can benefit from special tax incentives and streamlined administrative procedures, a competitive advantage that is already attracting new industrial players.
The Department for the South, established within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, coordinates and promotes Government action with regard to policies for Southern Italy and, in the context of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), provides support and cooperation to make investments faster, more efficient and more secure.
Today, Southern Italy is at the forefront of an unprecedented infrastructure transformation, driven by NRPP investments, which will elevate the logistics, digital, and industrial system to the standards of Europe's leading economies.
Now is the right time to invest in Italy: the “ZES unica” is the gateway to new growth opportunities in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Why invest in the “ZES unica”

The “ZES unica” offers a unique competitive advantage based on three fundamental pillars:

1. A strategic location for global trade
2. A growing and interconnected infrastructure system
3. A consolidated and evolving productive ecosystem

Thanks to its privileged location, the “ZES unica” ensures businesses fast access to global markets, reducing transit times and logistics costs.

A strategic location for global trade

Located in the heart of the **Mediterranean**, the “ZES unica” is a **natural logistics hub** for trade routes between **Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.**

- Strong integration with Northern Italy and Central-Western European markets
- Connection between the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indo-Pacific regions
- A key hub on major international maritime routes
- SCAN-MED Corridor (Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor)
- The southern terminal of the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network)
- Direct access to Northern European markets and stronger integration with continental supply chains

An advanced and interconnected infrastructure system

Ports and integrated logistics areas

- **Internationally significant commercial and industrial ports,** equipped with modern infrastructure for cargo handling
- Direct connections to **rail and road hubs for efficient intermodal transport**

Strategic rail and airport networks

- Access to an **intermodal transport system** designed for international logistics
- **Cargo and industrial airports** supporting key productive supply chains

Investing in the “ZES unica” means operating in an area with cutting-edge infrastructure capable of supporting international trade flows.

A World-Class and rapidly expanding infrastructure network

To ensure efficient and fast connectivity with Europe and the rest of the world, the “ZES unica” offers an advanced infrastructure network, currently undergoing further expansion.

- **20 international and regional airports**, offering direct connections to major European capitals and intercontinental hubs.
- **8 highly efficient logistics hubs**, facilitating the distribution of goods on both a national and European scale.
- **48 commercial and industrial ports**, including Gioia Tauro, Naples, Taranto, Palermo, and Cagliari, already established as key hubs for freight and passenger traffic in the Mediterranean.

The “ZES unica” includes 9 Port System Authorities (AdSP), managing a total of 48 ports:

Central Tyrrhenian Sea
Central Adriatic Sea
Southern Adriatic Sea
Southern Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas
Ionian Sea - Taranto port
Strait Area
Western Sicily Sea
Eastern Sicily Sea
Sardinian Sea

A Strategic Plan for growth and innovation

The “ZES unica” is built on a Strategic Development Plan (Piano Strategico della ZES unica) aimed at strengthening existing assets and creating new opportunities for both businesses already operating in Southern Italy and those looking to invest in this high-potential area.

To enhance the productive system of the “ZES unica”, the Plan has identified:

Five strategic sectors to strengthen

- Agri-Food & Agro-Industry
- Tourism
- Electronics & ICT
- Automotive
- High-Quality Made in Italy

Four strategic sectors to reinforce

- Shipbuilding & Maritime Industry
- Aerospace
- Railway Industry
- Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals

Three key technologies to promote

- Digital Technologies
- Cleantech (clean and resource-efficient technologies)
- Biotechnologies (Biotech)

The “ZES unica” is not just a logistics hub but a strategic industrial center, capable of attracting investments in the most advanced and innovative sectors

Investing in the “ZES unica”: a gateway to growth

Investing in the “ZES unica” means becoming part of an integrated ecosystem, where logistics, infrastructure, and key industries converge into an unprecedented growth platform.

The “ZES unica” serves as the intersection of innovation, advanced logistics, and global trade: a fully equipped area designed to welcome new businesses and strategic investments.

Education, Training and Research

In the Single SEZ area, the total number of upper secondary school graduates accounts for 43.5% of the national figure, with technical and vocational **specialisation representing 44.4%** of this group.

There are **39 universities**, including three specialised institutions: the **Polytechnics of Ancona and Bari, and the University of Naples "L'Orientale"**.

There are **143,600 graduates**, representing **34.6% of the national total**.

There are **485 postgraduate specialisation schools**, with **nearly 85,000 enrolled students**. The SEZ area hosts **37% of these schools** and **42% of total enrolments. Industrial doctorates account for over 60%.**

Within the SEZ area, there are **more than 53,000 university professors and researchers**, representing approximately 44% of the total academic staff.

Research hubs and technology discricts

The Single SEZ area is characterised by the presence of research hubs and technology clusters capable of fostering a strong level of collaboration with private stakeholders.

Strengths

- Highly specialised vertical sectors, often of international standing.
- Competitive costs and greater availability of public incentives.
- Presence of highly focused technology hubs.
- Increasing role as an area for experimentation and growth.

Key specialisations

- Aerospace.
- Microelectronics and nanotechnologies.
- ICT and big data.
- Energy, environment and bioeconomy.
- Advanced materials.

Advantages of investing in the “ZES unica”

Single Authorization (Autorizzazione Unica – AU): Administrative Simplification

A streamlined process for investments

Businesses planning to invest in economic, industrial, production, or logistics activities within the “ZES unica” can apply for the Single Authorization, which consolidates all necessary permits into one streamlined procedure.

The Single Authorization allows businesses to obtain all required permits in just a few days with a one-stop-shop application process.

It eliminates the need for multiple administrative procedures across different authorities, significantly reducing bureaucratic complexity.

Eligible projects

The Single Authorization can be requested for:

- establishing and locating new economic activities;
- constructing, launching, and modifying production facilities;
- converting, restructuring, or expanding existing industrial plants;
- transferring, ceasing, or reactivating economic activities.

A fast and simplified process

Within three working days of receiving the application, the Department for South initiates a Conference of Services.
At the end of the process, the Single Authorization is issued, consolidating all necessary permits.
If needed, it also serves as an urban planning amendment.
It includes the declaration of public utility, urgency and necessity of the project.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted via the “ZES unica” Digital Desk (S.U.D. ZES), accessible through the official portal (www.dipartimentosud.gov.it/en/) of the Department for South (Dipartimento per il Sud).
The application must include a detailed business plan, specifying project characteristics, investment amount, expected employment impact.

Fast approval times

Department for the South Issues Single Authorization a swift and predictable manner.

This centralized and simplified procedure ensures businesses can launch their investments quickly, with clear timelines and no bureaucratic obstacles

Success stories

Construction, in the Province of Brindisi, of a **facility for the production of lithium cells, modules and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)**, energy storage solutions that are essential for the energy transition and the development of renewable energy sources. The total investment amounts to approximately €600 million.

Development, in the Province of Catania, of a new **logistics facility for beverage bottling based on a "pick tower" model** – a highly automated, multi-level system that increases picking efficiency and maximises storage capacity. The total investment amounts to approximately €90 million.

S.U.D. ZES: the Digital One-Stop Shop for productive activities in the “ZES unica”

The “ZES unica” Digital Desk (S.U.D. ZES – Sportello unico digitale ZES), established within the Department for South, serves as the central point of contact for business companies looking to start, expand or modify productive activities within the “ZES unica”.

A unified strategy for economic growth

S.U.D. SEZ was established to ensure a unified relaunch of productive activities across the ten regions involved. The One-Stop Shop simplifies administrative procedures for businesses operating within the Single SEZ.
This platform simplifies administrative processes for business companies operating in the “ZES unica”.

Competences and areas of intervention

Within the “ZES unica”, the S.U.D. ZES is responsible for:

- Economic and productive activities: administrative procedures related to the localization, construction, expansion, cessation and reactivation of production plants.
- Building interventions and land transformation: authorizations for the construction and modification of buildings intended for economic and productive activities.
- Sports and cultural facilities of public interest.

Thanks to S.U.D. ZES, business companies can benefit from a single digital platform that centralizes and accelerates all the administrative procedures necessary to operate within the “ZES unica”.

A wide range of incentives for businesses

The “ZES unica” area offers a rich menu of incentives designed to support business companies intend to invest from scratch in these territories.
The available measures are tailored to meet the specific needs of each company, taking into account the business development stage and the territory where the investment is planned.
For the benefit of both Italian and foreign companies choosing to operate within the “ZES unica”, a wide range of incentives is available, funded through regional, national, and European Union resources, including, for instance:

Tax incentives and tax credits

- Investment Tax Credit for the "ZES unica" (Credito d'imposta per investimenti nella ZES unica)
- Investment Tax Credit for the "ZES unica" in the primary production sector (agriculture, fishing, and aquaculture) (Credito d'imposta per investimenti nella ZES unica per il settore della produzione primaria, agricoltura, pesca e acquacoltura)
- "Transizione 5.0"

Employment contribution reliefs

- "ZES unica" Bonus for Southern Italy (Bonus ZES unica per il Mezzogiorno)
- Youth Employment Bonus (Bonus giovani)
- Women's Employment Bonus (Bonus donne)
- SME contribution Relief (Bonus decontribuzione PMI)
- Self-Employment Incentives in strategic sectors for the development of new technologies and the digital and ecological transition (Incentivo all'autoimpiego nei settori strategici per lo sviluppo di nuove tenologie e la transizione digitale ed ecologica)

Favorable financing and development grants

- Zero-Interest Loans for New Businesses (Nuove imprese a tasso zero- NITO-ON)
- Smart & Start Italia
- Development Contracts (Contratti di sviluppo)

Thanks to this wide range of tools, businesses can benefit from targeted incentives, designed to support growth, innovation and internationalization in key economic sectors

Tax credit

The tax credit for investments in the Single SEZ represents a strategic fiscal lever to support businesses intending to establish or expand productive activities across the ten regions concerned, enabling a reduction in the tax burden in relation to investments in capital goods, real estate and equipment intended for production facilities. In this context, the measure has been made structural for the three-year period 2026–2028, in order to ensure certainty and stability for business investments, fostering more effective planning and a decision-making horizon aligned with production development needs.

Eligible beneficiaries

All enterprises may apply, regardless of their legal form or accounting regime, whether already established or newly set up within the Single SEZ.

The incentive applies to the acquisition of capital goods intended for production facilities located in eligible areas of the regions of Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Marche, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily and Umbria.

The steel, coal and lignite sectors, as well as transport (with the exception of warehousing and support services), energy, broadband, and the credit, financial and insurance sectors, are excluded.

Eligible investments

Investments in capital goods intended for production facilities are eligible, in particular:

- the purchase of new machinery, plant and equipment;
- the acquisition of land and buildings used for the establishment or expansion of production activities;
- assets acquired through finance leases, limited to the cost incurred for their purchase.

Goods intended for resale, consumables, and investment projects with a value of less than €200,000 are not eligible.

Level of benefit

The tax credit is calculated on the proportion of the total cost of eligible assets, up to a maximum of €100 million for each investment project, while projects with a value below €200,000 are not eligible.

The intensity of the incentive is determined by a dual variable: on the one hand, the location of the investment, depending on the region, and on the other, the size of the enterprise, as well as the overall scale of the investment.

Application process

To benefit from the tax credit, business companies must:

- Notify the Italian Revenue Agency (Agenzia delle entrate) of the amount of eligible investments.
- Submit an additional communication confirming the actual implementation of the investments.
- Use the tax credit for tax compensation through the Italian Revenue Agency's telematic services.

The tax credit can be combined with other incentives, provided that the total aid does not exceed the maximum limits set by European regulations.

THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE SOUTH

The Department for the South is established within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers:

- It coordinates and promotes Government action with regard to policies for Southern Italy and the implementation of the Single Special Economic Zone (SEZ).
- It is responsible for the issuance of the single authorisation.
- It acts as the contracting authority for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) interventions under its remit.
- In coordination with the competent central administrations it promotes the attractiveness of the Single SEZ for businesses.
- It coordinates the use of resources to finance infrastructure investments in industrial areas.

www.dipartimentosud.gov.it