

SMEs SELECTION CRITERIA

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Co-funded by
the European Union



WELCOME TO

SIMM 2026 Startups & Investment Matching

14 & 15 May, Porto, Portugal

About SIMM

The SIM Conference is an event designed to connect entrepreneurs, startups, and investors, both nationally and internationally. Focused on creating networking opportunities through carefully curated content, SIM offers a unique experience for founders and investors to establish meaningful connections.





#ABOUT THE EVENT

THE UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 PROJECT

The **UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0** is a project co-funded by the European Union that aims to strengthen collaboration between the Ukrainian and European innovation ecosystems.

The project involves strategic partners including **X23 Srl - The Innovation Bakery, ICI Cluster, Madan Parque Science and Technology Park, Chernihiv IT Cluster, AFIL, and the University of Bergamo.**

SIM PORTO 2026 EVENT

Dates: May 14-15, 2026

Location: R. Nova da Alfândega, 4050-430 Porto

Hours: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

SIM Porto represents one of the main international meeting and startup events for innovation leaders in Portugal, bringing together over **50,000 companies involved annually in an ecosystem** that includes:

- **innovative startups** with B2B solutions already on the market
- **Major PT and regional companies engaged in Open Innovation**
- **National and international innovation enablers**
- **Public institutions** and innovation agencies
- Specialized **media** and business press

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS

The UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project will offer the **selected SMEs:**

1. **B2B Matchmaking Event** - Targeted networking with the **SIM** innovation ecosystem;
2. **Open Innovation Lab** - Access to challenges from approximately 20 major corporations;
3. **Access to the fair and networking opportunities** with the participants;
4. **Tailored support** to participate to **SIM** (pitching sessions and support);
5. **Training and business cases analysis** opportunities.





#SELECTION PROCEDURE PHASE ONE

Before evaluation, each application must meet the following **MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS**:

- **Be an SME** (Small/Medium Enterprise) according to EU criteria
- **Operate in technology/innovation sectors**
- **Interest in adopting the I5.0 and I4.0 technologies** if not yet integrated into the business
- Be based in **Ukraine, Italy, Portugal**
- Be affiliated with one of the project partner clusters (**AFIL, MADAN Parque, ICI Cluster, or Chernihiv IT Cluster**)
- Complete registration form by **April 19th, 2026 at 17:00 CET**
- Availability to participate in the event for both days
- Commitment to participate in the preparatory webinar/workshop





#ADMISSIBILITY CRITERIA

SUBMISSION DEADLINE COMPLIANCE

Applications must be submitted by the official deadline: 19th April 2026 - 17:00 CET (Brussels time). Applications received after this deadline will NOT be considered for evaluation under any circumstances. The online registration system will automatically close at the specified time.

LATE APPLICATIONS

No exceptions will be made for late submissions, regardless of technical difficulties, time zone confusion, or other reasons. Applicants are strongly advised to submit their applications well in advance of the deadline to avoid last-minute technical issues.

SUPPLEMENTARY REGISTRATION PERIOD

If, following the completion of the selection process and confirmation phase, the number of confirmed participants falls below the available capacity, the Selection Committee reserves the right to open a supplementary registration period.

Any such decision will be communicated exclusively through official project channels:

- Project website: www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu
- LinkedIn: EU_UA_CLUSTER5.0
- Direct communication to affiliated clusters

Applicants from the supplementary period will undergo the same evaluation process outlined in this document.





#DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY PERSONAL DATA PROCESSING

By submitting an application, participants consent to the processing of their personal data for the purposes of:

- Selection and evaluation
- Project implementation and monitoring
- Communication regarding the programme - EU reporting and audit requirements

Legal basis: Legitimate interest for the implementation of an EU-funded project (Grant Agreement No. 101195937).

Data controller: X23 Srl - The Innovation Bakery Contact: info@x-23.org

SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Documentation supporting force majeure claims (medical certificates, conflict-related evidence) will be:

- Processed only by authorised project staff
- Stored securely and separately from general application data
- Retained only as long as necessary for verification and audit purposes
- Not shared with third parties except as required by EU audit procedures

PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS

Participants have the right to:

- Access their personal data
- Request correction of inaccurate data
- Object to processing (may affect participation eligibility)

Request deletion (subject to EU funding audit requirements)

Contact the data controller to exercise these rights.

DATA RETENTION

- Selected participants: Data retained for 5 years after project completion (EU audit requirement)
- Non-selected applicants: Data retained for 2 years, then securely deleted





#SELECTION PROCEDURE PHASE TWO

The evaluation process employs a two-tier scoring system combining **basic eligibility criteria** with **comprehensive innovation assessment**.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA		POINTS
LEVEL OF ENGLISH	Participant rates their English proficiency 3 or higher (on a scale from 1 to 5).	10
TYPE OF SERVICE/PRODUCT OFFERED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF I5.0	<p>The offer is specifically described (not generic like "IT solutions") and clearly contributes to one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry 5.0 • Twin Transition • Sustainability • Resilience • Human-centric innovation <p>Generic or vague answers in the registration form equals to 0.</p>	10
TYPE OF SERVICE/PRODUCT REQUESTED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF I5.0	<p>The answer clearly specifies what the company is seeking (e.g. technologies, partners) and shows intent for cooperation (e.g. pilots, EU market access).</p> <p>Empty or generic answers like "contacts" or "ideas" in the registration form equals to 0</p>	10
MOTIVATION	<p>Answer must reflect at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear cooperation interest • Relevance to Industry 5.0 / Twin Transition • Cross-border goals (EU-UA) • Strategic objectives beyond general "networking" <p>Empty or generic answers like "contacts" or "ideas" in the registration form equals to 0</p>	10





#SELECTION PROCEDURE PHASE TWO

INNOVATION ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA		MAX POINTS
ADOPTION OF 14.0 AND 15.0 TECHNOLOGIES	<p>Advanced (8-10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete integration of Industry 4.0/5.0 technologies (IoT, AI, Digital Twin, Advanced Analytics) • Implemented and functioning cyber-physical systems • Use of emerging technologies (AI, Machine Learning, Blockchain) <p>Intermediate (5-7 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial implementation of digital technologies • Automation and digitalization systems in progress • Adoption of basic cloud platforms and analytics <p>Basic (2-4 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First steps towards digitalization • Legacy systems with limited technological upgrades • Basic digital competencies present <p>Minimal (0-1 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor or no digital integration • Predominantly manual/traditional processes 	10
INTERNATIONAL SATION LEVEL	<p>Limited International Presence (8-10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely domestic operations with no international activities • No export experience or international partnerships • <p>Emerging International Activity (5-7 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional exports or sporadic international projects • Basic international market knowledge <p>Moderate International Presence (2-4 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular export activities to 1-3 countries • Established international partnerships in specific regions • Some international market experience <p>Extensive International Operations (0-1 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-established presence in multiple international markets • Strong export portfolio and international partnerships 	10





#SELECTION PROCEDURE PHASE TWO

INNOVATION ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA		MAX POINTS
SUSTAINABILITY INTEGRATION	<p>Advanced Sustainability (8-10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core business model centered on environmental/social sustainability • Certified sustainability standards (B-Corp, ISO 14001, SDG alignment) • Measurable positive impact on environmental or social challenges <p>Moderate Sustainability (5-7 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability practices implemented in key business areas • Environmental or social impact initiatives in place • Some sustainability certifications or ongoing certification processes <p>Basic Sustainability (2-4 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial sustainability practices or awareness • Limited environmental/social impact initiatives <p>Minimal Sustainability (0-1 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant sustainability practices • Limited awareness of environmental/social impact • No sustainability integration in business model 	10
GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	<p>Exemplary Diversity (9-10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female-led company (CEO/Founder) or gender-balanced leadership team (40%+ women) • Demonstrated commitment to gender equality in hiring and promotion <p>Strong Diversity (7-8 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant female representation in management roles (25-39%) • Gender-inclusive policies and practices in place <p>Moderate Diversity (4-6 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some female representation in key roles (15-24%) • Basic equal opportunity policies <p>Basic Diversity (2-3 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal female representation in leadership (10-14%) <p>Limited Diversity (0-1 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very low or no female representation in leadership (<10%) • No specific diversity initiatives or policies 	10





SELECTION PROCESS



STEP 1: INITIAL SCREENING

- Verification of **mandatory minimum requirements**
- Documentation completeness **check**
- Elimination of incomplete applications



STEP 2: TECHNICAL EVALUATION

- Application of integrated scoring system
- Scoring by multidisciplinary commission composed of:
 - Affiliated cluster representative
 - Innovation/startup sector expert



STEP 3: RANKING & SELECTION

- Comprehensive evaluation minimum: **40/80 points**
- Excellence threshold: **60/80 points**
- **Selection** of profiles
- **Results** announcement





#RESERVE LIST MANAGEMENT RESERVE LIST CREATION

Following the selection and ranking process, a **RESERVE LIST** will be established comprising candidates who:

- ✓ Met all mandatory requirements
- ✓ Achieved a minimum score of 40/80 points
- ✓ Were not selected due to capacity limitations

The reserve list will maintain the same ranking order established during Step 3 of the selection process (comprehensive evaluation score).

Reserve list candidates will be notified of their status and ranking position on 23rd April 2026.

VALIDITY OF RESERVE LIST

The reserve list remains valid until 4th May 2026 for substitution purposes.





#WITHDRAWAL AND SUBSTITUTION PROCEDURE

ELIGIBLE WITHDRAWAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Selected participants may withdraw from the programme under the following circumstances:

1. FORCE MAJEURE | Medical

- Serious illness or medical emergency (medical certificate required)
- Family emergency (death or serious illness of immediate family member- documentation required)

2. FORCE MAJEURE | Conflict-Related (Ukrainian participants)

- Escalation of military activities in participant's region requiring evacuation or shelter
- Damage to infrastructure preventing safe travel (electricity, transport, communications)
- Mandatory mobilisation or military service requirements
- Security situation making international travel impossible or inadvisable
- Loss of or damage to essential travel documents due to conflict

Documentation: Official communications from local authorities, humanitarian organisations, or credible media reports may be accepted as supporting evidence.

COMPLIANCE WITH UKRAINIAN LAW

Ukrainian participants are responsible for ensuring compliance with all Ukrainian legal requirements including, but not limited to:

- Mobilisation regulations and exemptions
- Exit permit requirements (if applicable) - Registration with military authorities
- Any restrictions on international travel for eligible persons
- The project consortium: - Cannot provide legal advice on Ukrainian law
- Cannot intervene in matters of Ukrainian jurisdiction
- Cannot guarantee assistance if participants face legal issues related to Ukrainian requirements

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

By confirming participation, Ukrainian participants declare that:

- They are legally permitted to travel internationally
- They have obtained all necessary permissions/exemptions
- They have verified their compliance with current Ukrainian regulations
- They understand the project cannot assist with Ukrainian legal matters

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Participants should consult:

- Ukrainian Ministry of Defence: [website]
- Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [website] - Legal advisors familiar with current Ukrainian law

The project can provide the official invitation letter for visa purposes but cannot advise on Ukrainian legal compliance.

CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES

If a participant's legal status changes between selection and the event (e.g., new mobilisation requirements), they must:

- Immediately notify the project coordination team
- Provide updated information
- Withdraw if they can no longer legally travel

This will be treated as force majeure with no financial liability.

3. FORCE MAJEURE | Other

- Natural disasters or extreme weather events preventing travel
- Sudden and unforeseen visa refusal (despite timely and correct application)
- Government-imposed travel restrictions or border closures

4. ORGANISATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Critical and unforeseen mandatory work commitments (employer confirmation required)
- Company crisis requiring immediate leadership presence (documented)





#SUBSTITUTION TIMELINE

After 27th April 2026: Priority Substitution Period

- Automatic replacement from reserve list in ranking order
- Substitute participants contacted within 48 hours of withdrawal
- Confirmation of participation required within 2 working days
- Full access to all preparatory activities

After 4th May 2026: No Substitutions

- Insufficient time for adequate preparation
- Administrative procedures cannot be completed in time
- No exceptions

WITHDRAWAL NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Participants wishing to withdraw must:

1. Submit written notification to: info@x-23.org

CC: Affiliated Cluster: belma.rizvanovic@madanparque.pt (Madan Parque); icicluster77@gmail.com (ICI Cluster); tetiana.rohachuk@chernihiv.it (Chernihiv.IT); samuel.monaco@afil.it (AFIL)

2. Include in the notification:

- Full name and organisation
- Reason for withdrawal
- Supporting documentation (if claiming force majeure)
- Date of notification

3. For Ukrainian participants citing conflict-related circumstances:

- Detailed description of the situation
- Any available supporting documentation (official communications, media reports, humanitarian organisation alerts)
- Contact information for verification if needed

The Selection Committee will review all withdrawal requests within 48 hours and confirm acceptance of the withdrawal and substitution process initiation.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNJUSTIFIED LATE WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal after 28th April 2026 without documented force majeure circumstances may result in:

- Exclusion from future UA_EU_CLUSTER5.0 project activities
- Notation in participant records -
- Communication to affiliated cluster organisation

This policy ensures fairness to reserve list candidates and protects the project's implementation timeline.





TIMELINE

DATE	MILESTONE
APRIL 19TH	Registration deadline
APRIL 20TH - 22TH	Screening and evaluation
APRIL 23RD	Results communication
APRIL 27TH	Participation confirmation





#FINANCIAL COMMITMENT AND COST RECOVERY COVERED COSTS

The cluster partners of the Consortium will cover for selected participants:

- Return travel to Porto (economy class, for PT participants bus/train)
- Accommodation (2 nights, 14-15 May 2026)
- SIM Conference event registration
- Portuguese companies will be provided with SIM Conference tickets and travel support (bus or train). Kindly note that accommodation is not included in this offering.

NON-RECOVERABLE COSTS

Once participants confirm their participation (by 27th April 2026), the project will begin incurring non-cancellable costs including:

- Hotel bookings
- Event registrations
- Administrative arrangements

WITHDRAWAL LIABILITY

Participants withdrawing after 28th April 2026, WITHOUT documented force majeure circumstances may be invoiced for non-recoverable costs already incurred on their behalf.

Maximum liability: up to €800 per participant

This provision ensures:

- Responsible use of EU taxpayer funds
- Fairness to reserve list candidates who lose their opportunity
- Project sustainability Force majeure withdrawals (as defined in this document) will NOT incur financial liability.





#INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND MEDIA CONSENT PARTICIPANT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Participants retain full ownership of:

- Their business ideas and innovations
- Presentation content and materials
- Proprietary information shared during the event
- Any intellectual property developed before or during participation

The project and SIM make no claim to participant IP. CONFIDENTIALITY Participants should:

- Exercise discretion when sharing sensitive business information
- Use non-disclosure agreements for detailed discussions with potential partners
- Mark materials as confidential where appropriate

The project cannot guarantee confidentiality of information shared in public or semi-public settings (presentations, networking sessions).

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AND PROMOTION

By confirming participation, SMEs consent to:

- Photography and video recording during official project activities
- Use of company name and logo in project communications and reports
- Publication of non-confidential project outcomes (case studies, success stories)
- Sharing of anonymised data for EU reporting purposes

Participants will receive copies of photos/videos upon request.

OPTING OUT OF PROMOTIONAL USE

Participants may opt out of promotional materials by:

- Notifying info@x-23.org in writing before 27th April 2026
- Specifying which uses they wish to exclude

Opting out does not affect participation but may limit project's ability to showcase participant achievements.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Participants may be asked to contribute to:

- Post-event surveys and feedback
- Case studies or testimonials (optional, subject to approval)
- Follow-up interviews for impact assessment

All such contributions will be subject to participant review and approval before publication.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The project will share content on official channels:

- LinkedIn: [EU_UA_CLUSTER5.0](#)
- Project website: www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu

Participants are encouraged to share their experience using: #UAEUCLUSTER50 #SIMPORTO2026
Tags will not be used without participant consent.





#PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

VISA REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESSING SCHENGEN VISA (Ukrainian participants)

Ukrainian participants must verify their visa requirements immediately upon selection. The project cannot support this process, and participants need to make the arrangements individually in accordance with their cluster organisations.

PROJECT SUPPORT

The project will provide:

- Official invitation letter for visa purposes
- Supporting documentation (accommodation confirmation, programme details)
- Contact point for urgent visa-related queries

VISA REFUSAL AND FORCE MAJEURE Visa refusal despite timely application and complete documentation constitutes force majeure and triggers substitution from the reserve list. Late application or incomplete documentation does NOT qualify as force majeure.

LIABILITY AND PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants are responsible for:

- Personal safety during travel to/from Porto
- Compliance with all Portuguese laws and regulations
- Behaviour during the event
- Any costs arising from personal negligence or misconduct

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

The project consortium and SIM organisers cannot be held liable for:

- Personal injury or property damage outside official programme activities
- Consequences of decisions to travel against official advice
- Losses due to force majeure events (including conflict escalation)
- Theft or loss of personal belongings

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

Ukrainian participants should:

- Monitor current travel advice from Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Check Portuguese government advisories regarding Ukrainian citizens
- Ensure compliance with Ukrainian exit requirements
- Consider security implications of international travel during wartime

The project supports participants' autonomy in making travel decisions but cannot assume responsibility for consequences.





REGISTER NOW!



REGISTRATION FORM IN UA

<https://forms.gle/Vg6JReDHbuJeifQ18>



REGISTRATION FORM IN PT

<https://forms.gle/HTz5yJTCJz69RgT39>



REGISTRATION FORM IN IT

<https://forms.gle/VvhgVgzDd7vQf8X88>



APPLICATION DEADLINE

19TH OF APRIL





UA EU CLUSTER_5.0

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

EU_UA_CLUSTER5.0



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ua-eu-cluster-5-0/>



info@x-23.org



www.ua-eu-cluster-partnership.eu

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