

CALL FOR SELECTION

Partnership Brokers for Strategic EU-Ukraine Business Collaboration

UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 Project

Grant Agreement No. 101195937

History of Changes

Version	Date	Type of Change	Description of Change	Author / Issuer
1.0	26th November 2025	Initial Issue	Initial publication	X23
1.1	2nd January 2026	Amendment	<p>Article 4 - Deadline for submission extended from 31 December 2025 to 16 January 2026</p> <p>Article 9 - Communication of results to participants extended from 22 January 2026 to 6th February 2026</p> <p>Article 10 - Substitution period Substitution periods extended as follows:</p> <p>a) priority period extended from 12th-30th December 2025 to 7th-16th January 2026</p> <p>b) conditional period extended from 30th December - 5th January 2026 to 17th - 31st January 2026</p> <p>c) final deadline extended from 10th January 2026 to 6th February 2026</p> <p>Article 12 - Acceptance and Contract Execution: Acceptance confirmation extended from 26th January 2026 to 8th February 2026.</p> <p>Contract execution extended from the period 26th-30th January 2026 to 9th-13th February 2026.</p>	X23
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 1 - External broker reduced from 30 to 15-20. Added project objectives and	X23

			brokers' role within the partnership strategy (1.3).	
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 4 - Deadline for submission extended from 31 December 2025 to 31 January 2026	X23
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 9 - Communication of results to participants extended from 6th February 2026 to 13th February 2026	X23
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 10 - Substitution periods extended as follows: a) priority period extended from 12th-30th December 2025 to 7th-31st January 2026 b) conditional period extended from 17th - 31st January 2026 to 31st January - 13th February 2026 c) final deadline extended from 6th January 2026 to 13th February 2026	X23
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 11 Compensation Model: Tranches for Aligned Incentives increased as follows: Milestone BM1/BM4 - from €150.00 to €250.00 Milestone BM2/BM5 - from €150.00 to €250.00 Milestone BM3/BM6 - from €150.00 to €250.00 MoU Achievement Bonus - from €350.00 to €450.00 for three MoUs.	X23
1.2	16th January 2026	Amendment	Article 12 - Acceptance and Contract Execution: Acceptance confirmation extended from 8th January 2026 to 16th February 2026. Contract execution extended from the period 9th-13th February 2026 to 16-18th February 2026. Added engagement duration, expected activities, concrete responsibilities and support infrastructure (12.5).	X23

Article 1 - Object of Selection

1. A public selection procedure by qualifications and examination is hereby announced for the formation of a shortlist of fifteen to twenty (15-20) Partnership Brokers specialising in facilitating strategic collaborations between Small and Medium Enterprises belonging to the innovation ecosystems of Italy, Portugal, and Ukraine. The total target of 30 brokers includes internal brokers activated separately.
2. The selection is aimed at entering into specialist consultancy agreements for partnership development services within the UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project, co-funded by the European Commission.
3. The UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project sets itself an ambitious objective of great strategic relevance: to build operational and lasting bridges between the innovative ecosystems of Ukraine and the European Union at a time of extraordinary challenge. The Grant Agreement with the European Commission identifies as a fundamental Key Performance Indicator the achievement of forty Memoranda of Understanding between SMEs of the participating clusters, explicitly recognising that the success of the entire project depends on our capacity to facilitate authentic, sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Following strategic analysis of optimal implementation approaches and consultation with the EU Project Officer, the UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project has adopted a hybrid model that combines external professional brokers recruited through a public call with internal brokers drawn for consortium partner organization. The strategy is based on the engagement of 15-20 highly qualified external professionals, supported by 10-15 brokers within the organisations that form the partnership, who operate as dedicated Partnership Brokers.

These brokers are not mere consultants or occasional facilitators, but represent the beating heart of the project's internationalisation strategy.

Article 2 - Eligible Applicants

1. This selection is open to all applicants, whether natural or legal persons, who meet the requirements set out in Article 3 below.
 2. There are no restrictions based on nationality or residence, subject to compliance with European legislation concerning cross-border service provision.
 3. Applications are welcomed from freelance professionals, specialist consultants, consultancy firms, and organisations specialising in partnership development and business matching.
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Article 3 - Participation Requirements

1. Participants in the selection must possess, at the closing date for application submission, the following requirements:
 - a) **Professional qualifications:**
 - documented minimum experience of five (5) years in partnership development activities, international business consultancy, or facilitation of cross-border collaborations;
 - proven competence in developing international business relationships with particular reference to European markets;
 - b) **Language competencies:**
 - professional competence in English not below level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference;
 - preferential competence in additional languages relevant to target markets (Italian, Portuguese, Ukrainian);
 - c) **Specialist technical competencies:**
 - documented knowledge of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 principles;
 - experience within innovation ecosystems, technology clusters, or startup environments;
 - familiarity with European regulations for cross-border collaborations;
 - d) **Operational requirements:**
 - legal authorisation to provide consultancy services in country of residence;
 - availability for minimum three (3) month engagement period with flexible scheduling;
 - commitment to participate in assigned events according to track allocation;
 - access to professional digital infrastructure for communication and collaboration.
 2. Requirements must be possessed at the closing date for application submission and maintained throughout the duration of any contractual relationship.
 3. Absence of any single requirement shall result in exclusion from the selection.
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Article 4 - Application Submission Methods and Deadlines

1. Applications for participation must be submitted exclusively through electronic means using:
 - a) Online application form: <https://forms.gle/G3CStyk5sYFyXiBfA>;

- b) submission via certified electronic mail to: ua.eu.cluster5.0@gmail.com.
2. The deadline for application submission is set for **31th January 2026, 23:59 CET (Brussels time)**.
 3. Applications received after the established deadline shall not be admitted for any reason whatsoever, even if due to postal disruptions or technical malfunctions not attributable to the candidate.
 4. Submission of an application constitutes unconditional acceptance of the provisions of this call and the attached contractual regulations.
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Article 5 - Required Documentation

1. The application for participation must contain the following documentation:
 - a) **Mandatory documentation:**
 - curriculum vitae in Europass format or equivalent professional standard;
 - self-certification of possession of requirements as per Article 3;
 - copy of valid identity document;
 - declaration of availability for required engagement period;
 - b) **Professional portfolio:**
 - detailed description of three (3) most significant partnership development projects with evidence of quantifiable results;
 - list of specialist competencies with particular reference to innovation ecosystems and Industry 5.0;
 - documentation proving required language competencies;
 - c) **Professional references:**
 - contact details of three (3) verifiable professional references;
 - authorisation to contact references for competency verification;
 - d) **Motivational statement:**
 - text of maximum one thousand (1,000) words explaining interest in the opportunity and strategic approach to facilitating EU-Ukraine partnerships.
2. Optional supplementary documentation includes:
 - a) professional endorsements from cluster organisations or chambers of commerce;
 - b) evidence of thought leadership through publications or speaking engagements;

- c) certifications in intercultural competencies or cross-border business development.
 3. All documentation must be submitted in English or accompanied by certified translation.
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Article 6 - Evaluation Criteria

1. Evaluation of candidates shall be conducted through a scoring system based on objective criteria and quantifiable parameters, for a maximum total of one hundred (100) points.
 2. Evaluation criteria are structured as follows:
 - a) Fundamental Competencies (maximum 40 points):**
 - international partnership experience (15 points);
 - knowledge of innovation ecosystems and Industry 5.0 (15 points);
 - quality and reach of professional network (10 points);
 - b) Strategic Capabilities (maximum 35 points):**
 - excellence in partnership facilitation (15 points);
 - cultural and cross-border communication competency (10 points);
 - problem-solving capability and adaptability (10 points);
 - c) Excellence Indicators (maximum 25 points):**
 - orientation towards sustainability and social impact (10 points);
 - digital competency and innovation mindset (8 points);
 - thought leadership and professional development (7 points).
 3. The minimum score for admission to the shortlist is set at sixty (60) points.
 4. The minimum score for access to wild card status is set at eighty (80) points.
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Article 7 - Evaluation Commission

1. Evaluation of applications is entrusted to a multidisciplinary Commission comprising:
 - a) one representative from each consortium partner;
 - b) two experts in innovation ecosystem development;

- c) one expert in international business development;
 - d) one expert in Industry 5.0 and digital transformation.
 2. The Commission operates according to principles of transparency, impartiality, and professionalism.
 3. Commission members are bound by duties of confidentiality and must abstain in cases of conflict of interest.
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Article 8 - Selection Procedure

1. The selection procedure comprises the following phases:

Phase I - Preliminary screening:

- a) verification of mandatory requirements as per Article 3;
- b) completeness check of submitted documentation;
- c) elimination of incomplete or non-conforming applications.

Phase II - Technical evaluation:

- a) application of scoring system as per Article 6;
- b) evaluation by multidisciplinary Commission;
- c) attribution of scores according to predefined criteria.

Phase III - Shortlist formation:

- a) compilation of shortlist in descending order of score;
 - b) identification of selected candidates within the limit of thirty (30) positions;
 - c) formation of reserve list for qualified candidates beyond the numerical limit.
 2. The deadline for completion of the procedure is set at fifteen (15) working days from the closing date for application submission.
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Article 9 - Shortlist and Communication of Results

1. The definitive shortlist is approved by determination of the Project Coordinator and published on the project website at www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu.
2. Communication of results to participants shall take place by **13th February 2026** through:

- a) publication of shortlist on the project website;
 - b) individual communication via electronic mail to selected candidates;
 - c) availability of shortlist position information for all participants.
3. The shortlist remains valid until **30th April 2026** for any substitutions or progressions.
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Article 10 - Reserve List and Substitutions

1. Qualified candidates not selected for numerical reasons are placed on a reserve list in order of score.
 2. The reserve list is utilised for substitutions in case of:
 - a) withdrawal by selected candidates;
 - b) early termination of contracts for supervening causes;
 - c) need to expand the number of brokers for project requirements.
 3. Substitutions from the reserve list are effected strictly following shortlist order.
 4. Substitution periods are:
 - a) **priority period** (7th-31th January 2026): automatic substitution according to shortlist;
 - b) **conditional period** (31th January - 13th February 2026): substitution subject to feasibility assessment;
 - c) **final deadline** (13th February 2026): no substitutions admitted beyond this date.
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Article 11 - Remuneration and Contractual Structure

1. Remuneration for required services is established at one thousand, two hundreds Euros (€1,200.00) per contractual engagement, inclusive of fiscal and contributory charges borne by the service provider.
2. Remuneration is disbursed according to milestone-linked system:
 - a) Two hundred and fifty Euros (€250.00) for completion of Milestone BM1/BM4;
 - b) Two hundred and fifty Euros (€250.00) for completion of Milestone BM2/BM5;
 - c) Two hundred and fifty Euros (€250.00) for completion of Milestone BM3/BM6;
 - d) Four hundred and fifty Euros (€450.00) as bonus for achievement of three (2) Memoranda of Understanding (one per each assigned SME).

3. The wild card system for exceptional performance provides:
 - a) twenty per cent (20%) bonus on payments for qualified brokers;
 - b) possibility of assignment of additional SMEs;
 - c) priority access for future project collaborations.
 4. Contractual relationships are governed by the standard contract annexed to this call, forming an integral and essential part thereof.
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Article 12 - Acceptance and Contract Execution

1. Selected candidates are invited to confirm acceptance by **16th February 2026**.
2. Failure to communicate acceptance within the established deadline results in forfeiture of selection and progression of the shortlist.
3. Contract execution takes place during the period **16-18th February 2026** through electronic means using qualified digital signature.
4. Service activation is differentiated according to track assignment:
 - a) Track SMAU: immediate activation with SME assignment by 18th February 2026;
 - b) Track SIM: deferred activation with SME assignment by 17th April 2026.
5. Each selected broker will stipulate a Service Agreement with the cluster organisation of their own country (AFIL for Italy, MADAN PARQUE for Portugal, Chernihiv.IT or ICI Cluster for Ukraine). The standardised contract defines with precision the role, responsibilities, deliverables, compensation, and governance. All brokers will operate under the same contractual conditions, regardless of country or reference cluster organisation.
6. The engagement duration will be from 3 to 6 months from initial SME assignment. The External Broker commits to conducting **minimum 3 virtual meetings (1 per month)** with each assigned SME.
The External Broker MUST facilitate the successful signing of three (3) MoUs during the engagement period: one MoU for each of the three assigned SMEs.
The required documentation will consist of Monthly Progress Reports, Meetings Minutes, Partnership Assessment and MoU Documentation.
While not mandatory, in-person participation in B2B Matchmaking event and Open Innovation Labs in SIM Fair (Portugal, May 2026) provides enhanced partnership facilitation opportunities.
7. The Cluster Organisation commits to:
 - Provide detailed SME profiles and partnership objectives

- Facilitate introductions between Broker and assigned SMEs
- Share relevant market analysis and industry intelligence
- Provide access to cluster resources and networks

The Cluster commits also to provide:

- **Coordination Support:** Regular communication channels with project coordinators
- **Technical Assistance:** Access to project platforms and collaboration tools
- **Legal Guidance:** Support for MoU template development and legal requirements
- **Performance Monitoring:** Monthly check-ins on partnership progression.

Article 13 - Personal Data Processing

1. Processing of personal data is carried out in conformity with EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) and applicable national legislation.
2. Data Controller is X23 Srl - The Innovation Bakery, with registered office at [address to be specified].
3. Personal data are processed for the following purposes:
 - a) management of the selection procedure;
 - b) execution and management of contractual relationships;
 - c) legal compliance and obligations arising from the European Grant Agreement;
 - d) project-related communications (subject to specific consent).
4. Retention periods are:
 - a) selected candidates: five (5) years from project conclusion (EU audit requirement);
 - b) non-selected candidates: two (2) years from selection conclusion;
 - c) reserve list: until April 30, 2026.

Article 14 - Grounds for Exclusion and Appeals

1. The following constitute grounds for exclusion:
 - a) absence of requirements as per Article 3;
 - b) application submission beyond deadlines or in non-conforming manner;
 - c) incompleteness of required documentation;
 - d) false or misleading declarations.
2. Exclusion is communicated to interested parties with indication of reasons and available means of redress.

3. Administrative appeal to the Project Coordinator is permitted against the shortlist and exclusion decisions within thirty (30) days of communication.
 4. The right of appeal to competent judicial authority within statutory deadlines is preserved.
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Article 15 - Final Provisions

1. For matters not expressly provided for in this call, the applicable legal provisions concerning public selections and commissioning of intellectual services shall apply.
 2. This call is supplemented by the annexed standard contract and project technical documentation available on the institutional website.
 3. Participation in the selection constitutes full acceptance of all provisions of this call.
 4. The Responsible Officer for the procedure is [to be designated] in the capacity of Project Manager of the UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project.
 5. For information, contact:
 - a) email: ua.eu.cluster5.0@gmail.com;
 - b) telephone:
For Italy +39 0363 7032 47
For Portugal +351 210 438 600
For Ukraine +38 093 917 08 52 / +380-99-240-4750 / +380-50-643-4344
 - c) website: www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu.
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Article 16 - Publication and Effectiveness

1. This call is published:
 - a) on the project website www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu;
 - b) on institutional websites of consortium partners;
 - c) through professional networks and cluster organisations.
 2. The call comes into effect from the date of publication on the project website.
 3. Any amendments or additions are published by the same means and constitute an integral part of this call.
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THE PROJECT COORDINATOR
X23 Srl - The Innovation Bakery

Bergamo, 26/11/2025
[Digital signature]

ANNEXES: - Annex A: Standard Contract for Partnership Brokerage Services - Annex B: Technical Specifications of UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 Project - Annex C: Application Form Template - Annex D: Complete Privacy Notice

This call is issued within the framework of the UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project, co-funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101195937. The provisions comply with European legislation concerning public procurement and intellectual service provision.

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